

# Independent

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## Govt. unveils Rs. 18.877 trillion relief-oriented federal budget

Proposes upto 25% increase in salaries, 15% in pensions of employees; Minimum wages raised from 32,000 to 37,000 rupees; Income tax rates for salaried individuals remain unchanged, with exemption limit at Rs. 600,000 annually; GDP growth target for the fiscal year 2024-25 is fixed at 3.6 percent, whereas the inflation rate is expected to remain 12 percent; Rs. 2,122bn earmarked for defence sector in budget 2024-25; Govt allocates record Rs1400 bln for PSDP; Rs 45 bn to be saved annually by abolishing public sector vacancies; Govt plans to invest a hefty amount in education sector in order to provide suitable environment for the education of children; BISP's budget increased up to Rs. 593 billion to support disadvantaged segments; 5,000 journalists, media workers to get health insurance in first phase; Announces tax relief on import of solar, aquaculture's raw material; No duty increase on import of essential items

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday unveiled the Rs18.877 trillion relief-oriented federal budget for the fiscal year 2024-25.

Presenting the federal budget 2024-25 in the National Assembly, the finance minister said that GDP growth target for the fiscal year 2024-25 is fixed at 3.6 percent, whereas the inflation rate is expected to remain 12 percent.

He said that the budget deficit to GDP during the period under review is estimated at 6.9 percent, whereas the primary sur-

plus during the review period is projected at 1.0 percent of the GDP.

The minister said that the Revenue collection of the Federal Board of Revenue is estimated to Rs12,970 billion during upcoming fiscal year, adding that tax revenue collection during the current fiscal year grew by 38 percent and the provincial share would be Rs7,438 billion.

He said that the non-tax revenue targets of the federation are fixed at Rs3,587 billion, whereas the net income of the federal government would be Rs9,119 billion.

The total expenditures

of the federal government is estimated at Rs18,877 billion out of the total amount of Rs9,775 billion would be spent on interest payments.

The government has allocated Rs1,400 billion for Public Sector Development Program in its current budget, adding that an additional amount of Rs100 billion would be allocated under Public Private Partnership, he added.

This year, he said, over all development budget was the highest in the country's history comprising Rs1,500 billion.

The minister said that the government would provide Rs2,122 billion for defence, and Rs839 billion would be allocated for Civil Administration.

Meanwhile, an amount of Rs1,014 billion is also allocated for pension expenses, adding that Rs1,363 billion are allocated for the subsidy of the gas, electricity and other sectors.

The Finance Minister further said that total grants amounting to Rs1,777 billion is allocated for the promotion of BISP, AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan, merged districts of KP, HEC, railways and IT sectors.

Finance Minister said that the government has declared a historic federal PSDP valued at Rs1,500 billion, which was higher than 101 percent of the last year's revised PSDP.

He said that despite the fiscal constraints, the government has enhanced its budgetary allocations, which would help to develop the volume of infrastructure including transportation, energy, IT and water resources and improve the living standards of the people in the country.

Senator Aurangzeb said that in PSDP 2024-25 special focus is paid to the completions of ongoing projects as 83 percent of resources are allocated for the completion of ongoing schemes and 17 percent for the new development schemes.

During the financial year 2024-25, it is proposed to allocate 59 percent of resources for the development of infrastructure and 20 percent for the social sector development.

To ensure the equitable development in AJK, GB and merged districts of the KP, the government has allocated at 10 percent and around 11 percent for other sectors development including IT, telecom, science and technology, governance and production sector.

The government has included projects related to support the productivity of exports oriented industries to enhance their competitiveness, to expand the digital infrastructure in the country.

Senator Muhammad

Aurangzeb said that the government is also paying special focus on the development of the transportation sector and is determined to further improve the network of roads and highways to strengthen the connectivity of cities to handle the increasing traffic volume.

### Three-pronged strategy to be adopted to reform pension scheme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday said that the government would adopt a three-pronged strategy to reform the pension scheme in line with international best practices.

The minister, in his budget speech in the National Assembly, said that the government had to pay unfunded pension liability, which was increasing every year.

He said after reforms in the pension scheme, the pension liability would be reduced considerably in next three decades. The minister said that for fresh employees, a contributory pension scheme would be introduced for which the government would deposit its share every month. Moreover, a pension fund would be created to manage the liability, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb presented the Federal Budget 2024-2025 before the National Assembly of Pakistan.

### It is fake and anti-people budget: Opposition

ISLAMABAD (INP) - Leader of the opposition in National Assembly Omar Ayub termed the federal budget as anti-people and said that the government didn't consult any stakeholder.

Talking to media outside the parliament house after the budget speech of Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, the opposition leader said that the constitution was violated for the very first time in National Assembly during the presentation of budget.

"I have presented four budgets in this house. These are fake documents as government didn't mention the total volume of budget and its deficit," said the opposition leader.

He added that the PTI government eliminated electricity loadshedding by 80 percent during its tenure.

"The PPP has stabbed the government in the back as their MNAs didn't want to participate in the budget session today," Ayub said.

MNA Ali Muhammad Khan of Sunni Ittehad Council said that the budget is anti-people as it doesn't have anything for the masses. "The party that got majority in the house was thrown on the opposition benches. The budget was presented by those who reached parliament on Form-47," said Ali Muhammad Khan.

He added that the PTI founder has urged the chief justice to hold audit of the General Elections 2024.

Earlier, the opposition members protested in the National Assembly during the budget speech of Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and raised slogans 'Go Nawaz Go'.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif signs the documents of the Federal Budget 2024-25 after its approval from the Federal Cabinet to be laid before the National Assembly.

### PM Shahbaz says

## Conspiracies to bankrupt Pakistan thwarted; economic stability achieved

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Wednesday said that conspiracies to bankrupt the country had been thwarted, steering it away from economic hardships towards stability.

Presiding over the meeting of the Pakistani Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Parliamentary Party at the Parliament House, he said, "We have left behind the conspiracies of those who dreamed of bankrupting the country and guided it from economic hardships to stability."

The prime minister

briefed the parliamentary party about the budgetary proposals.

He assured that maximum relief would be provided to the common man in the budget, with specific measures aimed at easing the burden of workers, farmers, and salaried people.

He expressed gratitude to the party members and allies for their confidence in him and their full support of the government policies benefiting the common man and the country.

Pm Shahbaz urged the parliamentarians to actively participate in the budget sessions, offering

suggestions, and providing a robust and reasoned response to any falsehoods or propaganda regarding the budget.

He stated, "History is witness to our efforts for rescuing Pakistan's economy through prioritizing national interests. With the guidance of Allah Almighty and under the leadership of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, we averted bankruptcy and default in the country." He said that a conspiratorial group posed a threat to the country's security and undermined those who had sacrificed their lives for it.

### Sindh budget to be presented on June 14

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh government has decided to present annual budget for the financial year 2024-25 on Friday (June 14) in the Sindh Assembly, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, who is also holding the portfolio of finance, will present the budget in the Sindh Assembly at 3pm.

According to a letter issued by the provincial finance department here Tuesday, the Sindh Cabinet meeting will be held at the CM House on the same day about 9am and the budget documents will be approved at the assembly floor.

### PPP not briefed over federal budget, says Nafisa Shah

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan People's Party's MNA Nafisa Shah on Wednesday said that the PPP was not briefed over the federal budget. Talking to the media she expressed reservations over the budget adding that these reservations will be presented to the government. "We will settle the issues with dialogue," Shah said. "There is no option before us of not extending support to the government over budget," PPP leader said.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding the rightsizing of the government.

### Commissioner chairs meeting to review human rights violation issues

KARACHI (APP): Commissioner Syed Hassan Naqvi chaired a meeting to review human rights issues in Karachi division and three committees headed by the Deputy Commissioners were constituted to take measures to stop occurring right violations.

The meeting, which was attended by Secretary Human Rights department, Deputy Commissioners, SSPs concerned, decided to coordinate with Human Rights department in containing human rights violations.

The meeting was informed that incidents of child abuse, acid throwing on women and sexual assault on innocent girls aged 3 to 8 years were on the rise which must be stopped by taking stringent measures.

The meeting also decided that all resources would be utilized to stop such grave violations and government policies would be implemented in letter and spirit.

Three committees headed by Deputy Commissioners would look into the issues in all 7 districts and Human Rights Desks would also be established at the DC offices.

In order to increase coordination, a Whatsapp group would be created to ensure immediate contact with DCs, SSPs and Human Rights Department.

The Commissioner asked all concerned officers to take steps to discourage such heinous crimes from the society and culprits must be dealt with an iron hand.

### Three ANF personnel martyred in encounter with smugglers

RAWALPINDI (APP): At least three Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) personnel were martyred on Wednesday in a shootout with suspected drug traffickers near Turkey toll plaza, Jhelum.

According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, the suspects were traveling on GT Road when they were signaled to stop at the toll plaza.

The smugglers tried to escape from the scene. The ANF team after a brief chase managed to intercept them when the suspects opened fire on the ANF team, resulting in the martyrdom of three personnel, including Head Constable Gulzar, Lance Naik Mazhar and a civilian.

### Government decides to extend cabinet

ISLAMABAD (Online): Federal government has decided to extend federal cabinet.

More ministers from coalition partners will be taken in the cabinet. According to sources two ministers each from MQM and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) will be included in cabinet. More ministers from PML-N will also be taken in the cabinet.

Sources said government has once again invited PPP to become part of cabinet. Government sources expect positive response from PPP.

Sources said extension in federal cabinet is likely within a few days.

### Poor, salaried class to be provided relief in Sindh Budget: Nasir

KARACHI (APP): Provincial Minister for Energy, Planning and Development Syed Nasir Hussain Shah on Wednesday said the Sindh government will provide relief to the salaried class and poor people in the budget.

Speaking to the media after the Sindh Assembly session, Shah said that President Asif Ali Zardari and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto want that the increase in salary should be proportional to inflation, so as far as possible we should increase the salaries of the employees.

The Energy Minister said that providing water facilities and free and cheap electricity to the people of Sindh are the top priorities

Nasir Shah said that new development schemes are not being introduced in the provincial budget, but priority will be given to completing ongoing development projects.

He said that 2.1 million houses will be constructed by the Sindh government for the flood victims.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan, Khazar Farhadov calls on Minister for Defence & Defence Production, Khawaja Muhammad Asif.

### Senator Bushra Anjum elected as Chairperson Education Committee, Sherry Rehman as Climate Change

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senator Bushra Anjum Butt was elected as the Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training on Wednesday.

During a meeting held at Parliament House, the Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training elected its Chairperson in accordance with Rule 184 (1) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012.

Senator Bushra Anjum Butt was nominated for the position by Senator Anusha Rahman Ahmad Khan and seconded by Senator Irfan-Ul-Haq Siddique.

In her acceptance speech, Senator Butt expressed her commitment to

advancing excellence and innovation in educational initiatives.

She thanked the committee members for their confidence in her leadership and emphasised her eagerness to collaborate with both committee members and stakeholders to address the challenges and opportunities in the nation's education sector.

The committee members congratulated Senator Butt on her new role, expressing confidence in her ability to lead initiatives that will positively influence educational policies and practices.

Earlier in the day, another meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change was held to elect its chairperson.



KARACHI: Ambassador of Netherland, Mrs Henny De Vries calls on Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori at Governor House.

### PPP assures Govt to extend support in budget vote

ISLAMABAD (INP): The People's Party and the PML-N have reached to an understanding with regard to the federal budget being presented in the Parliament today.

The PPP despite showing its reservations with regard to the budget will vote for it, sources said.

The party leaders earlier said that it didn't yet decide to vote for or against the federal budget being announced by the federal government today.

Sources said that the matters between two allied parties have been settled at the top leadership level.

The People's Party will extend its full support to the PML-N for approval of the budget. "Despite

protest and speeches in the parliament, the PPP will support passage of the budget," sources said.

According to sources, the government has assured the PPP to add some of its proposals in the budget. The PPP leadership in quid pro quo has assured to vote for the PML-N budget.

The PML-N had requested to the PPP for cooperation in passing the budget. Earlier, PPP leader Nayya Bukhari had said that the party has yet to decide to support or oppose the budget. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday met with President Asif Ali Zardari and discussed the country's overall economic situation and the upcoming annual budget 2024-25.



Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

**Unyielding onslaught**

Seven soldiers paid the ultimate price in Lakki Marwat on Sunday when their vehicle was blown up in an IED attack, another painful reminder of the state's inability to effectively counter rising terrorism. That same night, policemen successfully defended their post in Bajaur from a militant attack with no loss of lives. While we may be grateful for small mercies, it must be acknowledged such incidents are occurring with alarming frequency: CRSS data shows 281 fatalities of civilians and security personnel in the first quarter of 2024. This necessitates action on a war footing.

Several pivotal developments have led to the resurgence of terrorist activities in Pakistan, notably the Afghan Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021. The collapse of the ill-advised ceasefire with the banned TTP has only exacerbated the situation. Meanwhile, Kabul's reluctance to rein in the group and ensure Afghan soil is not used for launching attacks against Pakistan has made an already messy situation even messier. Despite repeated diplomatic engagements and cross-border actions, the Taliban have shown little inclination to curb the activities of their ideological brethren. And so, an emboldened TTP has been able to regroup and mount sophisticated attacks against targets inside Pakistan. The presence of TTP sanctuaries in Afghanistan, reportedly supported by modern weapons and financial aid from the Taliban, poses a significant threat to Pakistan's national security.

To counter this escalating threat, Pakistan must develop a strategy that integrates both military and civilian efforts. The National Action Plan needs to be revitalised and enforced with renewed vigour. Our security forces need to be adept at handling asymmetric warfare including detecting and defusing IEDs, urban combat, and intelligence gathering. The military must be supported by well-trained, well-equipped police forces to ensure a holistic approach to counterterrorism. Ensuring that no space is available to militants and their sympathisers is just as crucial. This includes rigorous monitoring of educational institutions, madrasahs, and other potential recruitment grounds for extremists. The state must also cut off funding sources for terrorist groups. Border security is another area to consider. This involves not only physical barriers but also the deployment of advanced surveillance technologies and increased patrols to prevent cross-border infiltration by militants. All the while, diplomatic efforts must continue to exert pressure on the Afghan Taliban to take concrete actions against the TTP. This should be complemented by engaging with stakeholders such as China, Russia, Iran and the UAE, to form a united front against the threat posed by Afghanistan-based militants. The battle against terrorism is not solely the responsibility of the military. Civilian institutions, LEAs, and society at large must get to work to counter this menace. The martyrdom of our security personnel must not go in vain.

**Thinking pink**

Arooj Waheed Dar

Even in 2024, women stand a long way from accessing equal opportunities with men. The persistent gender disparities across various spheres of life — education, employment, healthcare, and beyond — are stark reminders of the structural barriers confronting women in Pakistan. Despite efforts, the nation consistently lags on gender parity indices, raising concerns about the adequacy and sufficiency of initiatives targeted at closing the gender gap. Placed 142<sup>nd</sup> out of 146 countries on the WEF's 2023 Global Gender Gap Index, it is evident that significant strides are needed to address gender inequities in Pakistan.

An examination of past budgetary allocations and policy documents unveils a persistent neglect of gender considerations, manifesting in inadequate resource allocation for women across crucial sectors. These systemic imbalances perpetuate gender inequalities, thwarting the full realisation of Pakistan's human potential. Recent stabilisation policies have further tilted the scales against women due to discriminate access to formal capital markets, decent jobs, financial and digital tools, etc.

As the new fiscal year approaches, it is imperative to remind the government of the gender issues that have only received perfunctory attention over the years. Policymakers must acknowledge that no economic recovery can be sustainable if half the country's population is inhibited in its capacity to contribute productively, underscoring the need for gender-centric policies.

While economic revival must remain a top

priority, any effort towards this goal without adequate female representation is like building a house of cards. Sustainable economic recovery is contingent upon the mainstreaming of gender-centric policies across all sectors. This necessitates integrating the gendered impacts of policies into the planning process, rather than treating them as an afterthought.

In this context, the federal and provincial budgets can be leveraged by respective governments to address disparities through gender-responsive budgeting. GRB entails evaluating the gendered impacts of budgetary allocations, integrating gender equality in planning processes, and establishing monitoring mechanisms for greater accountability. The overarching goal is to ensure equitable distribution of resources for inclusive development.

It is disconcerting that despite the widespread adoption of GRB in many countries, including South Asian counterparts India and Bangladesh, Pakistan has yet to present a gender-responsive budget. As a first step, all PC-1 forms must incorporate a dedicated section obligating departments to thoroughly assess the gendered impacts of the proposed projects. Projects that help level the playing field should be prioritised over those that magnify distortions. Additionally, macroeconomic policies must only be implemented after carefully assessing their differential impacts on women.

To further promote gender equity, several key demands must be addressed, including ensuring equal employment opportunities, pay equity, supporting women-owned businesses with financial in-

centives, and increasing funding for girls' education, especially in underserved areas. Expanding maternal, reproductive, and mental health services, establishing affordable childcare facilities, and strengthening laws and support services against gender-based violence are also essential, particularly in the face of climatic challenges. Additionally, enhancing social protection programmes for more coverage, along with increasing digital and financial access is essential to promote equity.

Greater representation of women in decision-making roles is of utmost importance. Currently, political representation seems confined to a few privileged women, often detached from the everyday challenges faced by the majority.

This lack of representative female voices in the political arena results in the formation of ineffective policies that overlook critical gender issues. Developing mechanisms to facilitate participatory budgeting can help address this concern.

The government must also prioritise data consolidation to support evidence-based policymaking. At present, the inadequate targeting of social programmes stemming from deficiencies in data undermines the effectiveness of initiatives. With limited fiscal space, the government must calibrate each and every budgetary allocation judiciously for maximised impact, for which data is key. In a nutshell, mainstreaming gender considerations across all sectors during the planning phase can enable policy-makers to significantly enhance the prospects for fairer, more inclusive economic resurgence. — Courtesy Dawn

**Whither Europe?**

Mahir Ali

Shortly after Joe Biden and a phalanx of European leaders gathered in Normandy last week to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day landings that launched the endgame in the continent's bitterest conflict, citizens in 27 states began to vote in European parliamentary elections that were predicted to demonstrate a surge in support for precisely the kind of ideologies that purportedly perished in 1944-45.

One aspect of Operation Overlord that seldom scores a mention in current commentary is that the Soviet Union had been pleading for a second front since soon after Operation Barbarossa, when the Nazis swept across its territory three years before D-Day. There were those in Europe who relished the prospect of a combat between the USSR and Nazi Germany, and the Normandy landings were at least partly motivated by the fear that the Red Army would overrun Europe and take sole credit for Hitler's defeat.

Soviet forces did indeed reach Berlin before their Western allies — and a brief camaraderie made way before long for the Cold War. Stalin's regime is accurately accused of imposing its will on Eastern Europe. Somewhat more subtly, the US did the same in Western Europe. One of the CIA's first missions was to ensure that Italy did not vote in a communist or socialist majority in its first post-war poll. Part of the effort involved incorporating Nazi operatives or collaborators into 'democratic' Europe's postwar establishments.

The precursor of France's Rassemblement National, whose gains in last week's polls panicked Emmanuel Macron into calling a snap parliamentary election, was Front National, which was co-

founded by Nazi collaborators. RN leader Marine Le Pen has been trying to cleanse the party of its fascist associations, including by distancing it from Germany's Alternative für Deutschland, some of whose leaders refuse to stop expressing their admiration for the Third Reich. Notwithstanding some recent scandals involving its international associations — kowtowing to the Kremlin, for instance, and spying for China — the AfD did better in the Euro polls than any component of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's supposedly centre-left coalition, but not as well as the Christian Democrats (CDU).

The CDU's Ursula von der Leyen, who greeted the European election results by offering the assurance that the centre is holding, hopes to win a second term as European Commission president. She has lately been courting Giorgia Meloni, whose 'post-neofascist' Brothers of Italy came on top in another former Axis state. Meloni postures on the international stage as the acceptable face of Europe's far right, while her government's domestic attitudes reflect a clearer image of its perverse inclinations.

A defining feature of European politics in recent decades has been the extent to which the centre (both left and right) has sought to 'combat' the hard right by co-opting its ideas, notably (but not exclusively) on immigration. In many parts of Europe, for instance, economic distress is related to ageing societies and diminishing populations. But where is the party advocating better-organised immigration as a possible solution? The focus is identitarian, powered mainly by white Christian nationalism, and dedicated to excluding black and brown ethnicities. Hence the

EU devotes its energies not to educating the masses but to bribing North African states to detain and brutalise the politically or economically persecuted unfortunates who aspire to a new life on the fringes of a European experiment that they don't realise has failed.

The second round of the French election, on July 7, will precede the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics barely by a fortnight. Macron is obviously hoping that the anti-fascist voters will emerge to thwart the likelihood of an FN majority. As many commentators have indicated, though, it could mean cohabiting with the hard right for the remainder of his presidential term, and then handing over to Le Pen in 2027.

Whether or not it crossed voters' minds, the war in Ukraine was a factor in the EU elections, with some of the far right as well as far left parties calling for accommodation with Vladimir Putin — the D-Day ceremonies also highlighted Russia's aggression as an echo of Nazi attitudes from long ago. Without excusing Putin's self-serving trespasses, it might have been more fruitful to focus on why Moscow might suspect the intentions of hostile neighbours.

Neither the EU's dedication to Ukraine nor its devotion to Israel, notwithstanding the latter's genocidal tendencies, is likely to shift much in the near future, but the future of the any-how inadequate European Green Deal is in doubt. Add a second Trump administration to the equation, and humanity's short-term future shifts from gloom to doom, regardless of anything Putin or Xi Jinping might be plotting. — Courtesy Dawn

**Commerce News**

**Govt earmarks Rs 267,952m for various ongoing, new schemes of power sector**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has allocated an amount of Rs 267,952.773 million for various ongoing and new schemes of power sector in annual public sector development programme (PSDP) for year 2024-25.

According to the budgetary document released here Wednesday, out of total allocation, a sum of Rs 113,760.301 million has been specified for ongoing schemes through PSDP, Rs 17,401 million for new schemes and Rs 136,791.472

million (own resources) for year 2024-25. Out of total allocation, the local component stands at Rs 135,564 million and foreign loan component is Rs 132,388.208 million during the said period.

For ongoing schemes, a sum of Rs 4500 million each has been earmarked for 220/132 Kv GIS substation Dhabiji and 220 Kv Haripur Substation, Rs 6,000 million for 220Kv Swabi Substation, Rs 6,500 million for 500 Kv Allama Iqbal Industrial City, Rs 1,424.360 million for

electrification works at different valleys of district Chitral, Rs 4,536.225 million for 220 kV Quaid-e-Azam Apparel and Business Park Grid Station, Rs 38,000 million for installation of 2x600 MW Coal Fired Power Project GENCO-1 (Jamshoro), Rs 3,808 million for Power Distribution Enhancement Investment Program-II, Rs 4,499 million electricity distribution efficiency improvement project (MEPCO), Rs 3,691.509 million for electricity

distribution efficiency improvement project (HESCO) and Rs 2,600 million for 500 kV Matiari—Moro-R Y Khan. For New Scheme, an amount of Rs 6,250 million has been earmarked for land acquisition for installation of 1200 MW solar power plant Layyah, Rs 4,500 million for electricity distribution improvement and Rs 6,000 million for installation of assets performance management system on 100 kV and 200 kV distribution transformers.



Federal Minister for Communications, Privatization and Investment Board Abdul Aleem Khan presiding over a meeting of NHA in Islamabad.



LAHORE: Business community persons and LCCI members listening the budget 2024-25 at LCCI.

**UAE-based British Pakistani launches Trade Gate, offering diverse trading opportunities**

ISLAMABAD (APP): UAE-based British Pakistani Shaheel Ahmad Meer of the Meer Group launched the first Trade Gate branch in Dubai, aiming to innovate trading and joint ventures by integrating various business sectors.

It offers scholarships, practical training, and diverse trading opportunities across sectors like EV, automotive, e-commerce, real estate, and luxury cars, said a press release issued here.

Meer's vision is to democratise financial

education and global investment opportunities, fostering a vibrant community through seminars and networking. The initiative plans global expansion, aiming to lead in trading education and business investment globally, starting with Dubai as a transformative milestone.

Trade Gate goes beyond a conventional training center, becoming a dynamic hub that empowers individuals with the knowledge and tools for success in trading and joint ventures. Its holistic approach

to wealth creation and management offers participants a broad platform to explore and invest in various sectors.

Trade Gate offers diverse trading opportunities, allowing participants to explore sectors such as electric vehicles, automotive, e-commerce, real estate, and luxury car advisory services. With expert guidance and investment prospects, Trade Gate helps individuals capitalize on cutting-edge trends and market dynamics, paving the way for trading success.

**Chairman WAPDA reviews inspection of Neelum Jhelum Project's Head Race Tunnel'**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman WAPDA Engr Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd) Wednesday visited Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project to review ongoing inspection of the Head Race Tunnel.

He reached Dam (Weir) site of the Project located at Nauseri, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, said a press release issued here.

The Chairman visited in detail the de-watered head race tunnel to inspect and review damages that might have occurred to the tunnel. He was

accompanied by Project Manager, Neelum Jhelum Consultants James Stevenson.

The Consultants, the Contractors and the Project Team briefed the Chairman about the progress achieved so far.

It was briefed that de-watering of 48-Km long head race tunnel had been completed from the elevation of 1012 feet to 607 feet above mean sea level.

Subsequently, inspection of the head race tunnel has commenced.

**KP Governor for economic well-being of KP people, alleviation of deprivations**

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi in a meeting with Chairman State Life Corporation Shoaib Javid Hussain here at the Governor House on Wednesday emphasized the economic well-being and alleviation of deprivation for the residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

During the meeting, discussions were held on improving State Life facilities in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, said a press release issued here after the meeting adding that the governor issued directives to strengthen the health and Takaful zones of State Life in Dera Ismail Khan.

The meeting also discussed the SOS Village project, with an announcement of full cooperation from the Governor House. Additionally, deliberations took place on a pilot project for expensive treatments initiated by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

**Economists, businessmen, people laud federal budget 2024-25**

PESHAWAR (APP): Senior economists, traders, businessmen and people of all walks of life Wednesday highly lauded the federal budget 2024-25 and termed it goal oriented with maximum relief provided to all sectors in the country.

Dr Muhammad Naem, former Chairman Economics Department, University of Peshawar told APP that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and their

finance team deserved full credit and appreciation for presenting a goal-oriented budget despite prevailing economic and fiscal challenges.

He appreciated the three-pronged strategy announced by the Finance Minister to reform the pension scheme in line with international best practices. He said after reforms in the pension scheme, the pension liability would be reduced considerably in the next three decades.

Dr Naem supported the proposal of launching a contributory pension scheme for new recruitment for which the government would deposit its share every month and praised the proposal of the pension fund.

Dr Muhammad Naem highly appreciated the strong 6.25 percent expansion in the agriculture sector of Pakistan as indicated by the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2023-24, which is the highest in 19 years.

**Retailers may face penalty for selling smuggled cigarettes**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The retailers may face penalty for selling fake, smuggled and non-taxpaid cigarettes as strict action has been proposed against such practices in the Federal Budget for the fiscal year 2024-2025. Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb proposed the strict action while presenting the Federal Budget 2024-25 in the National Assembly on Wednesday.

**Coca-Cola appoints Volkan as new VP for Pak & Afghanistan region**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coca-Cola Company has appointed Volkan Öngüç as new Vice President for Pakistan and Afghanistan of Eurasia & Middle East Operation Unit of the company.

Volkan's professional experience in commercial management, business development, and sales spans over two decades. His expertise in revenue growth management, both in Turkey and internationally, have been

a key asset for the Company since he joined in April 2021, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. Speaking about his vision for Coca-Cola Pakistan, Volkan Öngüç said, "I believe Pakistan is a country of immense potential with over \$1 billion invested in the country by the Coca-Cola System. This is truly a second home and has many similarities with my home country Türkiye, such as our love for music."



## Task forces to be formed to fight KP's case, address problems of universities: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi said that a task force comprising representatives of political parties would be formed to fight the case of the province.

He was talking to a representative delegation of Peshawar Press Club (PPC) led by its President Arshad Aziz Malik here Wednesday. The Governor said that the task force would be formed after consultation with political parties with an aim to fight the case of the province and to improve the education system.

He told that consultation process with political parties was underway and afterwards, political leadership would be contacted to nominate their representatives for inclusion in the task force.

He said that task force would prepare papers mentioning arguments and reasons, adding it would serve as a milestone for others and help getting rights of the province.

The KP Governor said that a similar task force would be constituted to address education sector and to resolve issues being faced by universities.

He also expressed concern over deteriorating standard of education in Edwards College and said that it was astonishing that provincial government was ignoring education sector and on the contrary, Punjab and Sindh governments have allocated a considerable amount of Rs. 6 billion and 20 billion respectively for universities.

He said that the Chairman State Life has also been directed to devise a strategy to resolve

pension issues in universities. The Governor said that, he was being informed that Peshawar-D I Khan Motorway was not executed according to the standard and its length has been increased without any reason. He accepted the invitation to visit PPC and said that he would also bring the Federal Information Minister to the Club. The delegation also invited Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to visit PPC. Earlier, the President PPC informed the Governor about the affairs of the Club, including strength of its members, audit system and medical facilities. He briefed the Governor about the working of the Capacity Building Committee of the Club and the amount provided to members on Eids and under the head of medical expenses.



PESHAWAR: Ambassador of Iran Reza Amiri Moghadam and Consul General Ali Banafshekhan called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi at Governor House Peshawar.

## US consul general Lahore meets Punjab law minister

LAHORE (APP): US Consul General Lahore Kristin K Hawkins on Wednesday met Minister for Law/Communication and Works Sohaib Ahmad Bharth at his office and discussed the matter of mutual interest.

Political Assistant Dukless and Secretary Communication and Works were also present.

The minister briefed that the Punjab government had been taking all measures for the protection of minorities living in Punjab, and it had been ensured that they

must have equal progress opportunities in the province.

The Punjab government was focusing on environmental issues and plantation drive he added and further disclosed that defamation law was very much beneficial to curb the fake news and in this regard Punjab government appreciated the constructive criticism. He further disclosed that all stakeholders were taken on board and their suggestions were considered at the time of formulation of the defamation law.

## Two arrested for packing fake engine oil

PESHAWAR (APP): The district administration on Wednesday arrested two people for packing fake engine oil and seized packing materials during the ongoing crackdown against adulteration.

According to the district administration, the relevant team conducted raids on GT Road Chughalpura, where two people were found packing counterfeit engine oil in the renowned brand's packaging material, and the warehouse was sealed.

A large quantity of counterfeit motor oil, estimated at 10,000 liters, intended for distribution.

## Youth dies in dumper, bike collision

SARGODHA (APP): A motorcyclist died after being hit by an over-speeding dumper, here on Wednesday.

Police said that a recklessly driven dumper knocked down Muhammad Asif Gujjar near Chak No 138-SB.

The deceased was a resident of Chak No 128-SB. The body was shifted to hospital for postmortem.

Sillanwali police have registered a case against the dumper driver and started investigation.

## PHC launches "Advocate's Case Diary" web application

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC), Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim on Wednesday launched a web application "Advocate's Case Diary" which went online on the official website of the Court.

Deployment of the web application marked a significant step forward in the modernization of the Judiciary, one that embraces the transformative power of technology.

The web application Advocate Case Diary is not just a software program but a bridge between tradition and innovation.

This web application streamlines processes and judicial procedures by making them more cost-

effective and efficient.

Some features of the web application, the Advocate Case Diary includes fixation of cases of each advocate on a calendar basis. Moreover, it will keep a record of all pending as well as decided cases of a particular advocate.

The web application has a feature to display all issued summonses in a particular case as well as show the complete fixation history of a particular case.

The advocates will have the facility to access all scanned records of their cases with added features like print and download options.

Besides facilitating the lawyers, the web application has the feature of displaying a real-time online cause list.



LAHORE: US Consul General in Lahore Kristin K. Hawkins meeting with Punjab Transport Minister Bilal Akbar Khan.

## NAB takes action on sugar broker's mysterious disappearance

LAHORE (APP): National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lahore Director General Amjad Majeed Aulakh takes swift action against a mega sugar scam by authorizing an instant inquiry into the disappearance of a sugar broker named Sheikh Rashid, who absconded with billions of rupees in investments from traders and sugar stockists across Punjab.

Keeping in view, a high-level investigation team has been constituted to probe the multibillion scam that has left countless investors of Punjab and

several cities of Sindh, in distress. As per details, the NAB investigation team's initial raids uncover a web of deceit by revealing warehouses and shops in Sadiqabad, being used to stock misappropriated commodities by accused Sheikh Rashid and his accomplices. Taking decisive action under Section 12 of NAO 1999, DG NAB freezes all properties and stocked commodities owned by the accused persons and appoints Assistant Commissioner (AC) Sadiqabad as "Receiver" for the frozen assets.



LAHORE: Provincial Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat and others in a group photo on the occasion of opening ceremony of Digital Education at a local hotel of the provincial capital.

## Provincial ombudsman chairs monthly review meeting

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Ombudsman, Syed Jamal Ud Din Shah while chairing the monthly review meeting of the secretariat said that administrative accountability and measures for the prevention of abuse of authority are vital for maintaining good governance.

citizen to file complaints against the misuse of power and authority by any government department. He said that the Ombudsman Secretariat, since its inception has followed the steps to further enhance efficiency and to produce qualitative results for the satisfaction of complainants.

## Pesco, police launch joint operation against power theft

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) and police on Wednesday launched a joint operation to curb power theft in the province. According to the PESCO spokesman, the KP police had provided the personnel and more than 800 policemen would collaborate with the company's teams in the field across all circles, divisions, and subdivisions of the company. Under the joint operation plan, the police force would accompany each SDO along with their respective staff in the field. He said that the operation was not only aimed at apprehending electricity thieves but also to impose fines and register cases against them. He hoped that the joint operation would lead to swift recovery of dues besides to decrease incidents of attacks.

## Indus Telemetry system launched to revolutionize irrigation system in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): In a landmark development, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government with support from the USAID and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI)—deployed the Indus Telemetry System across 11 main irrigation canals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

This cutting-edge technology will revolutionize water management and reporting

in the province's irrigation system.

Minister of Irrigation for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Aqib Ullah Khan officially launched the Indus Telemetry System at a ceremony held here on Wednesday.

"The deployment of the Indus Telemetry System marks a transformative step in our efforts to ensure sustainable water management and equitable distribution.

# International News

## Russia fires more missiles and drones at Ukraine ahead of diplomatic effort

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: Russian forces fired missiles and drones at the Kyiv region and five other areas of Ukraine in a nighttime attack, officials said Wednesday, ahead of several days of intense diplomatic activity around the war that is now in its third year.

Ukraine's air force said it shot down 29 out of 30 air targets, including four cruise missiles, one Kinzhal ballistic missile, and 24 Shahed drones. Several people were injured, authorities said.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy praised the air force's response, calling it a "daily achievement." He has repeatedly appealed to Ukraine's Western partners to provide more air defense systems, and the United States has agreed to send another Patriot missile system,

two U.S. officials said late Tuesday. How best to support Ukraine's efforts to stop Russia's invasion will be a central issue in international meetings in coming days.

Kyiv's outgunned and outnumbered forces are battling to hold back the bigger Russian army, which is trying to exploit Ukrainian vulnerabilities. Ukraine has been short of troops, ammunition and air defenses in recent months as the Kremlin's forces try to cripple the national power supply and punch through the front line in eastern parts of the country.

Ukraine will need to weather the Russian onslaught through the summer, military analysts say, and in the meantime train more soldiers, build fortifications and hope that the provision of Western military aid picks up speed so

that in 2025 Kyiv may be able to mount its own offensive.

Leaders of the Group of Seven rich democracies, including U.S. President Joe Biden, are due to gather Thursday in Italy for their annual summit to discuss how to squeeze more money for Ukraine from Russian assets frozen in their countries.

Also Thursday, defense chiefs from the U.S., Europe and other nations hold their monthly meeting on Ukraine's security needs. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is to host the event in Brussels.

Next weekend, representatives of nearly 90 countries and organizations, half from Europe, are to attend a Swiss-hosted Ukraine peace summit, which will take place without Russia.



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a UNRWA school sheltering displaced people, amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, in Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip.

## Hezbollah vows to escalate attacks after Israel kills a top commander

**Monitoring Desk**  
JERUSALEM: Hezbollah fired big barrages of rockets at Israel on Wednesday and vowed to ramp up its attacks in retaliation for an Israeli strike which killed a senior Hezbollah field commander, as the conflict along the Lebanese-Israeli border escalated sharply.

The Iran-backed Hezbollah and Israel have been trading fire since the eruption of the Gaza war in October, in steadily intensifying hostilities that have fuelled concern of a bigger confrontation between the heavily armed adversaries. The Israeli strike in the south Lebanon village of Jouaiyya late on

Tuesday killed three Hezbollah fighters alongside the senior field commander Taleb Abdallah, also known as Abu Taleb, Israel and three security sources in Lebanon said.

He was the most senior Hezbollah commander killed during eight months of hostilities, one of the sources said.

The Israeli military confirmed that it had killed him as well as the three other Hezbollah fighters in a strike on a command and control centre.

The sources in Lebanon said he was Hezbollah's commander for the central region of the southern border strip.

## Malawi VP, nine others killed in plane crash

**Monitoring Desk**  
LILONGWE: Malawi's Vice President Saulos Chilima was killed in a plane crash, the nation's president said on Tuesday, after searchers located the wreckage of the aircraft in a mist-shrouded forest.

The military plane carrying Chilima, 51, and nine others disappeared on Monday, after it failed to land in the northern city of Mzuzu due to bad weather and was told to return to the capital, Lilongwe. Photographs shared by a member of the military rescue team showed army personnel standing on a foggy slope near debris bearing the registration number.

## Kyiv hopes Russia will attend second Ukraine peace summit

**Monitoring Desk**  
GENEVA: Ahead of the first summit on peace in Ukraine, Kyiv said on Tuesday (July 11) it wanted Russia to attend a second summit, to receive an internationally agreed roadmap towards ending the conflict.

Moscow said it had no interest in joining this weekend's meeting and so was not invited by hosts Switzerland.

## Biden heads to G7 summit focused on Ukraine aid, China's support for Russia

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden flies to Italy on Wednesday for meetings with Group of Seven leaders aimed at increasing pressure on Russia over its war against Ukraine and China for its support of Moscow and excess industrial capacity.

The G7 leaders arrive at the summit confronting myriad woes at home even

as they seek solutions for many of the world's most pressing problems.

Biden, 81, spent Tuesday evening at his home in Wilmington, Delaware, after a 12-member jury convicted his son Hunter Biden of lying about his drug use to illegally buy a gun in 2018, making him the first child of a sitting US president to be convicted of a crime.

## Russian warships enter Havana harbor

**Monitoring Desk**  
HAVANA: Russian navy ships churmed into Havana harbor on Wednesday, a stopover the U.S. and Cuba said posed no threat but which was widely seen as a Russian show of force as tensions rise over the Ukraine war.

Small groups of fishermen and curious onlookers lined the Malecon seafont boulevard in light rain to welcome the ships as they passed the 400-year-old Morro castle at the harbor's entrance.

The first to arrive was a fuel ship, the "Akademik Pashin" and a tug, the "Nikolay Chiker," while a Russian navy frigate and nuclear-powered submarine waited offshore and were expected to enter the harbor by mid-morning.

The frigate and submarine, part of the group of four Russian

vessels that arrived off Cuba on Wednesday, had conducted missile drills in the Atlantic Ocean en route to the island, Russia's defence ministry said the previous day.

Cuba said last week that the visit was standard practice by naval vessels from countries friendly to Havana.

The communist-run government's foreign ministry said the ships carried no nuclear weapons, something echoed by U.S. officials.

"We have been monitoring the ships' paths closely," a U.S. official told Reuters on condition of anonymity late on Tuesday.

"At no point have the ships or submarine posed a direct threat to the United States."

Havana is just 100 miles (160 km) from Key West, Florida, home to a U.S. Naval Air Station.

## At least 41 die in a fire at a building housing workers in Kuwait

**Monitoring Desk**  
DUBAI: At least 41 people died when a fire swept through a building that housed workers in Kuwait early Wednesday, and officials said the blaze appeared to be linked to code violations.

Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah confirmed the toll and ordered the arrest of the building's owner during a visit to the site, local media reported.

"We will address the issue of labor overcrowding," he said. "I'm now going to see what violations were committed here and I will deal with the owner of the property."

Local media said scores of workers were

living in the building in the southern Mangaf district, without giving their nationality.

Col. Sayed Hassan al-Mousawi, head of the firefighters' Accident Investigation Department, said there were dozens of casualties and that the final death toll may be higher.

Kuwait, like other Persian Gulf countries, has a large community of migrant workers who far outnumber the local population.

The nation of some 4.2 million people is slightly smaller than the U.S. state of New Jersey but has the world's sixth-largest known oil reserves.

A fire at an oil refinery in 2022 killed four people.



## Shehbaz lauds Finland's support for UNSC non permanent membership

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday lauded Finland's support to Pakistan in winning a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for 2025-26.

In response to Finnish President Alexander Stubb's remarks on X, the prime minister appreciated their support to Pakistan and reiterated his country's resolve to work for upholding international law and the UN Charter.

Earlier, President Stubb had congratulated Pakistan, Denmark, Greece, Panama, and Somalia on winning the UN Security Council's non-permanent membership.

The Finnish president also extended best wishes to Pakistan, besides assuring collaboration in strengthening the UN and the international system.

### Khawaja Asif says:

## Pakistan views Azerbaijan important due to strategic location, immense resources

ISLAMABAD (APP): The minister highlighted the importance of bilateral brotherly relations between two countries which are based on historical, cultural and religious commonalities. He expressed the desire to enhance the relations in relevant fields, including defence, defence industry and aviation which have immense potential to grow to the benefit of both countries. He also impressed upon the need of continued interaction between higher military and defence level leadership of the two countries.

The minister expressed these remarks during a meeting with Ambassador of Azerbaijan, Khazar Farhadov, who called on him here on Wednesday, a news release said.



KARACHI: Business community listening the budget speech on a Multimedia Screen at Karachi Chamber of Commerce (KCCI).

## Commissioner chairs DEC meeting

HYDERABAD (APP): A meeting of the Divisional Enforcement Committee established for the prevention of electricity theft under the chairmanship of Commissioner Shaheed Benazirabad Division Syed Muhammad Sajjad Haider was held today in his office.

Sajjad Haider said that consumers involved in electricity theft and who have not paid their electricity bills for a long time are guilty not only of the country but also of the citizens who pay their bills on time.

Commissioner while giving instructions to the officers of HESCO and SEPCO said that open courts should be held every month to listen to the complaints of the people and solve them. In this regard, full support will be provided by the divisional and district administration and the police.

The commissioner further said that the focal person for providing accurate data regarding the operations done by the WAPDA administration and other issues.

## Meeting reviews security situation in Larkana on Eid ul Azha.

LARKANA (APP): Deputy Commissioner Larkana Sharjeel Noor Channa chaired a meeting in the Conference Hall of Larkana Municipal Corporation (LMC) here Wednesday to review the law and order situation in the city. The meeting was also attended by Mayor of Larkana Mayor Anwar Ali Luhar and SSP Mir Rohal Khan Khoso.

Municipal Commissioner Javed Abbasi briefed about the security plan for Eid-ul-Azha and deployment of personnel at municipal and Genso (Chinese) Company collection campus on Eid-ul-Azha.



HYDERABAD: Business community listening and watching to the budget speech on large screen from Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb presenting federal budget at chamber of commerce.

## Sindh Govt seeks AKU's support for reforms in Education Boards

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Government has sought technical assistance from Agha Khan University (AKU) for the reforms in educational boards of the province.

This was agreed upon by both the parties in a meeting held between Provincial Minister for Universities and Boards Muhammad Ali Malkani and President of Agha Khan University Suleman Shahabuddin here at minister's office on Wednesday.

According to statement, the meeting was also attended by Advisor AKU ex-Ambassador Jamil Khan, Secretary Universities & Boards Muhammad Abbas Baloch, Director (P&D) Zulfiqar Ali Kandhro and other officers.

Muhammad Ali Malkani appreciated and lauded the services rendered by Prince Kareem Aga Khan and his ancestors for the social development of different communities through Agha Khan Foundation and other agencies of Agha Khan Development Network. He also acknowledged the educational and technical expertise of the Agha Khan educational board and sought their assistance in the improvement of the workings of educational boards working under Sindh Government. The AKU President Suleman Shahabuddin agreed to collaborate and assist in the reformation of educational boards on the pattern of the Agha Khan Educational Board. In this regard, a detailed meeting will be scheduled to formulate a comprehensive strategy for the reformation of the examination system in the Province.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs Parliamentary Party meeting of Muslim League (PML-N), held at Parliament House in Islamabad.

## Govt to set up NDC, DPA for promoting digital transformation: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday announced allocation of Rs 1 billion in the Federal Budget 2024-25 for establishing the National Digital Commission (NDC) and the Digital Pakistan Authority (DPA).

The minister, in his budget speech in the National Assembly, said, "The objective of this initiative is to promote digital transformation, innovations and digital solutions in various departments."

He said that the government had a full focus on promoting the Information Technology sector as with targeted investment it had the potential to yield significant profits in a short time.

He projected that with the talented Pakistani youth and the government's IT-friendly policies, Pakistan's IT exports would reach \$3.5 billion.

He said Rs 79 billion had been allocated for the Information Technology sector in the budget.

He said out of the total IT sector allocation, Rs 7 billion was specified for digitalization and reforms in the Federal Board of Revenue.

Modern IT systems would be installed at the FBR to expand the tax net base and remove loopholes in the tax collection system.

He said Rs 11 billion had been earmarked for the Technology Park Development Project in Islamabad.

The minister said an allocation of Rs 2 billion was proposed for the Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), which would be used to encourage the IT sector exporters and support the IT firms providing internships to students.

Furthermore, the minister said, Rs 20 billion had been proposed for the Digital Infrastructure Information.

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## Govt vows to ease public burden: Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, said on Wednesday that the country's economic indicators were showing a positive trajectory and were expected to improve further.

Talking to a private news channel, he acknowledged the public hardships but assured that the situation would gradually get better.

He noted a decrease in inflation and expressed optimism about continued positive outcomes in the coming days.

The minister reiterated the government's commitment to providing relief to the public within the limits of available resources.

He said that relying on borrowing relief followed by more loans was not a sustainable long-term solution, as it only added to the country's financial burden. Instead, he advocated for economic reforms aimed at achieving long-term positive results.

"The focus will be on implementing reforms that do not increase the burden on the poor but rather provide relief," he said.

He reiterated the need for a strategic approach of economic reforms to ensure sustainable economic growth and stability.

## Govt proposes ban on foreign travel of non-filers in budget

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government has decided to tighten noose for non-tax filer, proposing a ban on their foreign traveling.

The non-filers will have to pay 75 percent tax on mobile phone calls as proposed in the budget. The sources said that there is also a proposal to end the tax exemption on electric vehicles worth more than USD 50,000.

The federal government has also suggested levying additional tax on non-filers in order to bring them in the tax net. The FBR is aiming to create tax revenue through the enforcement.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has blocked SIM cards of the non-filers in the first phase and their electricity and gas connections might also be disconnected in the second phase.

"In case of no reply from them, the non-filers mobile phone SIMs, electricity and gas will be disconnected," according to sources.



SUKKUR: Mayor Sukkur, Barrister Arsalan Shaikh addresses to media persons during press conference regarding the facilities provided to citizens in cattle market, held in Sukkur.

## Municipal Commissioner Saddar visits basketball courts; assures full facilities to players

KARACHI (APP): Municipal Commissioner of Saddar Town, Noor Hassan Jochio has said that there is a need to take strong measures for the development and promotion of such sports which have been neglected in the past.

By participating in international competitions, the players can get a place on the victory podiums, he said.

He expressed these views on the occasion of the inspection of the basketball courts at Wajid Shamsul Hasan Family Park in Clifton and the Abdul Nasir Basketball Court at Aram Bagh Park.

Municipal Commissioner Noor Hassan Jochio further said that the importance of youth in a healthy society cannot be denied. "Our effort is not only to increase the playing fields but also to provide more facilities in the existing grounds so that more and more players can have opportunities to unearth their talent and enhance their skills", he added.

The administration of Saddar Town has started several projects for the construction and development of parks and sports grounds by using the available resources, the completion of which will increase the facilities available to the people for sightseeing and entertainment, and also eliminate the problem of encroachment, he maintained. Noor Hassan Jochio emphasised that after the 100 per cent completion of the renovation, the youth of the area will have the best facilities for playing basketball near their homes and they can learn the basic and modern techniques of this game under the supervision of their senior coaches.



HYDERABAD: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) Chairperson, Asad Iqbal Butt along with others addresses to media persons during press conference held at Hyderabad press club.

## Hyderabad police finalised comprehensive security plan for Eid ul-Azha

HYDERABAD (APP): The Hyderabad Police have implemented comprehensive security measures across the Hyderabad range on the occasion of Eid ul-Azha, and a total of 8,168 police officers and personnel have been assigned Eid duties.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Hyderabad Tariq Razaque Dharejo has issued directives to all SSPs of the range to ensure compliance with the Sindh government's code of conduct for collecting sacrificial animals. He urged the safety of life and property of the citizens should be ensured at any cost. According to a police spokesperson, as per directives of the DIG Hyderabad 2130 police officers and personnel will be deployed at 1382 mosques in nine districts of Hyderabad range, and 368 at 205 Imambargahs, 1472 police personnel will perform duties at 307 Eid gahs.

Additionally, 255 personnel will be stationed at 49 open Eid prayer sites, 294 at 33 recreational spots and 254 at 30 cattle markets. On the other hand, 79 police personnel will be deployed at 34 collection points of animal hides, 476 at 57 busy markets/shopping centres, 806 at 332 police pickets, 1067 on 216 police mobiles and 318 personnel will perform their duties on motorcycles.

Moreover, a standby force of 649 personnel will be available to respond to any untoward incidents.

## Eid Security Plan ready: SSP Sukkur

SUKKUR (APP): Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Sukkur, Amjad Shaikh on Wednesday said that over 2000 personnel would be deputed in Sukkur city to ensure security during the Eid holidays.

Special Eid security plan ready security personnel had been deployed in cattle markets, he said. SSP said special focus would be made on the protection of the minorities' places of worship. He said the police's special snap checking teams had become active on major roads leading to Sukkur city. He said the 15 force would patrol round the clock. Amjad Shaikh said all police officials would remain on duty due to security threats. He said, "Security measures have been finalized and a strict security plan chalked-out to avoid any untoward situation in the district."

SSP Shaikh said that he had already directed the deployment of police personnel on various sensitive points/places to ensure the law and order situation and control snatching and stole of motor bikes.

## Hina Khar demands 'collective wisdom, supportive policies of agriculture in budget 2024-25'

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan People's Party Senior leader Hina Khar Wednesday said that her party always played a responsible role in the country and always been a strong voice for the rights of neglected segment of society.

Talking to media in the Parliament, she said in budget 2024-25 PPP has once again demanded government for supportive policies for agriculture sector.

"We also demanded significant measures to support the poor and middle-income groups in the upcoming budget", she added.

She said President Zardari also deliberated on various strategies to alleviate the economic burden on the poor and middle classes in the forthcoming fiscal plan.

"We also demanded significant measures to support the poor and middle-income groups in the upcoming budget", she added.

She said that we are supporting government in right direction for economic and political stability in the country, adding, PPP will add some of its proposals related to public welfare issues in the budget. "We will settle the issues with dialogue," she added.



ISLAMABAD: Women scuffle with the police during a protest to demand rise in wage and pension, whilst they march towards the National Assembly in the Federal Capital, before Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb presents the country's annual budget for fiscal year 2024-25.

## Broad tax base required to alleviate public sufferings: Mian Zahid

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain has said it is not possible to provide any relief to the masses and business community as taxes worth 4000 billion rupees are not being collected.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, he said the new budget was expected to set a revenue target of 12900 billion rupees, 3500 billion rupees more than the current target. The sales tax rate was also likely to increase.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that if the difference between filers and non-filers was not removed in the new budget, the economy will not be fully digitized, and the tax base will not increase by five percent; then, the budget measures will affect the public, the salaried class, and the tax-paying business community.

The current tax system relies on indirect taxes and targets the commoner while rewarding tax evaders, he added.

The business leader said that in the presence of skewed taxation, the country's development was impossible.

He said that a series of measures have been initiated to manage the country's economy, and good results have come out. Inflation has come down; agricultural production has increased substantially, imports have decreased, and exports have increased slightly, bringing Pakistan's current account out of deficit. Despite the efforts, some sections were not ready to pay any tax, so the policy of transferring the entire burden to the taxpayers has been adopted, which has broken the backs of the people.

On the other hand, non-tax-paying and tax-dodging sectors, including property, agricultural income, professionals, wholesalers, and retailers, were flourishing.



HYDERABAD: Vendors selling sacrificial animals at Hathri bypass.