

# Independent

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**GWADAR:** President Asif Ali Zardari chairing a meeting on the security and law and order situation of Balochistan.

## President for enhanced capacity of LEAs to counter terror in Balochistan

*Says prosecution system needed to be improved so that the terrorist elements could not escape justice*

Independent Report

GWADAR: President Asif Ali Zardari has called for enhancing the capacity of the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), posting competent officers in Balochistan, and improving the prosecution mechanism to effectively counter terrorist elements in Balochistan.

The President expressed these views while chairing a meeting on the security/law and order situation in Balochistan, in Gwadar, on Thursday.

Minister for Interior, Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, MNA Malik Shah Gorgaj, Home Minister, Mir Ziaullah Langov, MPA Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, senior civil and military officials attended the meeting.

The President was briefed about the overall security situation of the province as well as the role of LEAs in successfully countering terrorist attacks in various dis-

tricts of Balochistan.

It was informed that the provincial government had adopted a targeted approach to improve the security and law-and-order situation in Balochistan. It was further apprised that the initiatives taken by the LEAs had resulted in improving the security situation in the province. The President was informed that the provincial government was taking steps to provide fool-proof security to Chinese and foreign nationals.

The President appreciated the efforts of the provincial government as well as the sacrifices of the LEAs in combating terrorism.

Speaking on the occasion, the President said that the prosecution system needed to be improved so that the terrorist elements could not escape justice. He said that compensation for the families of martyrs of LEAs in Balochistan should be enhanced bringing it at par with the rest of the provinces.

## All stakeholders have to create national consensus for dev. of Balochistan, stresses CM

Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti calls for expediting collective efforts to cope with menace of terrorism

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has underlined the need to create national consensus for development of the province. He stressed that all the stakeholders would have to come forward and create national consensus for development of the province.

He also stressed the need to expedite the collective efforts to cope with the menace of terrorism in the province.

He also stressed that we have to impart valuable

skills to the people of the bordering areas.

The Chief Minister was speaking at the meeting held under the chair of President Asif Ali Zardari on law and order and development projects in the province, during his visit to Gwadar on Thursday.

The President was briefed about the law and order situation besides development projects in the province.

The Chief Minister on the occasion hailed the special attention and visits of the President Zardari to the province and said that the people of

Balochistan are feeling well because of the repeated visits of the President. He said that the people of province value his love and affection a lot.

Highlighting the strategy prepared for development of the province, Chief Minister said that the historic programme of Benazir Bhutto Scholarship Programme has been started for promotion of the education in Balochistan.

The quota has been allocated for all segments of the society including minorities in the programme, so that the backward seg-

ments may have the opportunities to move ahead, he added.

Besides, the viable policies are being prepared to put the health sector on the modern lines under public-private partnership in light of the directives of Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Extraordinary resources are being allocated for health and education sectors in the provincial budget, adding he mentioned.

Similarly, the provincial government has prepared the project for providing job opportunities to some 30,000 youngsters during next couple of years.

In addition to this, we would also provide suitable assistance to the unemployed graduates by providing them the interest-free loans.

Referring the welfare of fishermen of Gwadar, Mir Sarfraz Bugti mentioned that exceptional measures are being taken for welfare of the local fishermen.

While the provincial government has issued directives for provision of the security and other facilities to the zayreen at Pak-Iran border. He made pledge to mobilize all available resources to meet expectations of people they have from the elected government.



**ISLAMABAD:** A delegation of Pakistan People's Party headed by Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif

## Armed men kidnap 10 Punjab residents from Quetta

QUETTA (INP): Unidentified armed men kidnapped 10 people hailing from Punjab from Shuban picnic point in Zarghon Ghar, Quetta.

According to details, armed men took 16 people hostage who were enjoying at Shuban picnic point in Zarghon Ghar. The DG Levies said the armed men released six hostages after checking their Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs).

The ten people who have been abducted include a Customs Officer and others, who are residents of Punjab province.

The search for the abductees has begun by the law enforcement agencies.

## Pakistan, Turkiye agree to further deepen bilateral cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday held a telephone conversation on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha to exchange Eid greetings with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkiye Hakan Fidan.

The two ministers reviewed the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Turkiye, a Foreign Office press release said.

## Chinese Minister arrives Islamabad on three-day visit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC) Liu Jianchao arrived here Thursday on a three-day visit.

He was received at the Islamabad International Airport by Additional Foreign Secretary (Asia & Pacific) Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, a Foreign Office press release said.

Minister Liu Jianchao will call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and hold extensive bilateral talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

## PM urges political parties to work together for development

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has urged all the political parties to work together for the development and prosperity of the country and public welfare.

He was talking to a delegation of Pakistan People's Party headed by Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari that called on him in Islamabad today. The delegation included Chairman Senate Yusuf Raza Gilani, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Syed Khurshid Shah, Syed Naveed Qamar and Sherry Rehman. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari held discussions national political issues.

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister said further consultation was held with Pakistan Peoples Party regarding the budget 2024-2025. He said economy is showing positive indicators while stock market has witnessed historic boom.

The Prime Minister said steps have been taken to provide relief to the common man in the budget of the new financial year. He said more consultation will continue through committees.

A dinner was given by the Prime Minister in honour of the Pakistan Peoples Party delegation.

Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar were also present in the meeting.

## Tarar regrets 'smear campaign' against Pak-China friendship by a political party on Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Thursday took exception to a "smear campaign" launched by a specific political party against the Pakistan-China friendship on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha. Addressing a news conference, the minister brushed aside the propaganda against Pakistan-China friendship particularly surrounding the upgradation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

"Undoubtedly, the lobbies against the Pakistan-China friendship are active, and are completely perturbed by the CPEC's upgradation, but such both attempts are destined to fail," he added.

The minister said the government fully understood that some powers

## Promulgating presidential ordinance is insult of parliament: CJP

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has sent appeals from Election Commission (EC) against Lahore High Court (LHC) decision regarding constitution of election tribunals to judges committee.

Committee will constitute larger bench next week in respect of these appeals. SC has issued notice to Attorney General (AG) besides seeking details about constitution of tribunals in other provinces from EC.

The Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has remarked the matter be placed before the committee as soon as possible.

Promulgating presidential ordinance is insult of the parliament. If ordinance has to be brought then shut the parliament. How can the change be made through presidential ordinance. On one side parliament has enacted law. How can the ordinance be brought after enactment of law by parliament.

What was reason for bringing ordinance? Was there any emergency. The ordinance came from where after the enactment of law by parliament. This is too interference in election. Election act was desire of parliament.



**LAHORE:** Director Hajj Punjab Muhammad Rizwan Sharif, Deputy Director Hajj Lahore Mubeen Shah and others welcoming Hajj pilgrims and garlanding them with flowers.

## Balochistan's budget for next FY to be presented in BA's session today

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Balochistan's budget for the next financial year 2024-25 is scheduled to be presented in the provincial assembly's session today (Friday).

The Provincial Minister for Finance, Mir Shoaib Nausherwani would be tabling the provincial budget for the next financial year.

It may be mentioned here that the Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has summoned the budget session of provincial assembly at 04:00 PM today.

During the budget session, the Minister for Finance would also table the supplementary budget for the current financial year 2023-24.

The budget session of provincial assembly would remain continued till June

29, 2024. According to the sources of Finance department, Government of Balochistan, the total volume of the provincial budget is expected to be around Rs. 850 billion.

The sources of Finance department informed that the province is expected to receive Rs. 647 billion from the divisible pool.

The estimates of non-development expenditures are proposed as Rs. 620 billion in the provincial budget.

The sources of Finance department said that 25 percent increase has been proposed in salaries of the government employees from Grade 1 to 16. Similarly, the 20 percent increase has been proposed in salaries of the employees from Grade 17 to 22.

## 35 Pakistani pilgrims fall a victim to scorching heat during Hajj, say authorities

RIYADH (INP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs has confirmed deaths of 35 Pakistani pilgrims.

According to Hajj Mission DG Abdul Wahab Soomro, nine Pakistanis died in Mashair, four in Mina, three in Arafat and two in Muzdalifah.

The Hajj DG says 20 Pakistani pilgrims lost their lives in Makkah and six in Medina.

The DG said the deaths were caused by intense temperature of 50 degrees Celsius. He said the allegation that the pilgrims were not taken care of was unfounded.

He said the dead bodies were notified by the Saudi government and arrangements of burials were made in accordance with wishes of the families of the deceased. Arrangements of bringing the bodies to Pakistan had also been made, Soomro said.

The Saudi government, he said, had always cooperated with the Pakistan government in such matters.

## PM grieved over martyrdom of Hujjaj in Makkah

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday expressed deep sorrow and grief over the tragic incident in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, which resulted in the loss of precious lives of Hujjaj, including some from Pakistan.

The prime minister, in a statement, directed the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pakistan's Embassy in Saudi Arabia to ensure provision of best possible medical care to the Pakistani Hajj pilgrims who were admitted in hospitals.

He talked to Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Religious Affairs Chaudhary Salik Hussain and Pakistan's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Ahmed Farooq in Makkah and directed them to make arrangements for shifting of the bodies of martyred Hajj pilgrims to Pakistan.



**GWADAR:** President Asif Ali Zardari being welcomed by Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti and Commander 12 Corps Lt General Rahat Naseem Ahmed Khan, upon his arrival.

## Grand public meeting at Chaman Parlat: We would not accept passport policy at Durand Line, assets Mehmood Khan Achakzai

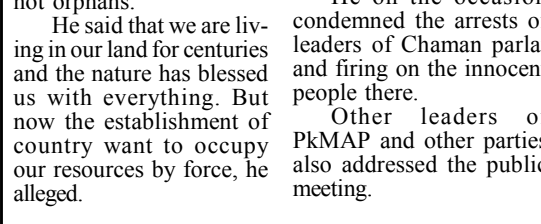
Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chairman Pashtoonkhaw Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) and Head of Tahafuz Aayeen Pakistan Tehreek, Mehmood Khan Achakzai has categorically stated that we are not going to accept the policy of passport on Durand Line at all.

He said that the solution to save the country lies in implementation on the constitution by all stakeholders. Mehmood Khan Achakzai was addressing grand protest public gathering in Chaman on Thursday.

The Chairman PkMAP said that those attacking our innocent children should mend their way as they are not orphans.

He said that we are living in our land for centuries and the nature has blessed us with everything. But now the establishment of country want to occupy our resources by force, he alleged.



**ISLAMABAD:** Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC), Liu Jianchao being received at the Islamabad International Airport by Additional Foreign Secretary.

# Daily Voice of Masses Independent

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## Killing of terrorist commander in Afghanistan

Certainly, the killing of a high value target terrorist commander Abdul Manan alias Hakimullah in Afghanistan is a serious blow to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a designated global terrorist group, involved in multiple acts of terrorism including target killings, IED blasts against security forces and other heinous crimes like extortion.

According to the reports, the terrorist Commander Abdul Manan alias Hakimullah was neutralized by unknown men in Chagasarai, District Asadabad, Kunar province of Afghanistan the other day.

Needless to mention is that Abdul Manan also remained involved in facilitating terrorist activities in different areas of the country including Bajaur.

He was an important figure of TTP and member of TTP Shura Malakand, who is reported to be a close associate of TTP's Malakand Chapter Commander Azmat Ullah Mehsood (Azmat Lala).

As per the reports, Abdul Manan remained involved in multiple acts of terror including target killings, IED blasts against Security Forces, extortion and played a key role in facilitating terrorist activities in Bajaur.

The reports coming from across the border suggest that Abdul Manan's killing is result of internal conflicts within different groups operating inside Afghanistan. His presence in Afghanistan further reinforced TTP's use of Afghan soil to perpetrate terrorism in Pakistan.

Pakistan has mentioned time and again that the fugitive commanders and combatants of the TTP are using havens in Afghanistan to launch deadly cross-border attacks against Pakistanis, including security forces.

As a matter of fact, a report released by The Washington-based Center for a New American Security last month had mentioned that the TTP and other regional militant groups "are active and face few constraints on their activities from the Taliban—with whom they share core ideological beliefs."

The study warned that terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan "are intensifying and an Afghan-based Islamic State affiliate, the Islamic State-Khorasan, or IS-K, "constitutes the main international concern."

The given situation although manifests bad governance by the so-called government in Afghanistan but still needs prompt action against the terrorist groups operating inside country and using the soil for the cross-border attacks against Pakistan.

Undoubtedly, it would be a test case for the Taliban regime to take result-oriented action against the terrorists' groups and prove their ability to improve governance in the country.

### Ali Tauqeer Sheikh

The finance bill or proposed budget for the next fiscal year has refused to commit any resources or even set the national direction for climate resilience.

It has failed to acknowledge that Pakistan is one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, and perhaps the least prepared. It has missed, once again, the opportunity to determine the course of action for Pakistan's sustainable economic development. Worse, the proposed budget has not outlined a vision for climate-resilient investments.

The finance bill has not shown any particular appetite for institutional or policy reforms that could help stop the economic bleeding caused by repeated climate-induced disasters or the slow onset that is threatening GDP growth rate and per capita incomes. Ironically, despite heavy losses, Pakistan has not explicitly adopted climate considerations into the budgetary process.

The government has, instead, opted for a simplistic formula for generating

tax and non-tax revenues, particularly by cutting subsidies. Economic development is a secondary target, and climate-resilient development is not even on the horizon. As seen in several other countries, the government can ensure that public finance is aligned with climate change mitigation and adaptation goals.

The Planning Commission has still not embedded adaptation and mitigation in PC-1s that are the backbone of annual public sector investments. The finance ministry has not initiated the tracking of climate expenditures, despite attempts over the years by several development partners. The office of the Accountant General Pakistan Revenues has not climate-proofed reporting of federal transactions, nor has the Auditor General upgraded its auditing standards and disclosure rules.

The FBR is not tracking and reporting climate-related tax expenditures, nor has it supported the development of climate-resilient infrastructure by ensuring that tax policies and regulations promote investments in climate-resilient projects and infrastructure. In fact, none of the major govern-

ment players have strengthened climate-smart budgeting by embedding climate considerations into their processes. These lacunae are mirrored in the provincial budgets.

Some of Pakistan's neighbours have begun to climate-proof their annual budgets. Bangladesh is now graduating from least developed country status to become, like Pakistan, a low-middle income country. It stands out for its long journey towards human development and climate resilience. As part of broader efforts to mainstream climate finance across its public financial management systems, Bangladesh set up the Climate Change Trust Fund in 2010 with a governmental equity of \$350 million. Designed to help communities recover from climate disasters by supporting the construction of houses in cyclone-affected areas, the CCTF has supported the construction of embankments and provision of solar home systems.

While our finance bill has announced the government's intent to set up a similar fund, following the Climate Change Act of 2017, the finance minister

has clouded its future by not committing any equity from the government, without which it will remain a fictional fund.

Another example is the Climate Fiscal Framework that Bangladesh has implemented since 2014. Revised in 2022, the CFF emphasises institutional coordination between the planning, finance and other divisions to ensure effective implementation of climate fiscal policies and programmes. The CFF is designed to ensure that their vulnerabilities are integrated into national development and resource mobilisation strategies. It made way in 2018 for a budget-tagging system that tracks and reports on all climate-related expenditures, enabling them to identify, classify, and mark climate-relevant allocations in the budget system. There is a lesson for Pakistan: such tracking systems not only help improve policymaking to address climate vulnerabilities, but also add to transparency and accountability in its budgeting.

A climate-smart budget would typically rest on five anchors: i) an assessment of the potential impacts of climate change on different sec-

tors and regions, ii) a mechanism to track and report on related expenditures, iii) an alignment with national policies and targets, such as the Nationally Determined Contributions, iv) prioritising resource allocation for mitigation, adaptation, and resilience-building, and v) accessing domestic and international climate finance to fill the resource gaps.

In other words, rather than treating it as a stand-alone issue, Pakistan needs to integrate its climate considerations into the overall budget-planning processes. Governments across the world are routinely focusing on domestic financing through national budget reallocations, the establishment of national/subnational climate funds, and partnerships with the local private sector, civil society, and local authorities. No such intent is outlined in the proposed budget. Likewise, the budget bill has not committed to systematically pursuing innovative green finance mechanisms, such as green bonds, green loans, and green guarantees to mobilise climate finances.

True, Pakistan's fiscal space is narrow, yet we still

follow traditional debt relief involving rescheduling, forgiving, or reducing a portion of a country's debt, often through bilateral or multilateral agreements. This approach focuses on reducing debt burdens without necessarily addressing environmental and climate concerns. Debt-for-climate swaps, on the other hand, involve converting debt into funds dedicated to environmental conservation and climate mitigation. This approach addresses both debt distress and climate change by redirecting debt payments towards climate-smart projects.

Several developing countries have used debt-for-climate swaps to finance climate projects. This approach focuses on reducing debt burdens without necessarily compromising environmental or climate concerns. Debt-for-climate swaps, on the other hand, involve converting debt into funds dedicated to environmental conservation and climate change mitigation. This can help address both debt distress and climate change by redirecting debt payments towards climate projects. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Accounting for change

### Khurram Husain

The resistance to change in Pakistan is an old problem but it wears a new face every few years. These days the resistance to change is wearing the face of an accounting problem. In other words, everything from our debt management to reforms in the power sector and tax machinery appears to us as little more than an accounting problem.

This resistance to change has been the country's key defining theme for decades now. It was laid down by Ghulam Ishaq Khan as the principal strategy with which the country would deal with the massive changes sweeping the world, starting in the 1980s and accelerating through the 1990s. GIK and a small coterie of bureaucrats around him, including but not limited to people like A.G.N. Kazi, H.U. Beg, V.A. Jafarey, Saeed Qureshi, I.A. Hanfi among others, practically ran Pakistan's economic management in those years.

They were serious men, rightly famous for

their professionalism and intellect, and they operated like an exclusive club of power-wielding civil servants where admission was by invitation only. Mahbub ul Haq hovered on the outer edges of this group, a one-man army, trying to champion change at a time when this coterie manned the ramparts to keep all change at bay and protect the status quo.

What was the change they were trying to keep at arm's length? In a nutshell, it was the declining ability of the state to shoulder all the responsibilities it had picked up, first during the heady growth years of the 1960s, and then again following the disastrous nationalisations of the 1970s.

From financing the development of the country's infrastructure to maintaining a pricing regime for agriculture and energy, to deciding who gets how much credit and on what terms, and who gets to invest how much and where, and fetch what returns on that investment, the state played an overriding role in the country's economy in

those days. And this coterie of bureaucrats selected all winners and losers in the economy.

Pakistan was not alone in facing this pressure for change in those days. It was near universal. Around the world, governments were finding their power to hold a pre-eminent position in all national economic decision-making challenged. Some responded by digging in, others by searching for a way out, and yet others by trying to externalise the costs of staying the course. It was not until the late 1980s and the early 1990s that proper reform strategies began to appear in the global conversation about breaking out of this confinement and finding new ways for economic growth to continue.

Crucially, those strategies included a template for tax and power sector reforms. But they also included a more general withdrawal of the state from areas administering pricing, credit allocations, ownership of commercial enterprises and more. Taken together, these strategies came to be called 'the

Washington Consensus'.

In those days, GIK laid the foundations of how Pakistan would tackle the growing crisis of state and economy. It was his approach to first agree to wide-ranging reforms, then find ways to blunt their impact, stymie their implementation and where necessary, simply renege on commitments once the funds promised under the agreements had been released.

The first Benazir Bhutto government was overwhelmed by the scale of the challenges it had to face — the aftermath of the Afghan jihad was smouldering to the west, while to the east, an Indian arms build-up had drained Pakistan's coffers. A bankrupt economy at home and a strident IMF programme signed by the interim government prior to her taking power necessitated structural reforms so deep that governments since her time have struggled to implement them.

The first Nawaz Sharif government brought in some of the changes envisaged. They changed the debt management strategy, brought in

the first non-DMG State Bank governor in the person of Muhammad Yaqub, undertook the first privatisation, liberalised trade, passed the Sales Tax Act (by a sleight of hand where they disguised it under a money bill), and opened up the capital account to free up the flow of capital into and out of the country. They also successfully wrested control of economic policy from GIK and his coterie and brought their own people into key positions, such as Sartaj Aziz and Ishaq Dar.

This is what lay at the heart of the big fight between president Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Nawaz Sharif, ending eventually with both being brought down. But what started as a fight over changing the direction of the economy, eventually became little more than a changing of the guard. The reforms of the first Nawaz Sharif government were not built to do much, other than spur short-term growth, and encourage an inflow of dollars through the foreign currency deposit scheme that became an albatross around the

government's neck by the end of the decade.

What emerged from all this is a type of economic management that today goes under the name of 'Daronomics', and whose principal aim is not that different from that of GIK. Daronomics aims to find ways to retain the state's pre-eminent role in the economy, while allowing enough space to private sector energies to continue the process of investment and growth. This strategy rarely works, and when it does, it racks up a tremendous bill that eventually lands up in the fiscal and public debt part of national accounts. The challenge of our times has been to find a way to pull the state out of this role and, instead, have empowered regulators to safeguard the public interest. But the nature of the political power struggle in our country is such that all power has to flow upwards and be subservient to the requirements of this struggle. The non-stop struggle for power has paralysed the state at the top, and stymied its attempt to develop a sound reform strategy.

## Food, with thought

### F.S. Aijazuddin

It is not a novel idea: which interesting personality would you want to share a meal with? From 2012, The New York Times has run a weekly column 'By the Book', in which famous authors are asked to identify three writers (dead or alive) they would like to invite for a literary dinner. Predictably, most choose William Shakespeare — provided he spoke modern English.

Even earlier, since 1994, the UK's Financial Times ran its series 'Lunch with the FT', in which a singularly important living personality was invited for an interview over lunch at a location of their choice, at FT's expense. Out of 1,000 or so lunches, the FT selected 50 interviews, publishing them as Lunch with the FT — A Second Helping (2019).

Intended to be a one-to-one, the FT occasionally had to pay for accompanying security details. One brought five guards. Modest by Pakistani standards, where no leaders worth their salt travel without a 50-strong police escort, not counting the ambulance team.

Not every interviewee honoured FT's open-palmed largesse. The newspaper tycoon Richard Desmond, for example, ordered a bottle of wine before the FT host could open the menu. It cost £580.

The Brexit spoiler Nigel Farage (who now threatens to disrupt the forthcoming UK general elections) preferred to drink before, during and after his meal, and then between meals.

Donald Trump for his interview in 2013 chose his own Trump Grill, in the basement of his own Trump Towers on Fifth Avenue, New

York. The bill for two came to a modest \$74.

His fellow American Edward Snowden released CIA's and NSA's classified documents to The Guardian and to The Washington Post and then had to seek asylum in Russia. (Putin has since granted him Russian nationality.) Snowden asked his interviewer Alan Rusbridger (formerly editor-in-chief of The Guardian) to meet him in the latter's room in the secluded Golden Apple Hotel in Moscow.

Snowden's choice of food was unexpected: spicy chicken curry, followed by ice cream. His trenchant remarks about the limited choices before the US voter in 2016 — Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton — will resonate among voters of recent elections across the world. He complained: "We're a country of 330 million people and we seem to be asked to make a choice between individuals whose lives are defined by scandal."

Particularly moving is the interview with the juvenile Bana al-Abed, trapped at Aleppo in the war between the Syrian regime and opposition militias. In the absence of coverage by journalists, she became the voice from the carnage through her Twitter feeds, managed by her mother.

Especially poignant were her tweets in December 2016: "My name is Bana. I am seven years old. This is my last moment to live or die." Earlier she had posted: "I am sick now, I have no medicine, no home, no clean water. This will make me die before a bomb kills me." She spoke for every child in Gaza.

Readers of the FT book who savour the pickle of corruption should read the interview with Sepp Blatter, the controversial head of FIFA

1998-2016. He admits being startled at the 14-8 decision in December 2010 to award the Soccer World Cup 2022 to Qatar. He had tried to rig the vote 'behind the scenes' to ensure that the 2018 and 2022 competitions would go to the 'two superpowers' Russia and the US.

Blatter griped that French president Sarkozy had let him down. After an indecent interval, in April 2015, Qatar bought 24 French Dassault Rafale jets for \$7 billion. (Pakistanis will recognise overtones in the infamous French Agosta 90B submarine deal in 1994. Sarkozy was then budget minister.)

Many of the FT interviews themselves border on literature. The novelist Hilary Mantel who has written best-sellers on the Tudors and Thomas Cromwell was asked whether she was the greatest English prose writer. Her reply was artfully simple: "You're only as good as your next sentence."

The best interview — it is a personal view — is the one of Roger Federer by Simon Kuper, conducted on board a private jet flying from Zurich to Madrid. Federer talks movingly about balancing the demands of world-class tennis with the imperative of playing Lego with his young son.

Kuper concludes with this paragraph that is an ace in itself: "Federer throws an arm around me, and I put my hand on his back. Every other back I've touched felt like a single undefined mass. On Federer's back you feel every bone and muscle. It's like reading an anatomy textbook in Braille."

It is sentences like these which subordinate the locale, the food consumed, and the price of the meal. Such interviews elevate reportage into an art form. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Rule of violence

### Khadim Hussain

With 245 terror attacks on security forces, police check-posts and public places — mostly in KP and Balochistan — in the first quarter of 2024 alone, it is obvious that terrorism is once again eating into the vitals of Pakistani state and society. However, what is more horrendous is the repetition of the pattern of violence that Pakistan, especially KP, witnessed a few decades ago; terror is once again stalking various parts of the country, especially Malakand Division and the former Fata region.

On May 9, a girls' school was set ablaze in the scenic Shawa valley of South Waziristan. On May 17, the people of lower South Waziristan awoke to the terror of a bomb attack on another girls' school. On May 29, a girls' school was torched in Shakhmir village in Razmak, North Waziristan. Thirty-four schools, mostly girls' schools, are on the verge of closure in central Kurram district due to lack of funds. All this has happened a year or so after Afghanistan banned secondary and higher education for girls there — as happened under the first Afghan Taliban regime. In the latter case, some two decades ago, the terror syndicate in KP followed suit.

The terror syndicate and violent extremists see gender diversity as a threat to their discourse of homogenisation. They are scared of gender diversity as much as they are of aesthetics and cultural diversity. The religious militant discourse constructs women as objects devoid of any human agency. Women must have no public role in the worldview of the proponents of this discourse, who wish to de-

stroy every space that women can use for a public role. Their destructive tendencies start with torching and bombing girls' schools. Destroying girls' schools with impunity at this time marks the beginning of another phase of the rule of violence.

On May 30, a student of Malakand University, Musa Khan, died in a heart-wrenching motorbike accident. It was later revealed that the circumstances that led to the accident may have been created inside the university. Musa Khan had been issued a show-cause notice and then an expulsion letter by the university, because he had allegedly brought a rubab to a university event. This had put the young student under severe mental pressure, which might have resulted in his accident. On May 31, renowned folk artist Said Wali Wazir of Janikhel, Bannu was manhandled and his musical instruments broken by the local police. This seems to have been on account of the dread spread by the terror syndicate that is opposed to music. Said Wali Wazir's music concerts are already banned in his area.

Like women, primary victims of the empire of violence include music, art and poetry. The terror syndicate demonstrated its abhorrence for music, art and poetry two decades ago; the pattern is now being repeated: as they are an expression of aesthetics and the beauty of life, music, art and poetry must be banished from the social structure and cultural norms. Instead, the narrative of ugliness must be injected into life. This entire discourse hinges on erasing our natural feelings for beauty and artistic expression. Music, art and

poetry are powerful tools to encourage socio-cultural gatherings; the terror syndicate wishes to keep the people isolated. Music, art and poetry keep the people rooted in their home soil, while the terror syndicate wants them to be uprooted.

When one looks at this saga, along with the attacks by violent mob r a n s a c k i n g several churches in Jaranwala town, Faisalabad, in August 2023, and an attack on a Christian home and factory in Sardogha on May 26, 2024, one reaches the conclusion that religious diversity is also under severe threat in Pakistan. The torching of girls' schools and targeting music, art and poetry by the terror syndicate in KP and attacks on religious minorities by extremists in Punjab clearly indicate a pattern of the rule of violence in the country.

Political parties, civil society organisations, the intelligentsia, media persons, women associations and youth groups need to wake up to the danger zone ahead. Folk music concerts, poetry recital sessions, cultural fairs, arts exhibitions, study circles and other cultural activities need to be regularly organised in educational institutions and public places, especially in KP. Policies that facilitate violent extremist private militias and the use of religion for political interests need to be challenged. A paradigm shift in foreign policy formulation needs to be advocated at all forums. Genuine federalism and a constitutional dispensation need to be underscored. Lastly, sociopolitical and socio-cultural activism must be facilitated in educational institutions and the larger society. -- Courtesy Dawn

## PM Shehbaz says: Govt bringing reforms in energy sector to reduce electricity tariff

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said the government was bringing reforms in the energy sector to reduce electricity tariff.

He was talking to a delegation of foreign experts in the energy sector, led by former Georgian Prime Minister Nika Gilauri which called on him at the PM House.

The prime minister said that circular debt, line losses and electricity theft were the major challenges in Pakistan's energy sector.

Emphasizing the importance of energy sector for the country's economic growth and development, he expressed his government's commitment to implement policies for reducing circular debt and improving the efficiency of electricity bill collection personnel.

He said privatization and outsourcing of the power distribution companies was the top priority of the government. "In this regard the government desires to take benefit from the Georgian experience."

The prime minister expressed his government's desire to promote alternative energy sources, particularly solar energy, and reduce reliance on expensive energy sources. He said the government would also promote public private partnership in the energy sector. The prime minister directed the federal ministers to consult with the delegation regarding the basic reforms of the country's energy sector and to evolve a comprehensive strategy regarding the reforms immediately. Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik, Power Minister Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, Minister of State for Finance Ali Pervaiz Malik, and relevant high officials attended the meeting.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a meeting with a delegation of experts of Power Sector led by Nika Gilauri Former Georgian Prime Minister, in Islamabad.

## Minister directs for audit of fertilizer companies to determine production costs

ISLAMABAD (APP):

Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain on Thursday directed that a third-party audit be conducted to determine the cost of production of fertilizer companies, in order to ensure transparency and fair pricing in the industry.

He issued the directive while chairing a Fertilizer Review Committee meeting which was attended by Federal Secretary Industries and Production, Dr. Muhammad Fakhre Alam Irfan, said a news release.

The meeting reviewed the stock availability, demand, and prices of urea in the country.

Rana Tanveer said that there was no shortage of urea fertilizer in the country and added steps were taken to ensure uninterrupted supply of gas to fertilizer companies for smooth production of urea.

He also directed fertilizer companies to review the performance of dealers and agencies, and instructed provinces to verify fertilizer dealers and agencies, with any ghost dealers and agencies to be blacklisted.

The minister emphasized that fertilizer companies must ensure the supply of fertilizer to the provinces

## SIFC provides enabling environment for investment

ISLAMABAD (Online):

Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has provided an enabling environment for investment and business development in the country by working with utmost diligence and dedication over the last one year. The most important of the measures is the provision of facility for investors in the IT sector to repatriate up to fifty percent of their profits. According to data released by the State Bank of Pakistan, IT exports have grown by sixty two percent.

Similarly, the establishment of the Office of the Investment Ombudsman has provided a platform to investors to resolve their issues efficiently and invest

## Rupee sheds 10 paise against Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP):

Pakistan Rupee on Thursday witnessed a devaluation of 10 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.60 against the previous day's closing at Rs 278.50. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market, however, were Rs 277.7 and Rs 280.6 respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 55 paise to close at Rs 298.77 against the last day's closing of Rs 298.22.

## ICCI all set to host APCPC on June 25-26

ISLAMABAD (APP):

The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) will organize "All Pakistan Chambers Presidents Conclave" (APCPC) on June 25-26, 2024.

The APCPC will hopefully be attended by Presidents of over 70 Chambers of Commerce & Industry and federal ministers of government's economic team, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that it is at the credit of the ICCI that it took the initiative to organize first APCPC in 2020 to bring Presidents of all Chambers of Commerce and Industry at one platform to discuss the key issues of business community and put forward proposals to the government for resolving them and now it is once again all set to convene the second APCPC.

He said the event aims to discuss important issues, share ideas and collaborate on initiatives that promote economic growth and development.

The Conclave will feature keynote speeches, panel discussions, and networking opportunities, providing a platform for business leaders to engage with each other and with policymakers.

He said that at the moment, the economy of the country is facing multiple challenges, which have slowed down the business activities, therefore, the ICCI felt the need to bring the leadership of the entire business community at one place and give comprehensive as well as workable proposals to the government for the revival of business and economic activities.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP):

Four ships, Marathopolis, MSC Positano, Atlantic Crown and Simaisma carrying container, Palm oil and LNG, berthed at Container Terminal, Liquid Terminal and Elengy Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Maersk Chicago, Khairpur and Chemtrans Ionian with Containers, Gasoline and Mogas also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.

Seven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Nordic Copenhagen and IMO left the port on today morning while two more container ships, Marathopolis and MSC Positano are expected to sail on same day.

Cargo volume of 188,296 tonnes, comprising 140,778 tonnes imports cargo and 47,518 tonnes export cargo carried in 5,276 Containers (2,566 TEUs Imports and 2,710 TEUs exports) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Five ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Khairpur, OM Shanghai and Maersk Chicago & another ship 'Navios Constellation' carrying Gasoline, Chemicals and Container are expected to take berths at respectively FOICO, EVTL and QICT on Thursday.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain presides over a meeting of the Fertilizer Review Committee.

## Multiple agri projects underway to unleash green revolution: Kundi

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP):

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday said that multiple agriculture development projects were underway in the province which on completion would brought a green revolution in the region.

The Chashma Lift Canal project, once completed, would help irrigate over 250,000 acres of land, and its irrigation area would be increased to 600,000 acres if its height were raised to 90 feet, he added.

The governor was addressing a ceremony held at the District Bar Dera Ismail Khan to distribute grant cheques of Rs 7.8 million among bar councils of the district.

He said the Federal Government was also working on the proposals of Tank Zam and Daraban

Zam projects, which would bring a green revolution and help meet the food requirement not only of the region but also of the neighbouring countries.

The governor said the role of bar councils was very important in resolving the social issues of the people and providing leadership to the nation. The bars also helped maintain the supremacy of law.

The lawyers' movement had proved that they were united to achieve their goals, he added.

Kundi said that there was a shortage of 10 judges in the merged tribal districts and he had taken up the matter with the Federal Government in order to ensure speedy justice for the local people.

The governor said the development of Dera Ismail Khan was his mission. They people here were fac-

ing numerous problems, including in education and health sectors.

"I have always highlighted the issues of my area with the Federation. Before the federal budget, I personally talked to the prime minister about the long-standing demand of the Chashma Lift Canal project, besides other issues, and I am thankful to the Federal Government for allocating Rs 19 billion for the canal, whose foundation stone will be laid down by the end of 2024."

The canal on completion would irrigate around 600,000 acres of land, he added.

He again expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Federal Minister for Water Resources Musadik Masood Malik for allocating funds for the Lift Canal project.

## High-level delegation led by Industries Minister to visit Turkmenistan from June 24

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level delegation led by Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain will visit Turkmenistan from June 24 to 26 to explore new opportunities for bilateral trade and investment.

The minister on Thursday held a meeting with Turkmenistan's Ambassador to Pakistan Atadjan Movlamov to discuss matters relating to the visit.

During the meeting, the minister said that strengthening trade and economic relations with Turkmenistan was the government's top priority and the delegation's visit would play an important role in that regard.

Ambassador Atadjan Movlamov proposed that both countries should organize a joint trade exhibition to promote trade and investment.

## Asian markets swing as traders assess rates outlook

HONG KONG (AFP/APP):

Asian markets were mixed Thursday as investors tried to gauge the outlook for US interest rates, while also keeping tabs on developments in France as it heads for crucial elections.

With Wall Street closed, there were few catalysts to drive buying, though sentiment has been buoyed this week by recent data indicating the world's top economy is slowing gradually, giving the Federal Reserve some freedom to ease monetary policy.

Traders are closely following the utterances of US central bank officials on their outlook for rates, with most warning that while inflation was on a downward trajectory, they wanted to see more evidence before committing to a cut.

## PSX closes at historic high level of 78,801 points

ISLAMABAD (APP):

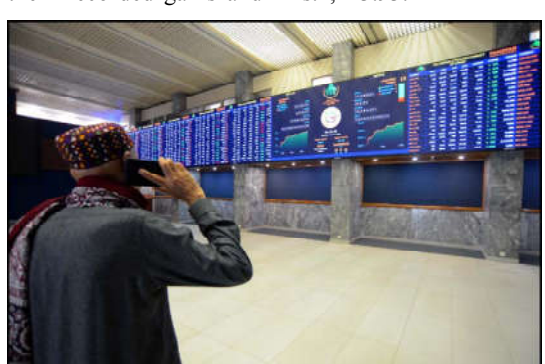
The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 2,094.76 points, a positive change of 2.73 percent, closing at historic level of 78,801.53 points against 76,706.77 points the previous trading day.

A total of 452,637,253 shares valuing Rs.20.675 billion were traded during the day as compared to 395,897,996 shares valuing Rs.21.366 billion the last day.

Some 447 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 256 of them recorded gains and

133 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 58 remained unchanged.

In PSX, the three top trading companies were Silk Bank Ltd with 53,586,473 shares at Rs.1.09 per share, the K-Electric Ltd with 23,109,865 shares with Rs.4.72 per share and Habib Bank with 20,943,162 shares at Rs.121.92 per share. Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.86.62 per share price, closing at Rs.7,706.92, whereas the runner-up was Ismail Industries Limited with a Rs.63.93 rise in its per share price to Rs.1,443.93.



KARACHI: Brokers are busy in trading at Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) in Karachi.

## New UAF sugarcane varieties suitable for cultivation during April, May: Dr Sarwar

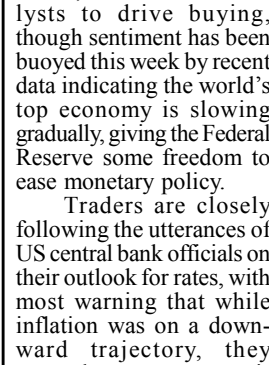
FAISALABAD (APP):

Two GM sugarcane varieties developed by University of Agriculture Fairlead (UAF), in addition to engineered traits of top-borer resistance and herbicide (glufosinate)-tolerance, are carrying numerous superior traits like input-responsiveness, high-number of millable canes, high sugar recovery and early maturing making it suitable for plantation in the months of April and May after harvesting wheat, said Pro-Vice Chancellor UAF and developer of GM sugarcane varieties Prof. Dr. Muhammad Sarwar Khan.

In the last week, The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of Pakistan under the Environment

Protection Agency (EPA), in its 34th meeting chaired by the Director General of the EPA, Farzana Altaf Shah, approved two GM sugarcane varieties; herbicide (glufosinate)-tolerant (CABB-HTS) and insect (top borer)-resistant (CABB-IRS) developed by UAF.

Vice Chancellor UAF ProfDr Iqraz Ahmad Khan, Director General EPA Farzana Altaf Shah, and many other scientists at the meeting congratulated Prof. Dr. Muhammad Sarwar Khan (Pro-Vice Chancellor/Dean Agriculture, UAF) and his team for developing these varieties and considered it a landmark achievement in GM sector world-wide.



PESHAWAR: Workers preserving the hides of sacrificial animals at their warehouse at Ring road.

## China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan to construct new railway to enhance trade, economic cooperation

BEIJING (APP):

China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan will construct a new railway starting in China Kashgar and traversing Torugart, Kosh-Dobo, and Kazarman in Kyrgyzstan, culminating in Andijan in eastern Uzbekistan, to enhance trade and economic cooperation.

A trilateral intergovernmental agreement on the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project was signed at a ceremony in Beijing last week.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Japarov, and President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev hailed the event as a sign of unity and shared progress.

The governments of

China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan agreed to embark on constructing the new railway at a Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit held in the Uzbek city of Samarkand in September 2022. The project feasibility study was updated following the completion of field surveys by Chinese engineers in December last year.

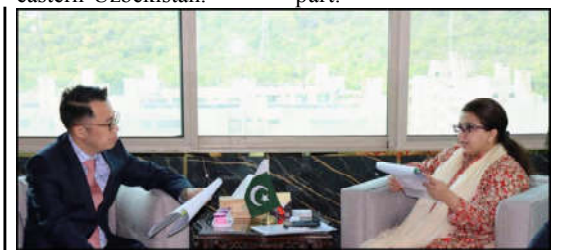
"All three countries have diligently prepared for the construction, which is expected to commence later this year," China Daily reported.

The new railway, a beacon of hope and optimism, will start in China's Kashgar and traverse Torugart, Kosh-Dobo, and Kazarman in Kyrgyzstan, culminating in Andijan in eastern Uzbekistan.

It is estimated that the railway will shorten the route between China and Europe by about 900 kilometers and reduce freight transit time by eight days.

This transformative railway, with its potential to enhance trade and economic cooperation between the countries along its path, holds the promise of a brighter future and instills optimism due to the potential economic benefits it will bring.

According to an earlier announcement, the planned 523-km railway will be constructed through a joint venture involving three countries. The estimated total cost of the project is \$8 billion, with \$4.7 billion allocated for the Kyrgyz part.



Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja in a meeting with CEO Huawei Pakistan Mr. Ethan Sun in Islamabad.

## Exports increase by 28.75% to Rs 7.9trln in 11 months

ISLAMABAD (APP):

The exports from the country in the rupee term witnessed an increase of 28.75 percent during the first eleven months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

Exports during July-May (2023-2024) totaled Rs. 7,962,082 million against Rs. 6,183,949 million during the corresponding period of last year, according to PBS provisional figures.

Exports from Pakistan during May, 2024 increased by 25.99 percent to Rs. 790,199 million compared to exports of Rs.627,199 million in May 2023.

On month-on-month basis, the exports from the country increased by 20.83 percent in May 2024 when compare to exports of

Rs.653,957 million in April 2024.

The main commodities of exports during May 2024 included knitwear (Rs. 115,022 million), readymade garments (Rs.97,564 million), bed wear (Rs. 77,184 million), rice others (Rs. 75,311 million), cotton Cloth (Rs. 48,117 million), towels (Rs.28,768 million), petroleum products, excluding top Naphta (Rs.25,393 million), rice Basmati (Rs.20,807 million), makeup articles, excluding towels & bedwear (Rs.18,558 million) and cotton yarn (Rs.17,883 million).

On the other hand, imports during July-May (FY2023-24) totaled Rs. 14,109,047 million as against Rs. 12,272,596 million during the corresponding period of last year, showing an increase of 14.96%

## Sri Lankan FM reaffirms unwavering commitment to SAARC

COLOMBO (PR):

His Excellency the Secretary General of SAARC Ambassador Golam Sarwar, visited Sri Lanka from 10-14 June

recognizing his esteemed position as a member of the SAARC Council of Ministers, in propelling the SAARC process forward.



2024. During the visit, Secretary General Sarwar paid courtesy call on Minister of Foreign Affairs His Excellency Ali Sabry on 14 June 2024 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombo. Discussions focused on ways to further enhance the SAARC process.

The Secretary General provided an update on ongoing initiatives and the challenges of SAARC, seeking Sri Lanka's support for advancing and further energising the process. Moreover, he sought the guidance of the Minister,

Foreign Minister Sabry, acknowledging the progress achieved and appreciating the Secretary General for his efforts, underscored the need for the Association to take further strides in strengthening regional cooperation. Recognizing the significant potential of SAARC as a regional forum, Minister Sabry emphasized its capacity to facilitate extensive regional cooperation in mutually agreed-upon domains and assured Sri Lanka's unflinching commitment for the SAARC process.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses the National Emergencies Operation Centre.

## Senators call for revising taxes on salaried class, medicines, property business, cement industry

ISLAMABAD (APP): The senators on both sides of the aisle on Thursday called for revising proposed taxes on the salaried class, medicines, cement industry and property business, besides minimizing power load-shedding in the country.

Taking part in the debate on budget 2024-25 in the Senate, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) parliamentary leader Ali Zafar claimed that no relief was given in the budget rather new taxes were imposed which would further burden the people.

He said the finance minister should have proposed steps to reduce the government's intervention into the market besides promoting a market driven economy. No concrete recommendations were suggested for economic growth and reduction in the government expenditures.

The economic growth would suffer with increase in the taxes to achieve the revenue target of Rs 3.8 trillion, he added.

Kamran Murtaza of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl said JUI-F said that the federal consolidated funds needed to be discussed at the forum.

He regretted that three governments remained in power but new National Finance Commission Award had been announced in violation of Article 160 of the Constitution.

Quratulain Marri of the Pakistan Peoples Party said an amount of Rs 150 billion was allocated for electricity, and claimed that 20-hour power load-shedding was being carried out in her constituency.

Similarly, Rs 22 billion was earmarked for gas, which was also in short supply, she added.

## PM lauds CDA, ICT admin for cleanliness drive during Eid-ul-Azha

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday appreciated the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Islamabad Capital Territory Administration for effectively carrying out the cleanliness drive during Eid-ul-Azha. On his X timeline, the prime minister also appreciated CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner of Islamabad over the commendable operations.

## Lawyers killing a test case for the government, Law Minister

ATTOCK (INP): Federal Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar on Thursday spoke at the condolence reference of the murdered lawyers in Attock where he assured of taking the killers to justice by declaring it as a test case for the government.

"It is really sad that we will not be able to meet our friends again but I assure you that justice will prevail and we will do everything for the consolation of the bereaved families of Israr and Zulfiqar", the minister said. He said that this was a textbook case of anti-terrorism. "Every case has its own merits, job of a lawyer is to present the case before the court and verdict is then announced on merit, no one will be allowed to go scot-free as lawyers are an important pillar of the society."

## Khan's political advisor abducted

LAHORE (INP): Ghulam Shabbir, the political advisor to former Prime Minister and founder of PTI, Imran Khan, has been reported kidnapped, sparking concerns and investigations in Lahore. Authorities confirm that a case of kidnapping has been filed at Kahana police station based on a complaint lodged by Ghulam Shabbir's son, Bilal. Ghulam Shabbir, who is also the elder brother of Shabbaz Gul, was reportedly abducted by unknown individuals two days ago while en route from his home to Islamabad.



QUETTA: People carrying coffin of Head of Kasi tribe Arbab Abdul Zahir Kasi for burial after funeral prayer.

## Visits revamped NEOC NDMA to become a safety wall for Pakistan: PM

Shahbaz Sharif lauds revamping NEOC; appreciates cutting-edge technology

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday, lauding the revamped National Emergencies Operation Centre (NEOC) equipped with multiple satellite feeds and artificial intelligence tools, expressed the hope that the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) would prove to be a safety wall for Pakistan against the impacts of the climate change.

"Due to climate change, Pakistan is in the red zone and among the top ten vulnerable countries. We should not lose our morale rather work hard. After this achievement, I have no doubt that the NDMA, in coordination with provincial PDMA, will become a safety wall for Pakistan," the prime minister said during his visit to the NEOC here along with the federal ministers and secretaries.

This was the maiden visit of the prime minister since the revamped NEOC was inaugurated in October last year.

He highly appreciated NDMA Chairman Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik for realising his dream of focusing on the capacity building and human resource development of the Authority instead of an earlier planned project of building

an office tower.

Referring to his previous meetings following the floods of 2022, the prime minister said he had suggested the NDMA chief to prioritise the capacity building of the organisation by equipping it with the latest technology, input from the provinces and recruitment of permanent human resources, besides establishing a digital hub.

"Today, the way that dream has been realised deserves applause. I don't think any province has achieved such capacity with the world-class systems. I am happy that instead of a highrise building, you invested in this digital hub," the prime minister remarked.

He said the 2022 floods had inflicted a \$30 billion loss to the country which would take years to overcome as the Federal Government alone had spent Rs 100 billion for the rehabilitation of affected population, besides the funding from provinces as well as aid from the friendly countries.

He said consequent to the efforts by that time Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and other federal and provincial organisations, the country

was able to rehabilitate millions of people.

Prime Minister Shehbaz appreciated the merit-based induction of quality human resource and establishing a third-party validation mechanism at the NDMA, and assured of the government's support and funding for the staffers' training and procurement of equipment.

"This is not normal. This is not usual. This is far above normal and usual," he said and asked the federal ministers and secretaries to follow the role model to make Pakistan a great nation.

He asked the NDMA to ensure close coordination with the provinces, including Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and advised the procurement of equipment through coordination to avoid duplication.

"This is not an expenditure. This is an investment to save our future investments," he remarked.

He told the gathering that the Federal Government had allocated Rs 80 billion for the promotion of information technology, besides signing an agreement with Huawei for training of 300,000 Pakistani youngsters in IT (Information Technology) annually.

## At UN Pakistan urges global drive to recover arms from deadly terrorists group like TTP

UNITED NATIONS (APP): A senior Pakistani diplomat has called for a "concerted campaign" to recover all weapons from terrorist groups like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which reportedly uses safe havens in Afghanistan to launch deadly cross-border attacks inside Pakistan.

"Pakistan is particularly concerned at the acquisition and use of modern and sophisticated small arms by the terrorist groups such as TTP—a UN-listed terrorist organization," Ambassador Munir Akram said in remarks at the 4th Conference to review the implementation of the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA) on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

The 2001 UNPoA, which was backed by all member states, provides the framework for activities to counter the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Since then, the UN has worked to support the implementation of the UNPoA at national, regional, and international levels.

"Terrorists and criminals do not manufacture these arms," the Pakistani envoy told delegates, pointing out they acquire them from illicit arms markets or receive them from entities that want to destabilize a particular region or country.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti giving Eidi to children.

## Benazir Bhutto's visionary leadership still inspires young generation: Raisani

QUETTA (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party MNA Nawabzada Jamal Khan Raisani on Thursday said that the vision and the dynamic leadership former prime minister Benazir Bhutto still inspired the young generation of the country. The young PPP Member of the National Assembly, in a statement on the 70th birth anniversary of former party chairperson, said her struggle and sacrifices for democracy was a golden chapter in the country's history.

Due to the party leaders like Benazir Bhutto, the PPP always remained steadfast against the anti-democracy elements, he added. Raisani said it was Benazir Bhutto Shaheed who had become a symbol of Pakistan's identity internationally because of her prolonged fight against the dictators. She set a precedent by working for the country's solidarity, integrity and stability, he added.

Raisani said that she was the first woman prime minister of an Islamic country and was revered as the "Daughter of Islam".

## Govt aims to transform entire education system of Pakistan: Maqbool

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui on Thursday said we aim to transform the entire education system of Pakistan. He pointed out the high number of out of school children and the adverse impact it is having on the society.

He was talking to a high level delegation led by Kevin Kells, Managing Director, Google for Education, which called on him. The delegation included Farhan Qureshi, Country Director Pakistan Google, Aron Saether Jackson, CEO Allied, Umar Farooq, CEO Tech Valley amongst other senior officials of Google. The meeting was also attended by senior officials of the education ministry led by Secretary Education Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani.

Dr. Khalid welcomed the diverse Google delegation that comprised of officials from seven different countries including USA, UK, Australia etc.

He said under his leadership, the ministry was working tirelessly to bring this number down. He said that this crisis has been given the highest priority.

He said the delegation can provide expertise and knowledge that can help us chart future plans that can enable us to resolve this issue.

Dr. Khalid urged the delegation to expand their scope of work with special regard to education in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: A high level delegation led by Kevin Kells, Managing Director, Google for Education, call upon the Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui.

## Amid intense heat Salik hails Saudi Govt for exemplary arrangements of Hajj

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Chaudhry Salik Hussain has applauded the Saudi Government for its exemplary arrangements for pilgrims even amidst intense heat.

During a consultation meeting at the Pakistan Hajj Mission in Makkah, Chaudhry Salik Hussain highlighted that the Saudi authorities had implemented various measures to alleviate the adverse impact of heat, including installing water sprinklers and organizing a system to distribute cold water and beverages.

He also mentioned that mobile health units and dispensaries had been set up at key locations to safeguard the pilgrims' health.

According to a press release, he said hundreds of volunteers and Saudi forces were deployed at multiple sites to facilitate over 2 million pilgrims to smoothly perform the Hajj.


## Owais seeks Naqvi's help over protests at grid stations in KP

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Energy Owais Leghari has written a letter to Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi asking for help on the incidents at grid stations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Leghari has written a letter to the Interior Minister that "influential individuals" in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are leading protests on the premises of grid stations.

The minister highlighted that provincial assembly members and others had unlawfully directed grid station staff to restore electricity, exacerbating line losses and electricity theft issues at affected feeders. This situation not only jeopardizes grid station security but also poses risks to safety of the staff.

He said that KP police were not registering cases against individuals involved in these incidents.



# PRINT OR PERISH

## The 10% GST Threatens Free Press

1. The newspaper industry is facing an existential crisis due to the 10% GST proposed on newsprint in the recent budget.
2. In an environment full of fake news and disinformation, newspapers are a vital source for credible and authentic news. They play an important role in promoting democratic values and shaping informed public opinions. The imposition of this GST will push many newspapers, particularly small and regional newspapers, towards closure.
3. Newspapers organisations are already subsidising the cost of their publications for their readers as they are not passing on the cost burden to the readers. Taxing the newspapers will further weaken the economies of the print media and impact the citizens' right to know.
4. This tax threatens the survival of an already struggling newspaper industry. While reducing the quality and quantity of news coverage, the tax will increase production costs, endanger jobs, restrict the ability for the industry to pay competitive and timely salaries and will make it impossible for print media organisations to implement the government mandated Wage Board for newspaper employees.

**We urge the government to reconsider and withdraw this tax to ensure the survival and continued contribution of newspapers to an enlightened society.**