

# Independent

dailyindisb@gmail.com Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah www.dailyindependent.com.pk Islamabad

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## President criticises PML-N-led govt over its handling of IMF deal and its reliance on loans

**'We know how to form and topple governments' Zardari warns PML-N**

**Monitoring Desk**  
LAHORE: President Asif Ali Zardari has criticised the PML-N-led government over its handling of International Monetary Fund (IMF) deal and its reliance on loans.

"The IMF loans are a test for the public," Zardari said, accusing the PML-N of failing to manage the government effectively. "We know how to form and dismantle governments," he declared, promising that the PPP would take decisive action. Party leaders voiced their concerns about the lack of cooperation from the Punjab and federal governments. "We are not getting our full rights," a leader complained, pointing out that electoral issues remain unresolved.

Zardari assured the leaders of addressing their grievances directly, stating his commitment to active engagement in Islamabad and Lahore. He emphasized the PPP's unmatched capability in Pakistani politics, view-

ing criticism of the party as a form of recognition. Directing the PPP Punjab leadership to collaborate in resolving internal issues, Zardari affirmed, "We are conducting a test of the people by taking IMF loans. The Muslim League (N) is not in power. We know how to form and dismantle governments. We will not abandon our people." He urged PPP workers to prepare for intensified efforts ahead, particularly in promoting youth leadership within the party's ranks. Zardari also called for a comprehensive report on the party's organizational structure, emphasizing the need to move beyond the politics of closed rooms and take proactive steps forward. Previously, President Asif Ali Zardari revealed the government's intention to impose taxes on agricultural income in alignment with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions.



**KARACHI: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi meeting with the Leader of Dawoodi Bohra Community Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin.**

## Pakistan, Germany share rich history of diplomatic relations: Senate Chairman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani Thursday said that Pakistan and Germany share rich history of diplomatic relations founded in mutual trust, cooperation and a commitment to global peace and development.

"Germany is a valuable partner of Pakistan bilaterally and in the EU context and we are keen to further strengthen this partnership" he expressed these views in a meeting with a three member German parliamentary delegation led by Michael Muller, MP, German Bundestag. The Chairman Senate specially mentioned the high level contacts

and said that Pakistan desires to promote more interactions at all levels, said a news release.

He also underscored the need to promote parliamentary exchanges between the two countries and said that high level political contacts help bring people closer.

He informed that the Senate of Pakistan was working on establishing friendship groups to promote people to people contacts for better understanding. While appreciating the development cooperation, he expressed the desire to continue efforts for tackling climate change related challenge.



**BEIJING: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Ambassador of Pakistan to China H.E. Mr. Khalil Hashmi and Former Ambassador to China Naghmana Hashmi at welcome banquet hosted for dignitaries attending the high-level forum on the Action Plan for Global Development and a Shared Future organised by CIDCA.**

## Nepra approves electricity tariff increase by up to Rs 7.12 per unit

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on Thursday granted the government's request to raise the basic electricity tariff by up to Rs 7.12 per unit. This increase will be applied nationwide, including in Karachi, with households consuming up to 200 units per month being exempt from the hike for three months. The new tariff structure, as outlined in the notification, will see domestic consumers using between

201 and 300 units per month experiencing a rise of Rs 7.12, bringing the rate to Rs 34.26 per unit. Consumers using between 301 and 400 units will face an increase of Rs 7.02, resulting in a new rate of Rs 39.15 per unit. For those consuming between 401 and 500 units, the rate will go up by Rs 6.12 to Rs 41.36 per unit. The tariff for consumers using between 501 and 600 units will increase by Rs 6.12 to Rs 42.78 per unit, and those using between 601 and 700 units will see an increase of Rs 6.12.



**Prime Minister of Pakistan H.E. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of Azerbaijan H.E. Ilham Aliyev leading their respective delegations during bilateral talks in Islamabad.**

## Pak, Azerbaijan agree to expand investment volume upto \$2 bn

**This connection is a big asset, we are brothers, we are friends, and we support each other on every international issue: Aliyev**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Azerbaijan on Thursday agreed to enhance the bilateral investment level of up to US\$2 billion in areas of mutual beneficial projects. In a joint press stakeout along with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev, after witnessing signing of agreements and MoUs in diverse areas between the two countries, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said "we have discussed an initial figure of \$2 billion investment in areas of mutual beneficial projects".

The prime minister hoped that when he will visit Azerbaijan in November this year, the two sides would be ready to ink agreements worth \$2 billion to start with, as there was great potential in both sides to multiply this figure in years to come. "In

today's in depth conversation, we have agreed to enhance our bilateral trade besides discussing areas of joint cooperation and joint investments," he added. The prime minister said, "The bilateral investment volume of less than \$100 million does not reflect the strength of our brotherhood and friendship in the field of joint investment in areas which are mutually beneficial". Expressing satisfaction over the bilateral meeting, the prime minister said discussions were held on mutual trust and confidence where both sides expressed their unwavering commitment to move forward and touch higher levels of achievements in the fields of trade and investment.

He emphasized that Pakistan had always supported Azerbaijan's stand while the brotherly coun-

try had always supported the cause of millions of Kashmiris who had rendered huge sacrifices for more than seven decades to achieve their right of self determination as per UN Security Council resolutions.

He recalled the President Aliyev's visit in 2017 during the tenure of then PM Nawaz Sharif saying that history was repeating as Nawaz Sharif's younger brother was now receiving him along with people of Pakistan.

PM Shehbaz hoped that the COP29 to be hosted by Azerbaijan in Baku would be a significant international event for all developing countries including Pakistan. "We are confident that under your wise stewardship, COP29 will deliver on the climate

change related issues of developing countries like Pakistan."

He said the Government of Pakistan was impressed by the beautification of Baku, therefore it has decided to copy Baku.

Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev said the brotherhood between the two countries was based on deep feelings between peoples of the two sides. "This connection is a big asset, we are brothers, we are friends, and we support each other on every international issue."

He said, "Our state forward support on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, is our commitment to our brotherhood and also our respect to international law, the rights of Kashmiris are ignored and violated for decades."

## Apex Court to announce verdict regarding reserved seats today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan would announce its verdict on Friday in appeal of Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) regarding the reserved seats. The Registrar Office of the top court has issued the cause list, according to which the decision would be pronounced Friday morning 9:00am. It may be mentioned here that a full court bench, presided by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa, reserved the verdict into the case on Tuesday after the respondents' lawyers concluded their arguments.

The Peshawar High Court (PHC) had upheld the verdict of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for not awarding reserved seats to SIC.

## Food crisis looms large as flour mills go on strike across country

LAHORE (INP): A number of flour mills were eventually shut down on Thursday for an indefinite period in various parts of the country after the government failed to redress concerns of the Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA) regarding imposition of withholding tax on the commodity.

According to the PFMA, more than 1,500 flour mills across country have halted wheat washing and flour supply after the recent announcement of observing strike. The PFMA demands withdrawal of withholding tax on the flour.

It further said small scale flour dealers were also joining the chorus of millers in lodging their protest against the government.

In line with PFA's orders, as many as 73 flour mills in Gujranwala and more than 60 mills in Multan ceased their operations.



**ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani in a meeting with German Parliamentary delegation headed by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) at Parliament House.**

## All IMF conditions already met, Pakistan eyes \$6b bailout program: FM Aurangzeb

**Says consultations with provinces on about tax on agricultural income**

ISLAMABAD (INP): Finance Minister Aurangzeb has said that Pakistan wanted to get \$6 billion bailout package from the IMF as Islamabad has already met all IMF conditions.

Talking to media after attending a meeting of National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance, the Finance Minister said new loan program will be finalized this month.

He said climate change issues will also be discussed after the first review mission of the new loan program. The Finance Minister said climate financing funding was not being negotiated in current negotiations with IMF.

He said progress has also been made on improving income tax collections on agriculture and the con-

sultations with provinces regarding agricultural income tax were underway.

Earlier, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance meeting was held under the chair of MNA Syed Naveed Qamar to review the performance of the Finance Ministry.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb gave a briefing to the committee about the government's various initiatives to boost economic recovery.

Finance Minister Aurangzeb told the participants that all economic indicators remained positive during the last financial year 2023-2024 and foreign exchange reserves touched over 9 billion dollars while the inflation rate also declined gradually.

He said currency remained unstable due to a delay in IMF bailout program in 2023 but after the agreement, economic conditions improved, profits and dividends of foreign companies were being paid.

The Finance Minister claimed that due to the IMF program, the government was getting funds from other institutions. He said now World Bank has approved funding of 1 billion dollars for the Dasu Dam.

Aurangzeb claimed that nothing was being controlled artificially by the government, adding that there are no restrictions on imports and the assumptions about the value of the dollar were a thing of the past.



**ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in a group photo with Speakers of Punjab, Sindh, KPK and Balochistan Assemblies along with Speaker of AJ&K and GB Assembly in Parliament House.**

## No designs to enter into any talks with TTP: FO

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan says it has no designs to enter into any talks with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan.

At her weekly news briefing in Islamabad Thursday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said the terrorist entity is involved in the killing of Pakistani and foreign citizens inside Pakistan.

The Spokesperson said Pakistan respects Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. She said we expect the Afghan authorities to uphold their sovereignty and take action against terrorist groups which have found sanctuaries inside Afghanistan and using their territory for terrorist attacks against Pakistan.

Responding to a question, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan is committed to implement Illegal For-

eigners Repatriation Plan. She said the first phase of this plan is near completion and alluded to the illegal foreigners including Afghans repatriated to their home countries.

The spokesperson clarified that Pakistan has not given any understanding to the UNHCR for the suspension of the plan. She pointed out that the government has approved one-year extension of the validity of Proof of Registration cards of the Afghan refugees.

To a question, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan and the United States have a multifaceted and a robust partnership. She said we believe that this relationship should move forward on the basis of mutual respect, sovereign equality and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.



**ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.**

## President for timely project completion in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday stressed the timely completion of the ongoing development projects of Balochistan and urged the provincial government to take proactive measures for the province's welfare. Talking to Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti, President Zardari acknowledged that the provincial government has implemented effective measures for the development and prosperity of Balochistan and emphasized the urgent completion of the Kachhi Canal with

federal support to meet provincial water demands, boost agriculture, and ensure food security.

The President also expressed his satisfaction over the ongoing public welfare projects in the province and the measures taken by the provincial government for maintaining peace and order in the province. Bugti briefed President Zardari on provincial situation during the meeting at Presidency and briefed him on ongoing development projects, the overall law and order situation in the province.



**ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani in a meeting with Faisal Karim Kundi, Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at Parliament House.**

## Interior Minister confirms Azm-e-Istehkam Operation not commenced

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi on Thursday stated that the Azm-e-Istehkam operation has neither commenced nor has there been any discussion of operations in specific areas.

He clarified that there was a miscommunication with the media regarding the Azm-e-Istehkam operation, which is part of six points of the National Action Plan (NAP).

The interior minister provided a briefing during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Interior chaired by Senator Faisal Rahman on Thursday. The meeting was attended by the Secretary of the Interior, IG FC, and Rangers officials.

Mohsin Naqvi emphasized that the discussion was about the implementation of NAP, not about operations in any specific areas. He also pointed out that prosecution falls under the mandate and authority of the provinces. He highlighted that law and order control pri-

marily lies with the provinces, which cannot be ignored. The Ministry of Interior oversees targeted operations and border security.

The interior minister mentioned ongoing operations in Punjab and Sindh with support from Rangers, and significant improvements in the security of the Main Super Highway.

Naqvi attributed the current terrorism to agreements made by the previous government with the Taliban, which led to the release of terrorists from prisons and the subsequent resurgence of terrorism. The minister noted the formation of groups of 15-20 terrorists and emphasized that ongoing operations are making progress.

In the meeting, Senator Naseema Ehsan criticised the police officers' priorities, valuing their meetings over human lives. Senator Saifullah Abro lamented the lack of security even for senators, citing unsolved murder cases involving journalists and a doctor in Sindh.



## Population crisis

Pakistan is the world's fifth most populous nation, yet the resources and socioeconomic tools needed to provide for over 240m souls are severely lacking. The only logical measure is to bring down the fertility rate in order to provide a better standard of living to citizens, as well as the generations to come. Unfortunately, successive governments, beyond providing lip service, have failed to act to prevent the population bomb from coming close to detonation. If we continue on this trajectory, the UNFPA projects that Pakistan's population may hit 263m by 2030, which is just around the corner. Does Pakistan have the resources to adequately feed, clothe, educate and house this massive number? The answer is worryingly self-evident.

Therefore, today, as World Population Day is being observed globally, both state and civil society must pledge to address the population issue in a progressive and sagacious manner. This can be done by declaring a 'population emergency', and committing funds and efforts to the cause of addressing the explosive population growth. While some states have taken invasive steps, such as limiting the number of children couples can have, there are better examples in the neighbourhood that do not infringe on personal rights, yet achieve the goal of planned families.

In this regard, UNFPA cites the Muslim-majority states of Turkiye, Iran and Bangladesh, which have managed to implement successful family planning programmes. As per the UN body's research, these countries succeeded because the state was fully supporting policies aimed at reducing population growth, while information and family planning services were easily available to citizens. There is no reason why Pakistan — which in the 1960s had initiated similar plans — cannot learn from these Muslim states, with which we share many cultural similarities. Perhaps the biggest factor that can give a boost to family planning campaigns is unwavering commitment from the state at the federal and provincial levels. There needs to be buy-in from political parties, as well as the clergy.

The fact is that due to the social structures in Pakistan, it is imperative to have ulema, tribal elders and other community leaders on board to successfully implement family planning programmes — from big cities to the furthest hamlets. Both men and women need to be counselled about the options available. Moreover, successful programmes, such as Lady Health Workers, can be utilised to provide information and reproductive health services to women. At the policy level, the skewed weightage given to large populations in the NFC Award formula should be reconsidered, as provincial administrations will continue to ignore rampant population growth in order to secure more funds. For a balanced future where all Pakistanis have access to food, water and basic services, a successful family planning model is essential.

Zeba Sathar

Today is World Population Day and the theme this year is 'Interwoven Lives, Threads of Hope'. While the world is becoming increasingly interconnected, it has, paradoxically, also become vastly inequitable. Many citizens around the world, including those of Pakistan, continue to be highly neglected despite their lives being interwoven with those more fortunate.

UN Secretary General António Guterres has expressed concern over the achievement of the global development agenda outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals, and the collection of data that measures progress towards a better world for all by 2030. A mere six years prior to the SDG deadline, he has highlighted the need for data to capture inequalities in the achievement of universally agreed goals to ensure that no one is left behind. Importantly, while Pakistan may not be recording adequate progress with regard to the SDGs, we certainly collect data to measure inequities in most development outcomes.

The country's official

statistical agency, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, has completed not one but two censuses in the last seven years! PBS also collects annual data through a range of regular surveys — the Household Integrated Economic Survey, Labour Force Survey, the Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement survey, and many others. The truth is that PBS seems to have little time to share the heaps of crucial data it collects as it is caught up collecting more.

The data of the 2023 census, which has essential ground-level information on the condition of the Pakistani population, has yet to be released. In general, there appears to be a lack of appetite, awareness and ability in Pakistan to analyse and utilise data especially among those making decisions regarding the employment, health, education and other essential needs of the country's 240 million citizens.

Data reflecting inequities among communities, districts and populations that are being 'left far behind', is, in fact, readily available. What is missing, however, is the will to

analyse the data, prove its veracity and take action accordingly. The Population Council's recent analysis of District-Level Vulnerabilities (based mainly on the PBS Pakistan Mouza Census 2020), shows that the distance to a basic health unit in rural Punjab is seven kilometres, 25km in Sindh, 15km in KP, and 51km in Balochistan. Similarly, the average distance to a girl's secondary school in Punjab is 8km compared to the much higher 38km in Balochistan.

Socioeconomic data is periodically collected by PBS, but barely used. The PBS website is the window to Pakistan's official figures on everything ranging from prices, numbers of animals and acreage of land to education, health, national accounts, etc. It should be making widely available development data on inequities across Pakistan, showing chunks of the population, especially in the districts of rural Balochistan, which are left very far behind.

There is one silver lining in District-Level Vulnerabilities in the area of communications — mobile density is almost 100 per

cent in Pakistan. Undoubtedly, an equaliser, mobile phones make it easier for families to connect with each other and the self-employed to connect with their clientele. Specifically, a large number of migrant families are able to remain regularly in touch with their relatives back home thanks to mobile phones. But, while we remain progressively interconnected through telecommunication, internet and social media, we are drifting apart as a nation, due to the wide disparity of living standards across the population.

We do not need data to recognise the inequality of lives across Pakistan; it is visible around us and just requires a bit of sensitivity and empathy to observe. It is palpable in the lived experience of countless people — a large proportion of whom live below the poverty line. We are surrounded by poverty, discrimination and injustice.

The country's elite need to take a break from their mundane chatter about politics, the heat, and inflation, and focus on the glaring divide between the rich and the poor. In this regard,

the poor treatment of domestic help stands out as a grave issue of concern. Often, these workers who provide household services face humiliation and even violence at work and at home.

Women's empowerment is a priority area of the SDGs and human rights in general. Still, women in Pakistan (with the exception of a privileged few) generally fall in the bottom rung of any socioeconomic metric; they lead a life fraught with difficulty. They are often malnourished and experience frequent and unwanted pregnancies, and have poor access to basic services, such as health and education. Above all, they are generally devoid of any agency to make decisions concerning themselves or their children, and struggle to make ends meet.

Children's rights and welfare is at the heart of the SDGs. In spite of that, a majority of children in Pakistan are denied even their basic rights. We continue to remain complacent about high levels of fertility when out of the 7m babies born each year, about half are either unwanted or mistimed,

and are likely to end up being born in poor households. The vast majority of these children are likely to be stunted and never go to school. Many would be lucky to survive their first birthday.

The poor are berated through remarks such as 'these people have too many children and do not look after their health'. Given the indifference to their plight, there may come a point when the poor are blamed for not wanting to get out of their state of poverty. This attitude is in divergence with the values of a just and humane society. A thread of hope in terms of providing basic needs to the millions being left behind would lie in our state leadership, elites and citizens groups waking up to the situation. A major jolt is required to disturb the prevailing complacency, apathy and lack of conscience that are preventing policies that direct resources towards access to health, education and safe drinking water for millions of Pakistanis. Without immediate course correction, Pakistan is headed towards default on its SDGs by 2030. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Pressure building

Khurram Husain

There is no precedent in our history of such a long and intense spell of inflation gripping the country. It has never happened before. Pakistan has had bouts of high inflation, with the last one running roughly from early 2008 to 2010 or so, depending on which metrics you use to measure its rise and tapering off. But the most recent bout began in May 2021 and is continuing unabated, despite what the measurement of the Consumer Price Index might be showing.

That is three continuous years with no end in sight. Not only that, if the last peak that inflation saw was about 20pc, this bout has seen it touch a peak above 30pc. Not only is the present bout of inflation longer in duration than any in the past, it is also more intense.

We have a new situation on our hands, because there is no model, no projection and no way of knowing what such

prolonged exposure to such intense inflationary pressure can do to a populace. Already we are surrounded by anecdotes and stories told by those around us of electricity bills that are in excess of or equal to a household's monthly expenses. But wait till the month of August. That is when the new electricity bills will start arriving, and for those who live on a salary, the new tax deductions will be applied. The pressures on household purchasing power are set to intensify further.

How far will this process go? The state is balancing its books on our backs, yours and mine. It is shedding its deficits and offloading them onto us instead. This is what they call 'stabilisation' in the sterile language of economists. For the rest of us, it simply means a severe eroding of our standard of living.

Since 2008 onwards, Pakistan has been under a virtually continuous stabilisation programme. I say 'virtually continu-

ous' for a reason. There were a few years in between, from 2014 till 2017, and again from around 2021 till 2022, when a brief spurt of economic growth passed through our midst. None of those were real. They were fuelled by heavy borrowing, domestic and foreign, and both played a big role in creating the crash that followed.

I have written a lot about why this has been the case. For now, I want to draw your attention, dear reader, to this simple fact: Pakistan's populace has been subjected now to the longest and most intense bout of inflation that it has ever experienced in its history. And it isn't over yet.

The reason I want you to focus your mind on this is equally simple. We don't know where the breaking point lies, and we certainly don't know what happens when we hit that breaking point. A few countries offer some clues. Kenya, for example, saw the outbreak of large-scale rioting on the streets when the govern-

ment rolled out an IMF-mandated budget laden with taxes and withdrawals of vital subsidies required to keep food prices in check.

But riots need not be the only expression of popular anger and desperation. A rising tide of street crime usually accompanies rising urban unemployment coupled with inflation. But beyond these more traditional outlets for the growing desperation lies a danger zone that we can barely imagine.

Economists do not have the models to tell you what sustained exposure to intense economic desperation can do to a populace. The consequences need not come overnight, as in Kenya where riots broke out almost immediately following the announcement of the budget. The slow burn of inflation can bring changes that we are not equipped to measure or detect. The vote that needed to be suppressed so ruthlessly in February this year is perhaps one example. It is easy to see where

Miftah Ismail is coming from when he says the (real) outcome of the February election was actually driven by prolonged inflation.

But beyond protests and riots and petty crime and votes, the rising arc of desperation can also lead to conflict. People can turn on each other with bizarre justifications that don't seem to connect with their economic circumstances in any rational way. They can turn towards faith healers and other quacks, whether for health advice, or advice on 'get rich quick' rackets, or even political and religious advice. What can follow is a train of consequences that leads in strange directions: the growth of bubbles and pyramid schemes or the spread of bad medicine or rising cases of domestic violence or the growing incidence of lynching and looting and other violent mob behaviour.

The state can no longer rely only on its repressive apparatus to keep the consequences of

inflation in check. The personnel who staff this apparatus are themselves drawn from the general populace, and it is to the same general populace they return when they go home after performing their duties. Whatever happens to the people happens to them, unless the state tries to use its dwindling resource base to secure these personnel from the depredations of inflation. Doing so leaves less behind for others, and makes the situation worse by aggravating the inflationary fire rather than helping put it out. The inflation engulfing the country is no longer just an economic problem. It is a danger to the social order. It is not clear when a tipping point will be reached, nor what it will trigger if and when it does arrive. I do not know any longer who I am writing this for. Those in power cannot be reached, and even if they could, there is not much they can do about it anymore. For the rest of us, however, it is worth bearing in mind that power in Pakistan is losing its grip.

## More than change

F.S. Aijazuddin

President Joe Biden insists that he is still running. He has not said in which direction. He needs to decide quickly before someone makes up his mind for him. Some expect the Democratic Party to push him over the edge. Others that his medical team will advise him against subjecting himself to the rigour of a gruelling election campaign. The only person he will listen to is his wife Jill Biden.

It will not be the first time that a spouse has had the last word. In November 1990, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, locked in a leadership contest within her Conservative Party, survived the first ballot. She would have taken the fight into a second ballot — 'to fight on and fight to win' — had her husband Denis Thatcher not persuaded her to quit. He gave her this pithy advice: "Don't go on, love."

In Great Britain's recent general election, the British voters themselves, rather than a furtive cabal of Conservative bigwigs, were invited to decide on the future of PM Rishi Sunak and the party. The results — unequivocal but not unexpected — sent Rishi and the Conservative Party packing.

His successor as PM is Labour's Sir Keir Starmer who won by a landslide. No one can predict how long he will last. It seems the only permanent resident of 10 Downing Street is the photogenic tabby cat which poses artfully on its doorstep.

In the UK, the transfer of power is like the passing of an Egyptian pharaoh, interred with meticulous ceremony and a treasure of memories.

In US politics, a presidential election is not a contest of ideologies. It is a clash of personalities: for example, the winsome John F. Kennedy vs Rich-

ard Nixon with a five o'clock shadow; the dynamic Bill Clinton vs Bob Dole; the underdog Barack Obama vs Mitt Romney; the brash Donald Trump vs Hilary Clinton, and then the corrective Joe Biden vs Donald Trump.

Should a US president retire prematurely through death (Franklin D. Roosevelt) or resignation (Nixon), the automatic replacement is the incumbent vice president. Harry Truman replaced Roosevelt; Gerald Ford succeeded Nixon. It is said that during George H.W. Bush's presidency, though, the Secret Service had been instructed that if the president was ever in mortal danger, VP Dan Quayle should be shot first.

If Biden does stumble into premature retirement, his successor would be his Vice President Kamala Harris. She would by default become the US's first female off-white president.

Kamala Harris, like Rishi Sunak, comes from immigrant stock. As did Baroness Sayeeda Warsi (chairwoman of the Conservative Party, 2010-12). Warsi, the first Muslim to serve as a cabinet minister, held two posts: minister of state for the foreign and commonwealth office and simultaneously for faith and communities. She resigned in August 2014, after disagreeing with PM David Cameron's policy relating to the Israel-Gaza conflict.

Ten years later, that Israeli-Gaza conflict is continuing, unresolved. However, her then lone voice has gathered strength. In the new UK parliament, there are 89 MPs from ethnic minority backgrounds, among them 26 Muslim MPs who have made their position on the Gaza conflict clear.

By comparison, in India's current Lok Sabha, there are only 24 Muslim MPs. Congress has seven; Modi's ruling BJP

none. Some BJP cynics have questioned how many true Muslims Pakistan has in its parliament.

Interestingly, in the UK and in India, future policies will be influenced less by ideologies than by changing demographics. The Rev Martin Luther King's dream that humans should "not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character" is being fulfilled gradually. Ask Barack Obama. Ask Mi-c-hael Jack-son. Ask Meg-han Markle. But in a rainbow world, colour will continue to matter.

This year 2024 will be known as that of general elections. One quarter of the world's population across 97 countries is eligible to vote. They include eight of the most populous — Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Indo-nesia, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, and the US.

Their voters will inevitably have significant, differing expectations of their governments. Over the next four to five years, they want to see not just the change promised during the electoral hustings but a discernible improvement in governance, resource distribution, climate change, etc.

Governments might like to follow these five simplified commandments: Thou shalt not kill (the US); Thou shalt not commit adultery (Donald Trump); Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods (Netanyahu); Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour (the Western media); and Thou shalt not steal (Pakistani politicians).

But then leaders are neither saints nor miracle workers. To them, any accountability is best postponed until the time of the next general election or their political death, whichever comes first. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Climate diplomacy

Aisha Khan

Climate change is now globally recognised as an existential threat to the planet and all life systems. Diplomacy has been used as a tool for centuries to address geopolitical issues and resolve contentious matters through negotiated agreements.

In today's world and the current global scenario, the overarching threat of climate change makes climate and diplomacy inseparable. The use of one to step up action in the other has played a critical role in moving the needle on climate change from its inception at the Earth Summit in Rio (1992) to the Paris Agreement (2015) that finally succeeded in getting 196 countries to agree on an 'Agenda of Solutions'.

As we move forward into uncharted territory, it is more important than ever before to forge mutually beneficial alliances to preserve nature and invest in sustainable development so that people and nature can thrive in tandem. To this end, the Conference of Parties is held annually to reach agreement on contentious issues within the Paris Agreement on the way forward. Diplomacy is in full swing at these meetings and country delegates from their respective foreign offices play an important role at these multilateral dialogues.

However, while recognising the necessity of multilateralism, it is equally important to acknowledge the need for strengthening bilateral cooperation that can promote dialogue and confidence, thereby contributing to regional stability. Cooperative and coordinated mechanisms are an investment in future peace and crisis management between and among

countries that live in close proximity and are connected by land, air and water. The benefits of an integrated approach include reducing future risks, improving productivity of resources and people, boosting innovation by seeking solutions to new challenges, increasing environmental benefits and improving ecosystems.

South Asia is a complex and dynamic ecosystem with climate hot spots, high mountains, large glaciated areas and a vast coastal belt. It is also the least integrated region in the world with a population of approximately two billion and a large youth cohort. The geography and topography of the region makes each country an upper or lower riparian that derives its waters from the same mountain source. The type of climate-induced disasters and the coping capacity of people also have similarities that go beyond economic indicators to sharing social norms and traditional practices, especially with regard to gender, access and opportunity.

Air pollution is a transboundary issue and a common concern that is rapidly eroding the environmental integrity of urban centres and putting glaciated areas under threat causing damage to human health and accelerating the melting of glaciers. All of the above make a compelling case for collaboration.

Under a rapidly warming world with high humanitarian stakes, it is time for countries in South Asia to prioritise policies based on the urgency of the crisis and plan accordingly. Climate diplomacy is the best tool for re-evaluating and recalibrating relationship dynamics taking into account the scope of the climate threat, its impact on

communities and the capacity of states to manage it on a stand-alone basis. Given the interconnectedness of the landmass, climate impacts will have a spill-over effect making the future risky at best and hazardous at worst.

The recent climate stocktake in Dubai and the post-election scenario in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India present the region with a new opportunity to explore the potential of developing a regional climate vision strategy that offers practical cooperative solutions for safeguarding the natural resources of South Asia and protecting human life.

Given the truncated and traumatic history of the region, this may not be easy but using climate as an entry point and diplomacy as a tool can open windows for constructive conversations.

The courts in Pakistan and India have recognised climate change as a human rights issue and justified this rights-based approach by linking the state's obligation to take precautionary measures to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. This shift in constitutionalising climate change offers a unique opportunity to both countries to address the challenge jointly and use it to deliver on an agenda that is seen not only as an exogenous threat but as a core legal and ethical responsibility of the state towards its citizens. Cooperation and collaboration on approaches that support sustainable development, protect the rights of people and nature, ensure that decisions on climate change are equitable and develop better understanding of the problem and solutions to environmental issues can only be a win for all. -- Courtesy Dawn



## PM stresses using technology for effective enforcement of customs duties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday emphasized the importance of taking comprehensive measures to eliminate corruption in customs operations. He stressed the need to remove unnecessary hurdles and utilize modern technology, including artificial intelligence and advanced equipment, to ensure the full enforcement of customs duties.

Chairing a meeting focused on the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and Pakistan Customs, the prime minister described the customs sector as the backbone of the country's economy. He stated that reforms within the FBR and complete digitization would secure economic stability.

Prime Minister Shehbaz instructed the relevant authorities to ensure a third-party audit of reform initiatives in the FBR and other departments, consolidating all such projects under a single framework.

He directed efforts to increase revenue collection through enhanced enforcement measures and called for the establishment of a project management unit dedicated to reforms in the customs sector. Addressing issues related to mis-invoicing, he stressed the need to resolve these problems and eliminate under-invoicing to protect Pakistan's

industries and products. He also requested detailed reports on revenue collection resulting from enforcement actions and called for the establishment of a regulatory framework for the operations of the shipping industry.

The prime minister emphasized the need for a third-party audit of the web-based one-customs system (WeBOC). During the briefing on customs operations, it was reported that Pakistan Customs



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding the Federal Board of Revenue.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chairing the Advisory Committee Meeting on Release of International Mobile Telephony (IMT) Spectrum for Next-Generation Mobile Broadband Services in Pakistan.

## Govt committed to boost cotton production: Tanveer

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Industries, Production and National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain on Thursday reiterated the government's commitment to promote the cotton industry. He said this while addressing the meeting of the Pakistan Central Cotton Committee's governing body, said a news release.

which will significantly alleviate its financial burdens and alleviate its difficulties to a great extent," he added. He said that research and development must be prioritized, and the government is committed to providing comprehensive support to farmers, ginners, and all relevant stakeholders.

The minister said the country's annual cotton production currently stands at 8.4 million bales, aiming to increase 15 million bales by 2025. The yield per acre can be increased with modern agricultural practices and technology.

The minister stressed that Pakistan's economy heavily relies on cotton production and textile industry growth is linked to good cotton yields. "The textile industry has been granted Rs 10 per unit subsidy on electricity,

## Speakers highlight potential, challenges in IT, Telecom sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): The speakers at a public-private dialogue on Wednesday called for strategic collaborations and rationalized spectrum and licensing mechanisms to address challenges and unlock potential in the Information Technology (IT) and Telecommunication sector.

The dialogue, organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)'s study group on IT and Telecommunication, focused on the state of competition in the telecom sector and ways to promote it. Brig. Muhammad Yasin Senior Advisor

Emeritus at SDPI, highlighted the critical role of the telecom sector as the backbone of the country's economy, impacting education, health, industry, defence, and agriculture. He emphasized the need for a robust and competitive environment, meaningful regulations, and collaborations among service providers to foster sector development. He also noted that infrastructure sharing among telecom operators could reduce business costs and improve service delivery, especially in rural areas where competition has dwindled the number of internet service providers from six to three.



MULTAN: Students visiting different stalls during the Tech Expo 2024 organized by the Institute of Computer Science and Information Technology at the Jinnah Hall.

## WUM hosts TECHExpo on modern advancement

MULTAN (APP): Students of 10 universities of exhibited their projects at one-day TechExpo, hosted by WUM Institute of CS & IT on modern advancements which included several educational and technological advancements.

This expo and poster exhibition was the first of its kind at WUM featuring different modules in disciplines such as computer science, engineering, applied sciences, AI intelligence, and healthcare. A total of 38 projects were displayed showcasing a broad spectrum of academic and practical skills. A Poster competition was also

organized by final-year students from different universities. The expo attracted participants from 10 universities, which made it an gathering of academic minds. Students from the BZU, Emerson, Air Universities, NCBA, Times, MNSUA, NUML, NFC and Education University. This diversity of participation enriched the event, fostering a spirit of academic exchange and collaboration. Women University Multan (WUM) Dr Kalsoom Pracha stressed upon the importance of technological and academic advancement in today's world while speaking at the event.

## Advisory Committee discusses release of IMT Spectrum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Finance Minister, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Thursday chaired the meeting of Advisory Committee on Release of International Mobile Telephony (IMT) Spectrum for Improvement of Next Generation Mobile Broadband Services in Pakistan.

allocation and utilization of the IMT spectrum. It was mentioned that the release of this spectrum is expected to significantly improve connectivity, enhance Internet speeds, and meet the increasing demand for high-quality data services.

The key stakeholders from the telecommunication sector and regulatory authorities briefed the minister on their strategic plans for the

According to press release issued by finance ministry, the meeting was attended by Minister of State for IT and Telecom, Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Chairman P a k i s t a n Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and senior officials from relevant ministries and departments. The key stakeholders from the telecommunication sector and regulatory authorities briefed the minister on their strategic plans for the

## OGRA organizes seminar on "Safe Use of LPG, 'Zero' Fatal Accident"

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) here on Thursday organized a national seminar on "Safe Use of LPG - 'Zero' Fatal Accident" to address the need for enhanced safety measures in the use of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

Chairman OGRA Masroor Khan along with Member Oil, Member Finance and the senior team from OGRA's LPG and Enforcement Departments, were also present on the occasion.

The seminar was attended by senior officials from the Petroleum Division, Islamabad Police, Motorways Police, Civil Defense and CEOs of leading LPG sector companies. The seminar aimed to address these safety concerns by bringing together industry leaders, policymakers.

Masroor Khan said that the increasing use of LPG across the country, from urban centers to remote villages demanded urgent need for robust safety protocols. He said that the seminar aimed to address these safety concerns by bringing together industry leaders, policymakers.



LAHORE: People are buying used items from a roadside vendor at Shadman area in the Provincial Capital.

## Indonesia to promote industry, trade, tourism with Pakistan

PESHAWAR (APP): Indonesian Charge d Affaires, Rahmat Hindiatra, and Economic Attache, Axelsyah R Miraza has expressed the desire to promote industry and trade, as well as youth and cultural tourism, with Pakistan, particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

both countries and concluded with a decision to work together to strengthen Pakistan-Indonesia relations. Both sides expressed satisfaction over the prospect of enhancing trade, industry, and youth and cultural tourism to foster closer ties and pave the way for economic stability. The Indonesian delegation invited former Governor Haji Ghulam Ali, Adnan Jalil, and other participants to visit Indonesia, an invitation that was warmly appreciated by the hosts.

They conveyed their commitment to future collaboration during a meeting at the residence of former caretaker provincial minister Adnan Jalil. Welcoming the Indonesian delegation, Adnan Jalil was joined by former Governor Haji Ghulam Ali, former caretaker provincial minister and industrialist Haji Fazl Elahi, former presidents of the Sarhad Chamber, Ishaq Khan and Sirajuddin, along with Rashid Awan from SMEDA and other notable figures. The meeting involved a thorough discussion of the successful sectors in

Rahmat Hindiatra, and Economic Attache Axelsyah R Miraza praised the hardworking and dedicated people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and expressed eagerness to collaborate with them. They emphasized the need for both countries to exchange experiences in industry and trade to strengthen and expand their commercial relations.

## Govt making concerted efforts to reduce electricity prices: Awais Leghari

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Power Division Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari has apprised the National Assembly Standing Committee on Energy (Power Division) that the Power Division is making concerted efforts to reduce the price of electricity by intensifying anti-theft campaigns and reducing line losses.

The committee which met with Muhammad Idriss in the Chair and was attended by MNAs; Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Raja Qamer ul Islam,

Chaudhry Naseer Ahmed Abbas, Rana Muhammad Hayat Khan, Khurshid Ahmed Hunejo, Syed Waseem Hussain, Junaid Akbar, Malik Anwar Taj, Sher Ali Arbab, Haji Imtiaz Ahmed Chaudhry and Ali Afzal Sahi, Muhammad Iqbal Khan. The senior officers from Ministry of Energy (Power Division) and its attached departments also attended the meeting. The Secretary, Ministry of Energy (Power Division) briefed the Committee on working and performance of the Ministry and its attached departments. The Secretary informed that the Power Division dealt with the matters relating to development of power resources of the country, electric utilities, liaison with international engineering organization in power sector, federal agencies and institutions for promotion of special studies in power sector etc. He further apprised that the Ministry had plans for development of large scale alternative renewable energy (ARE) projects including hydro power projects.

## PSX gains 150 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday gained 150.80 points, a positive change of 0.19 percent, closing at 79,992.35 points against 79,841.56 points on the last working day.

A total of 389,024,310 shares were traded during the day as compared to 495,910,236 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 20,924 billion against Rs 22,116 billion on the last trading day.

Around 445 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 181 of them recorded gains and 212 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 52 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Agritech Limited with 22,041,367 shares at Rs 24.24 per share, Hub Power Company with 18,624,585 shares at Rs 163.75 per share.

The National Savings has set an annual target of Rs 1.742 trillion for the year 2023-24, it is encouraging that 100 percent of the target has been achieved, the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Thursday.

The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the fiscal year 2022-23, he said. He said this was an Rs 200 billion additional annual target than the

target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22. The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the financial year (2021-22) which will promote savings culture in the country, he said. Given the current market trend in the country the ambitious target had been set to improve the savings culture further, he added. The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced. At this time Automated Teller Machine (ATM) has also been introduced in CDNS which will provide enough facilities to the users," he added.

## FPCCI stresses on FTA with Indonesia to enhance, diversify bilateral trade

Independent Report KARACHI: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Thursday, emphasized the need of entering into a free trade agreement with Indonesia to enhance and diversify bilateral trade while rectifying trade imbalances.

Pakistan in the Southeast Asia region," he suggested. Senior Vice President FPCCI, Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, said that ASEAN countries can be a huge export market for Pakistan as it has a population of over 600 million with a very strong middle-class. Their collective GDP in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) has well surpassed \$10 trillion, he added. VP FPCCI, Aman Paracha, stated the

President FPCCI, Atif Ikram Sheikh, in a statement, stressed that Pakistan needed to work with Indonesia to formulate a free trade agreement (FTA) in order to rectify bilateral trade deficit of up to \$3 billion. "We should work on Brand Pakistan through single-country exhibitions; exchange of trade delegations; cultural & trade exchanges and projecting soft-image of

importance of diversifying imports from Indonesia beyond palm oil and exploring opportunities for Pakistani exports in diverse sectors. He announced FPCCI's plans to organize single-country exhibition in Indonesia.



(FTA) in order to rectify bilateral trade deficit of up to \$3 billion. "We should work on Brand Pakistan through single-country exhibitions; exchange of trade delegations; cultural & trade exchanges and projecting soft-image of



## Ayaz for further strengthening Pak-Germany bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Thursday emphasized further strengthening Pakistan-Germany bilateral ties, particularly through expanding cooperation between parliamentary friendship groups and the exchange of parliamentary delegations.

He made these remarks during a meeting with the Parliamentary delegation from Germany, who called on him here. Both sides discussed a wide range of bilateral, regional, and global issues.

They expressed contentment over the current state of bilateral relations, including parliamentary ties, and reaffirmed their joint resolve to further expand and diversify mutually beneficial cooperation.

The NA Speaker said Pakistan and Germany enjoy a multifaceted friendly relationship marked by shared interests and a common stance on various regional and international issues.

"It is high time to further strengthen parliamentary, cultural, economic, and people-to-people connections between the two countries to attain a shared goal of sustainable development," said the NA Speaker.

While discussing trade and economic cooperation bilaterally and in European context, Sadiq mentioned Pakistan's proactive efforts in creating a conducive environment for economic and trade activities, providing friendly countries with

significant investment opportunities and mutual benefits.

The delegates expressed gratitude to the NA Speaker for the warm welcome and his sentiments for country and its people.

They reiterated that Germany views Pakistan as an important regional stakeholder and is committed to further strengthening linkages in all areas of mutual interest, in addition to fostering parliamentary and cultural exchanges.

German delegation comprised of Members of German Parliament; Michael Müller, Christoph Schmid and Derya Türk-Nachbar, Parliamentary officials and representatives of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung(FES) Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in a group photo with parliamentary delegation from Federal Republic of Germany at Parliament House.

## Riaz hands over apartment keys to 1-16/3 allottees

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada on Thursday handed over the keys to the allottees of the 1-16/3 apartments in a ceremony held here at the project site.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister appreciated the efforts of Pakistan Housing Authority (PHA) officials for the successful completion of the project and for carrying out the best construction work for the apartments.

Pirzada expressed concern over the shortage of housing in the country and directed PHA's Foundation management to start work on launching more housing projects to provide shelter to lower-income groups.

The minister said that providing quality and affordable housing to federal government employees was the priority of the government and hoped that the issue of govt employee's plots and apartments would be resolved by September 2024.

He directed the PHA foundation officials to complete the plantation of trees at the site and made arrangements for the supply of daily-use items in the newly growing residential area.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Rubina Khalid, Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), conducted a live E-Katcheri session at BISP Headquarters.

## Aleem directs review of Sialkot-Rawalpindi motorway project

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan Thursday instructed a review of the Sialkot to Rawalpindi Motorway project, proposing an upgrade from four lanes to six lanes to meet the future needs of the next 50 years.

During a high-level meeting of the National Highway Authority (NHA), Aleem Khan said that all motorways should be free of barriers and obstructions for vehicles.

He advocated for public awareness through print and electronic media regarding these updates. The Minister reviewed the progress on various NHA projects, including those in Balochistan, Sindh and Gilgit-Baltistan.

He directed the installation of live cameras on all NHA construction projects to enable real-time monitoring. Highlighting the importance of highways and motorways as national assets, he stressed the need to consider future demands due to population growth.

The minister prioritized the construction of economically beneficial roads and instructed the NHA to implement the phase-wise construction of the N25 highway in Balochistan, costing Rs. 150 billion. He also called for third-party evaluations of repair projects to ensure the proper utilization of government funds.

He urged the NHA to engage with the Gilgit-Baltistan government to resolve communication issues and to address directives from the Balochistan High Court by coordinating with the provincial government.

Special instructions were issued regarding the construction of CPEC-linked highways, with NHA required to include plans in a dashboard for reporting to the Prime Minister. He also called for a feasibility report on the shortest routes to access Central Asian countries in the future.

The meeting, attended by the Federal Secretary for Communications, Chairman of the NHA, and senior officers.



ISLAMABAD: Stall holders examine the burnt remains of their stalls which burnt due to yesterday's fire at the H-9 Weekly Bazaar.

## Proactive monsoon measures in place: Chairman FFC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Federal Flood Commission, Engineer Ahmed Kamal said on Thursday that rigorous efforts have been made this year to prepare for the monsoon season.

Talking to PTV World News, he said that all the federal and provincial organizations were proactively preparing for timely alerts and necessary actions for the monsoon season's flooding.

"All federal and provincial organizations start their preparations in January and February each year," he added.

Kamal said this year alone, four meetings concerning monsoon preparations were held on March 4, April 26, June 10, and most recently on July 4. In these meetings, detailed directions were issued to all federal and provincial units.

He said letters were sent to the chief secretaries of the provinces regarding river encroachments and critical shore points on river systems to ensure effective flood fighting.

The Chairman FFC also addressed the issue of timely repairs to the Sukkur barrage gates with the Sindh provincial irrigation department.

He stressed the importance of having concrete contingency plans for all barrages and dams. Kamal said, "We need to have well-prepared, well-knit, and well-implemented contingency plans in place to safeguard the population, especially in the emergency situations."

So far, he said 58 flood fighting plans from various provincial and federal organizations have been received and placed on the commission's website.

## World Population Day: PM stresses importance of joint efforts for resilient future

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday called on government departments, civil society, the private sector, and international partners to collaborate for a resilient and equitable future.

In his message on World Population Day being observed on Thursday, (July 11, 2024), he stressed the importance of sustainable population growth to ensure every citizen enjoys dignity, security, and prosperity.

"Our government is fully committed in its endeavors of providing quality education and skills training to this young generation to compete in a rapidly evolving global economy. Additionally, we are creating sufficient job opportunities for the youth to harness their potential and turn this youth bulge into an asset."

"I urge all stakeholders - government departments, civil society, private sector, and our international partners - to join hands in our pursuit of a resilient and equitable future. Together, we can build a Pakistan where every citizen enjoys a life of dignity, security, and prosperity by steadfastly pursuing the path of achieving sustainable population growth."

Creating an environment where every Pakistani can thrive requires effective management of our population growth, ensuring a balance between resources and population size to foster economic growth, improve living standards, and reduce poverty, he emphasized.

Pakistan's demographic makeup reveals a significant youth majority, comprising over 65% of the population under 30 years old. This dynamic presents dual prospects and difficulties. The nation's youth represent a powerful force for fostering economic growth, innovation, and societal advancement.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry and other officers from ministry, AJK and GB Councils, said a press release.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan presiding over a high level meeting of NHA.

## 120 Pakistanis receive US Fulbright scholarships

ISLAMABAD (APP): US Ambassador, Donald A. Blome, on Thursday congratulated 120 Pakistani students and scholars on receiving prestigious Fulbright scholarships to pursue Master's and PhD programmes in the United States (US).

The group also included participants in the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Programme. The Fulbright Programme is the US government's flagship academic exchange programme, and the Fulbright Programme in Pakistan is one of the largest in the world.

Supported by the US government, Fulbright academic exchanges enable students to attend top-tier universities, advance groundbreaking research, share knowledge, and make global connections. To ensure departing students are well-equipped to navigate the academic landscape and immerse themselves in American culture, the United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP) organized a two-day pre-departure orientation here.

## MoHR to start mechanism of certificate for PWDs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) moves to digitalise the disability certificate issuance mechanism for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). This initiative aims to streamline the process, reduce delays, and enhance accessibility.

A high-level meeting was held to discuss this initiative, attended by representatives from the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, PIMS, Polyclinic, NIRM, Chairman Medical Assessment Board Dr. Faridullah Zimri, and ED SPRC.

Key decisions made during the meeting included developing an online application and tracking system to facilitate easier access and progress monitoring for applicants.

Digital certificates will be issued to replace traditional physical copies, enhancing efficiency and security.

NADRA's database will be integrated for seamless verification, ensuring the authenticity of the information provided, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

Collaboration among stakeholders from the healthcare, social welfare, and IT sectors was emphasized to ensure the successful implementation of the digital system. This joint effort aims to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for PWDs in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Faisal Saleem Rehman, Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Interior presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Housing & Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada handing over house keys to the allottees of flats in sector 1-16/3.

## Human rights experts demand robust legislation for an autonomous Minorities' Rights Commission

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a press conference organized by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) and Peoples Commission for Minorities Rights (PCMR) vehemently criticized the private members' National Commission for Minorities Bill, 2024 recently introduced in the National Assembly, which, according to them, was in conflict with UN Paris principles regarding National Human Rights Institutions. The panelists urged the Federal government to introduce a treasury bill to create a strong legal basis for an independent,

pressed civil society reservations on the bill introduced by the treasury, noting that it was a counterfeit of the bill passed by the National Assembly and subsequently dropped by the Senate last year, due to inherent flaws. He regretted that the movers ignored the warning about the effectiveness and weak composition of the proposed body. He expressed dismay that MNAs did not consult any competent Civil Society Organizations, hence displaying a lack of seriousness regarding establishing minorities' commissions. He observed that

and mandate of a national human rights institution. He also stressed meritorious appointments on the commission.

Dr. A. H. Nayyar, an academic, researcher, and PCMR member, said that the prospective commission should function as an independent human rights institution rather than a religious body. He called for dropping the proposed representation of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), and the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) from the bill, in line with the other national commissions on human rights, child rights, and women's rights constituted through acts of parliament in Pakistan, otherwise, it will remain under the influence of religious bodies, undermining its independence.

Nabila Feroze Bhatti referenced the Supreme Court's 2014 directive, which called for the establishment of a minority rights body with a mandate to monitor the practical realization of minorities' rights and provide policy recommendations. He emphasized that the government must constitute an empowered body to fully implement the court's directive.



the minorities commission should concentrate on protecting and promoting minorities' rights and addressing violations, however, assigning this commission the tasks relating to protection, rehabilitation, and preservation of places of worship will be a departure from the functions autonomous, and effective National Commission for Minorities Rights. Peter Jacob, Dr. A. H. Nayyar, Shafique Chaudhary, Nabila Feroze Bhatti and Fatima Atif were among the panelists at the press conference held at the National Press Club.

Peter Jacob, the executive director of CSJ, ex-

## Decision on maintainability of petition against appointment of Justice Tariq reserved

ISLAMABAD (Online): Decision on maintainability of the petition against the appointment of Islamabad High Court (IHC) judge Justice Tariq Mehmoode Jahangiri has been reserved.

The petition filed by Mian Dawood against the appointment of Justice Tariq Mehmoode Jahangiri came up for hearing before single bench of IHC led by Chief Justice (CJ) Aamir Farooq for hearing Thursday.

CJ IHC Aamir Farooq remarked during the hearing of the case there are registrar office objections on your petition. Read your plea.

The counsel for petitioner Mian Dawood told the court there is objection on making Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) respondent. It is our plea that the learned judge does not come upto the qualification. Please make investigations into it.

The court inquired can quo warranto writ be filed against any judge.

The counsel told the court I give replies to both of your questions.

He gave reference to decision of Sajjad Ali Shah case 1998.

CH IHC remarked you are saying if there is personal matter of judge then it can be seen.

The counsel replied yes I am saying this.

The counsel requested, his petition is maintainable. Petition has been filed to ascertain the authenticity of letter running on social media.

The CJ IHC Aamir Farooq remarked "I have written your points. Thank you. The counsel told the court debate is going on social media and media on university letters.

The CJ IHC remarked you should not talk to the extent of merit till now. Give arguments on maintainability. The court later reserved judgment on maintainability of the petition.