

# Independent

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## Govt mulls shutting down all utility stores across country

Prime minister seeks recommendations for introduction of alternative system to such stores

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The federal government has decided to close Utility Stores across the country, a move confirmed by the secretary of industries and production ministry during a Senate Standing Committee meeting on Friday.

The secretary told the meeting the decision was part of a broader strategy of the government to exit non-essential business operations, and that efforts were ongoing to reassign affected employees to other institutions.

The announcement

was made during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Industry and Production, which was chaired by Senator Aoun Abbas. The secretary emphasized that the government's aim is to streamline its operations by moving away from activities deemed non-essential.

According to the Utility Store management, the federal government has given them two weeks, while the subsidy on items available at the stores had already ended. According to the management, after

the news of closure of the stores, there was concern among more than 11,000 employees, out of which 6,000 were permanent and others on contract and daily wages.

On the other hand, the standing committee took strict notice on the decision to close Utility Stores and sought details on the statement of the industries secretary. Committee Chairman Senator Aoun Abbas Bappi expressed concern over the government's decision.

INP adds: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif

has sought proposals for shutting down the state-owned Utility Stores Corporation (USC) and replaces it with a new system.

The prime minister also called for proposals within two weeks for an alternative system in place of the Utility Stores.

The government was mulling to give cash amounts to BISP consumers of the Utility Stores.

In the meanwhile, the Utility Stores have stopped sale of subsidized items to the BISP consumers.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on matters related to Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, and British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ms. Jane Marriott, jointly launched the "District Education Performance Index" in Federal Capital.

## Ahsan concerned over alarming results of District Education Performance Index

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday expressed concern over the fall of 58 percent of the country's districts in the medium category of the District Education Performance Index (DEPI), and remaining in the under-performing.

Addressing a news conference following the release of the DEPI 2020-23 report, Iqbal said Pakistan's literacy rate of 60 percent was insufficient for progress and must be increased to 90 percent.

"Pakistan's national average score on the index is a modest 53 out of 100, placing the country in the 'Low' performance category," according to the report compiled by the Planning Commission in collaboration with international experts and government agencies.

The report is the first of its kind to measure district-level education performance, focusing on key

outcomes such as access, learning, equity, governance and inputs like infrastructure and public financing.

Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan's 124 districts have scored an average of 53 percent in education, with no district falling into the high-performance category except Islamabad.

The report highlighted issues such as lack of Internet access and the diminishing role of technical institutions in education.

The minister said the declining quality of education has led to decreased enrollment in government schools and stressed the need for revolutionary measures like providing Internet access in schools, ensuring technological education and increasing digital literacy.

He also informed that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has recently established a task force to on education emergency. He said, a five-year plan would be shared with the provinces.

Sharing additional findings of the report, he acknowledged the progress Pakistan has made in human capital development but noted that the pace remains slower compared to other emerging economies and regional peers.

"These findings serve as a sober reminder that much more needs to be done to improve education outcomes across the country. We are in an era of knowledge revolution where the intellectual capital of the nation determines its destiny," he observed.

Ahsan Iqbal stressed that Pakistan's education indicators lagged behind those of peer countries and stated "Unless we achieve 90 percent literacy and universal primary enrollment, we cannot enter the development arena."

He emphasized the importance of fostering creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills in children and vowed to bring 25 million out-of-school children into the education system.

## Imran Khan says: Another May 9 incident could have been leveled against us had we held August 22 public meeting

ISLAMABAD (Online): PTI founder Imran Khan has said there was apprehension of chaos on September 22, therefore, Islamabad public meeting was postponed.

Had we held public meeting May 9 like incident could have occurred. This is question of prestige of court. Court allows us to hold public meeting but administration cancels it. Islamabad public meeting has been postponed for last time, he said this in an informal talk with the journalists here in Adiala jail Rawalpindi.

He further stated no judicial inquiry has been conducted so far in respect of May 9, 2023 incident. Had we insisted on holding public meeting on August 22, it was feared May 9 like event could have been shifted to us again.

He held information

was given religious parties are on protest. There is threat for fomenting chaos. Therefore I called Azam Swati and Barrister Gohar and postponed public meeting.

He pointed out they have issued NOC for September 8 public meeting. If any one tries to create any hindrance then on September 8 then they will themselves be responsible.

When PML-N is seized with fear that we are holding talks with establishment then they recall May 9.

I have not to talk with any government of form 47. I will never want country drifts into chaos.

Reacting to security sources statement he said who I am. I am head of the largest political party of the country. Therefore, I am demanding for open trial of Gen (Retd) Faiz Hameed.

## Complex problems of Balochistan actually requires serious solution, says Governor

Sheikh Jaffar Mandokhail emphasizes voice of all stakeholders including youth should be involved in process of decision making and equal access to resources and services

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has stated that the complex issues of the province actually requires serious solution.

The Governor said that he says it with conviction following his affiliation with practical politics spanning around four decades that our diversity is our biggest strength.

Therefore, the major issues of the province can be resolved through wholehearted representation and partnership of the province in the federal and provincial institutions including parliament.

The Governor was speaking to the delegation who called on him under leadership of the central leader of Jama'at-e-Islami, Sirajul Haq here at the Governor's House on Friday.

Also present on the occasion were the provincial minister, Mir Asim Kurd, parliamentary secretary, Barkat Rind and members of the provincial assembly, Maulana Hidayatur Rehman Baloch and Zarak Khan Mandokhail.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor said that sustainable peace and prosperity of the country is linked with peace and prosperity of Balochistan.

He said that we do imagine of such Balochistan where the real issues are resolved through meaningful political dialogue.

He stressed that the voice of all stakeholders including the youth should be involved in the process of decision making and equal access to the resources and services.

He said it is included in our top condition to increase the voice of youth in the policy and decision

making recognizing their important character.

He stressed the need to provide equal opportunities and facilities to the people so that they may polish their learning and creative capabilities.

He also stressed that there is a need to take the existing tense situation and prevailing sensitivity seriously by government and all political organizations and civil society.

He insisted that we should take steps in the interest of country and people keeping in view the tense situation of whole region just because we can't afford more hatred and disputes.

The Governor exhorted to the ruling elite as well as the political elders, religious scholars and intellectuals to play wholehearted role in finding peaceful solution to the present situation.

## Health ministry confirms second case of Monkeypox

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Health on Friday confirmed that second case of Monkeypox has been reported in Pakistan.

According to spokesperson of the Ministry of Health, the patient came from the Gulf countries with symptoms.

He added that the Health Desk at Peshawar Airport transferred the patient to hospital timely whose Mpox test was reported positive.

The spokesperson said that the Ministry of Health is ensuring continuous monitoring of the situation.

National Coordinator for Health Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad said that an effective system of screening and surveillance system was functional at all airports.

He added border health staff were working diligently at airports and entry points.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad said that the government was ensuring serious measures to keep people safe from epidemics.

Missing brothers of Mashwani case: Government seems to be beneficiary of enforced disappearances: IHC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has given indication to issue strict order in the case pertaining to recovery of two missing professors brothers of Azhar Mashwani.

The court remarked apparently it seems as if government is beneficiary of enforced disappearances. How the people are kidnapped and chief executive does nothing. Attorney General (AG) had said he would brief Prime Minister (PM). Chief Executive knows about these matters but even then enforced disappearances are taking place.

Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb remarked if government has not to follow due process then what can we say.

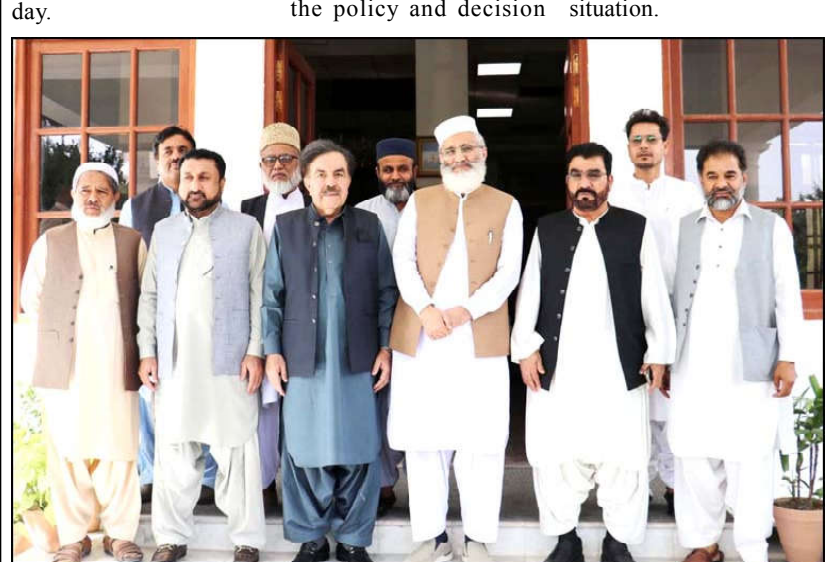
They cannot estimate how much such things are defaming the country. I am fixing this case on Tuesday. But I will not be here on Tuesday. We don't want delay in this case due to my non availability.

He gave these remarks during hearing of case pertaining to recovery of two missing professor brothers of Azhar Mashwani Friday.

Babar Awan counsel for the petitioner gave arguments.

During the hearing of the case the court inquired have you come to know anything.

Additional Attorney General (AAG) Munawar Iqbal Dogal told the court today contact has been made at high level. Efforts are under way in all ways.



QUETTA: A delegation led by former Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Sirajul Haq in a group photo with Governor Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail

## PM offers aid to Bangladesh amid severe floods

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, expressing profound sorrow and grief over recent catastrophic floods, on Friday offered assistance Bangladesh to help cope with the devastating situation.

In a letter to Chief Advisor, Bangladesh Dr. Muhammad Younis, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif expressed Pakistan's solidarity with Bangladesh during this challenging time, stating that the country stood with those who have lost loved ones, homes, and livelihoods in the floods. This was shared in a press release by the PM's Office.

## Attends funeral prayers of martyred policemen Naqvi determines to take action against attackers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has pledged to take stern action against the attackers who killed 13 police personnel in the Kacha area of Rahim Yar Khan.

Presiding over a high-level meeting at Rahim Yar Khan Airport on Friday, Naqvi emphasized the need for robust security measures and instructed authorities to equip operational forces with modern weapons and safety equipment.

Naqvi described the incident as a "sad tragedy" and directed all necessary measures to prevent such incidents in the future.

He ordered a coordinated operation against the perpetrators, stating that they would be dealt with "iron hands."

Meanwhile the funeral prayers for police personnel martyred in the attack by robbers in Machhka were held at the Sadiq Shaheed Police Lines Rahim Yar Khan.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Punjab IGP Dr. Usman Anwar and Punjab Home Secretary

Noor-ul-Amin Mengal attended the funeral prayers. A large number of senior police and military officials, police personnel, public, and relatives of martyrs also participated in the prayers.

In the robbers' attack in Machhka area the previous night, 12 police personnel were martyred and eight were injured. Three of the martyred police belonged to the Hindu community. A smart contingent of police paid tribute to the martyrs. After the funeral prayers, the bodies of the martyrs were sent to their native areas. The martyrs will be given full honors during their burial in their hometowns.

Mohsin Naqvi visited police personnel receiving treatment at Sheikh Zayed Hospital Rahim Yar Khan. Speaking to the media, he said the great sacrifices of martyrs would not go in vain. The federal government would provide complete support to the Punjab government in eliminating robbers from Kachha area. Mohsin Naqvi called the martyrdom of police personnel a tragedy for Pakistan and emphasised that those involved in the heinous act would be made an example.



RAHIM YAR KHAN: Federal Minister for Interior, Mohsin Naqvi attending funeral prayer of martyred police personnel in Rahim Yar Khan.

## Sindh & Balochistan assemblies to increase cooperation, vow Speaker BA & Sindh CM

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The Speaker Balochistan Assembly, Captain (Retd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai and Chief Minister Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah have expressed consensus on promoting the cooperation between the two provincial assemblies.

The Speaker Balochistan Assembly was in meeting with the Chief Minister Sindh whom he visited in Karachi on Friday.

The Chief Minister Sindh welcomed the Speaker Balochistan Assembly on his visit to

During the course of meeting, matters of mutual interests were discussed by Abdul Khaliq Achakzai and Syed Murad Ali Shah.

They also spoke on the sessions and business of the two assemblies during the meeting. Besides they also talked the rains and flashfloods caused due to the climate change in the provinces.

It may be mentioned here that the Speaker Balochistan Assembly reached Karachi on Friday where he met the Chief Minister Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah.

## BA session summoned from September 2 Independent Report

QUETTA: The session of Balochistan Assembly has been summoned from September 2 in the provincial assembly's Hall here.

According to an official notification issued here by the Provincial Assembly's secretariat on Friday, the Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has summoned the session of provincial assembly at 03:00 PM.

As per the notification, the session would remain continued till September 12, 2024. There would be five sittings during the session of provincial assembly, mentioned in the notification.



QUETTA: Provincial Secretary Information Imran Khan and Director General Public Relations Balochistan Muhammad Noor Khetran in a group photo with participants of two-days training regarding Public Awareness and Access to Information



## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### Who to believe?

Pakistani netizens, always quick to find humour in the darkest places, have dubbed it 'the return of the sharrarti (mischievous) sharks'.

Contradicting the state minister for IT, who had on Sunday claimed that slow internet speeds were due to Pakistanis' newfound love for VPNs, the PTA chairman on Wednesday told the National Assembly Standing Committee on IT and Telecommunication that the slowdown was, in fact, attributable to a problem with one of the submarine cables connecting Pakistan to the rest of the world.

A major fault in Pakistan's submarine cables was once, many years ago, attributed to shark activity, much to the amusement of ordinary citizens. It has since turned into a running gag about Pakistan's frequent struggles with unexplained internet failures. That it has resurfaced is a sign of how seriously the Pakistani people are taking the government's flip-flopping on ongoing internet connectivity issues.

It seems worth asking at this point whether the government realises how much damage it is causing to its credibility by repeatedly denying the problems being faced by citizens and then contradicting itself when explaining what may be causing them. Facing the NA committee, the PTA chairman deflected questions regarding the 'firewall' reportedly being rolled out by the state. Later, while speaking to a reporter, he acknowledged that the PTA has been upgrading its 'web management system' but did not elaborate on how this system works. A report published in these pages suggests that this system may be being upgraded to have the capability to throttle and limit content on an application basis, as well as allow URL filtering, IP blocking, including complete blocking of websites, and VPN whitelisting. However, experts warn that any problems with the system could impact a very large number of users because of the way Pakistan's internet is structured. This seems to have been confirmed by experience in recent days.

Pakistan cannot progress in the modern world if the keys to its nascent IT industry are to remain in the hands of a regulatory authority that cannot even prevaricate with consistency. The secrecy surrounding the ongoing tinkering with the internet is giving rise to all kinds of speculation and uncertainty, which, as multiple stakeholders have warned, has been affecting business confidence too. Meanwhile, even established experts seem to be in the dark about what the authorities seek to achieve and at what cost. This is a deeply problematic situation that may have far-reaching consequences for Pakistan. Civilian leaders must continue to demand answers from the PTA and seek clarity on what it is trying to achieve. They must also enforce a system of accountability for those responsible for this new 'web management' technology, especially for the economic losses it has been causing due to frequent disruptions to the internet.

### Zubeida Mustafa

Ours is a society where parents start planning their daughter's marriage soon after she is born. Here the social compulsion for couples to prove their fertility is so great that they have their first child within a year or so after tying the knot. Worse still, women are desperate to produce a son to protect their marriage and preserve their marital status. On top of that, we are so prudish that to talk about family planning is considered immoral.

Given the above, can family planning succeed in Pakistan? Whatever the prospects, the sane among us will have to continue to focus their attention on this field because population has become a global issue as the UN's recent World Population Prospects report tells us. It concedes that Earth can no longer sustain the massive population that continues to grow. It is now calculated that the world population will not peak before 2100 when it will stand at 10.3 billion. Pakistan is one of the 126 countries whose populations are still growing. Pakistan's population growth rate has been around 2.5 per cent in the last 25 years. Its total fertility rate is 3.6 while the world average is 2.2 and the replacement rate is 2.1.

In these bleak circumstances comes a ray of hope: a report produced by Research and Development Solutions. It suggests pragmatic strategies to meet supply-side needs, which have been inadequately addressed in this country, leading to many unintended pregnancies, abortions and a high unmet need. Above all, as the writers of this report, Dr Adnan Khan and Ayesha Khan, tell me, these strategies have actually been applied in the Akhtar Hameed Khan

## Babies galore

Foundation's Urban Impact Lab and have produced results.

In a nutshell, the report confirmed my observation that our family planning programme has failed to provide the services that many young married couples are looking for. With data gathered from various sources, the report tells us that many utilities — clinics, population centres and contraceptive outlets — exist but are grossly underutilised.

Some utilities do not have even one client in a day. Private facilities show a better outreach but even that is not satisfactory. The Lady Health Workers, who are the backbone of the programme, are ineffective as they are so loaded with numerous non-family planning duties that they give only an hour a week to mobilising women to become contraceptive users. Hence the programme has turned out to be high-cost and ineffective. There is also the problem of the procurement of contraceptives as their import is pretty centralised. Sometimes this leads to shortages that are not warranted.

Dr Adnan recommends the use of technologies to gather information on locations where there is likely to be a need, track users, increase the outreach of utilities and communicate with users. The procurement of contraceptives should also be allowed by the private sector and the government should concentrate on its role of financier rather than provider of services.

At present, Pakistan's contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) is 34pc with 11 million users. To meet the Sustainable Development Goals, there must be 20m married women of reproductive age using contraceptives by next year. This is an unattainable

target under the present system as only 5m more women will join the contraceptive users' ranks.

By using technology, Dr Ayesha has transformed these vital statistics in her project. In the first phase (2019 for 15 months), in a population of 278,000 with 36,000 women she managed to increase CPR from 33pc to 44pc. Mainly injections and IUCD (intra-uterine contraceptive device) were used with the per user cost amounting to only Rs1,100. In the second phase (2023 for two years) more residents were added — 800,000 with 126,000 women. The results? The CPR shot up dramatically to 51pc. In the second phase, technology was used and the rise in CPR was dramatic.

Dr Ayesha says that if all urban slums were provided with this technology-driven programme, 37m people would be reached. And that is a substantial number.

Will the increase in the outreach of family planning facilities cause people to internalise the 'small family' message? Dr Adnan believes it will not. Once the pressure is withdrawn, they will lapse into having sex without using contraceptives. The narrative has to be changed. I agree. Fundamentally, it calls for the empowerment of women and to teach all and sundry about the rights of the young ones they give birth to.

The need is to treat human development holistically. We have to promote education, provide healthcare, livelihood and shelter for all. Without these basic needs being fulfilled, people will have no control over their lives. Would a man unaware of what lies in store for him worry about the planet being overpopulated? - Courtesy Dawn

## Dropped chances

### Shahzad Sharjeel

We have been approaching polio wrong all along. It is not just a public health, water, and sanitation problem. Above all else, it is a political economy and geostrategic challenge.

Poliomyelitis is a viral infection transmitted via the oral-faecal route that targets the motor nervous system, leading to paralysis. It is sometimes fatal. Pakistan and Afghanistan are the last holdouts of polio. The fate of the rest of the world depends on these two countries separated by the Durand Line. Those who have been helping Pakistan eradicate polio face a choice; how would they choose if the choice came down to a polio-free world and the status quo in the region?

The custodians of Pakistan's national security must decide if any strategic depth is worth inflicting on the country's future generations this crippling disease and, in the process, being singled out as the nation that took down the entire globe with it because it sought to treat a neighbouring country as its backyard.

The hospitable people in the borderlands regularly take to the streets in the thousands to participate in peace rallies; it is the security apparatus that should realise that we suffered enough by embroiling ourselves in other people's wars and espousing proxies.

If we had informed certain 'guests' that they were not welcome on our soil, those hunting them would not have stooped so low as to go sniffing in the guise of vaccinators. The backlash continues to haunt us.

The political economy of procuring the polio vaccine drops and utilising the Bill and Melinda Gates Founda-

tion IDA buyback programme by successive governments in fits and starts warrants an in-depth investigation. We have a history of under-the-table deals on anything and everything, from wheat imports to sugar exports. What makes us believe some will not salivate when procuring polio drops?

No country in the world has lost as many polio vaccination workers, including health and police personnel, in terrorist attacks as we have. According to reports, more than 200 members of vaccination teams have been killed. The shambolic handling of security strategy in campaigns is among the prime reasons.

Polio eradication is more of a communication challenge than anything else. Mullah Fazlullah was running over 100 illegal FM channels, spewing venom against the vaccine and vaccinators. Pakistan and its development partners were solely focused on vaccine drops, the cold chain, and some attention to inter-provincial movement. No effort was made to counter the negative propaganda in the guise of religion. One cannot think of a single public or community radio channel countering the militant vitriol.

A lack of political will is usually disguised as a lack of capacity. We would have had different results if even five per cent of the polio eradication budget had been earmarked for strategic communication and the right expertise had been tapped.

Photo-ops for prominent personalities administering polio drops are fine but insufficient. An in-depth and nuanced communication strategy is required, with the right messages and messengers reaching every neighbourhood and

street. India and Nigeria did it despite poverty, illiteracy, and myriad insurgency movements to match ours, so why can't we? The poorest corners of Africa have won the battle against this disease; whenever a freak case reappears anywhere, we brace ourselves lest it be traced back to us. The last case Malawi recorded two years ago was traced to a Pakistani strain. We are not too popular around the globe for myriad acts of om-ission and co-mmission. The world is seeing a tilt towards right-wi-ng, authoritarian leaders vowing to build iron walls to keep out im-m-igrants. Even supposedly friendly countries go about announcing that Pakistani la-bour is not welcome. Before the world de-cides to put polio-related travel curbs on us, we need to put all the genies of extremism, militancy, and regression back in the bottle.

All entities trying to help Pakistan need to change tack. They should use all the leverage; any stakeholder who does not cooperate in polio eradication should forget about transit trade, continued facilitation to refugees, defence courses, spare parts for the stockpiled junk, and access to technology.

At times, one feels pity for Bill Gates. He tries his best to help us rid ourselves of polio. One wonders if the amused look on his face during his last meeting with the Pakistani leadership was because he had heard 'resolves to fight polio' before or if he was merely bemused by the matching socks and neckties in the room.

Fourteen new polio cases have already surfaced in Pak-istan. We must turn the search for the latest polio case into a hunt for the last one. - Courtesy Dawn

## Commerce News

### Pakistan eyes Turkish expertise to elevate aviation industry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, while appreciating the success of Turkish aviation industry on Friday, said that collaboration in this sector with Turkiye was an important part of bilateral relations between the two countries.

During a meeting with Chairperson of Pegasus Airlines, Mehmet T. Nane, who was accompanied by CEO of Lucky Cement Limited Muhammad Ali Tabba, the minister noted

that the collaboration in this field was aligned with the Prime Minister's vision to enhance Pakistan's aviation industry.

He also recalled a recent meeting with the Turkish Trade Minister, where both sides discussed various avenues for trade and business collaboration, according to press release issued by finance ministry.

This meeting, he noted, was part of broader strategy to strengthen ties between Pakistan and Turkey in multiple sectors, including

aviation. On the occasion, Mehmet T. Nane presented an overview of the Turkish aviation strategy, highlighting key aspects that could benefit Pakistan's aviation sector. He elaborated on how Pakistan could leverage Turkiye's experience and expertise to advance its own aviation industry.

The discussions were deemed highly fruitful, marking a step forward in Pakistan's efforts to boost its aviation capabilities and foster stronger economic ties with Turkiye.

### Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships, Tolten, X-Press Anglesey and Epic Burano carrying Container and LPG, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminals and Engro Vopak Terminal respectively on Thursday. Eleven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships Tolten, X-Press Anglesey and New Apex left the port today morning while four more ships, Antares, Epic Burano, Navig-8 Constellation, and Madison Eagle are expected to sail on Friday.

Cargo volume of 142,127 tonnes, comprising 94,464 tonnes of import cargo and 47,663 tonnes of export cargo carried in 3,294 Containers (2,003 TEUs Imports & 1,291 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during the last 24 hours. Four ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them two ships, Solar Roma and Gaschem Mosel & four more ships, Bolan, Beijing, Hyundai Busan, and Maersk Columbus carrying Palm oil, Chemicals, Mogas, and Container are expected to take berths at LCT, EVTL.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, in a meeting with Mr. Mehmet T. Nane, Chairperson of Pegasus Airlines, accompanied by Mr. Muhammad Ali Tabba, CEO of Lucky Cement Limited.

### Telenor Velocity, I2I collaborate to transform Pak startup landscape

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a strategic move to bolster Pakistan's growing startup ecosystem, Telenor Velocity, Telenor Pakistan's premier startup accelerator, forged a powerful alliance with Invest2Innovate (i2i).

According to news release by combining Telenor Pakistan's market reach, technological infrastructure, and industry expertise with i2i's proven track record in

nurturing entrepreneurs, this partnership aims to empower startups to scale rapidly and compete on a global stage.

Pakistan's youthful demographic, with 64% of the population under 30, presents an immense opportunity for innovation. With a population of nearly 240 million and 80% teledensity, the country boasts a vibrant startup ecosystem.

### SBP injects Rs966.5b into market

KARACHI (APP): State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) injected Rs966.5 billion in the market on Friday through reverse repo purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation (OMO). According to OMO results issued here, the SBP conducted Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) on August 23, 2024 for 7-day and 28-day tenors and accepted 20 bids cumulatively amounting to Rs816.5 billion.

The central bank received 19 bids for 7-day tenor cumulatively offering an amount of Rs1,119.4 billion at the rate of return

ranging between 19.58 to 19.65 percent while 2 bids were received for the 28-day tenor offering an amount of Rs16.5 billion at the rate of return ranging between 19.61 to 19.62%.

The SBP accepted 18 quotes for 7-day tenor amounting to Rs800 billion at 19.59% rate of return while 2 quotes for 28-day tenor amounting to Rs16.5 billion were accepted at 19.61% rate of return.

Meanwhile, the central bank also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation for 7-day and 28-day tenors and injected Rs150 billion in the market.

### SNGPL disconnects eight more connections

LODHAN (APP): Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) UFG Control Task Force cut off eight more connections including one commercial besides removing six extensions. Giving details, SNGPL sources said a consumer was found using a compressor to suck gas, and his connection was severed.

In Gaggi Mandi, a consumer was found using a domestic meter for commercial purposes, and his meter was also removed.

### PSX gains 08 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Friday and gained 08.01 points, showing a slight positive change of 0.01 percent, closing at 78,801.43 points against 78,793.41 points on the last working day. A total of 682,409,886 shares were traded during the day as compared to 804,261,249 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 18.168 billion against Rs 16.975 billion on the last trading day.

### Pak-Afghan liaison body demands extension in TAD implementation

PESHAWAR (APP): Businessmen dealing in Pak-Afghan trade have demanded a two-month delay in the implementation of the recently enforced Temporary Admission Documentation (TAD) policy to allow clearance of the long queue of trucks standing on both sides of the border in wait of permission for goods delivery.

The demand was made during a meeting of the Pak-Afghan Liaison Committee held at the Directorate of Transit

Trade Model Custom Collectorate with Additional Director Transit Trade, Dr. Tahir Iqbal Khattak.

According to a press release issued here on Friday, the meeting was attended by Coordinator Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, Former SVP SCCL, Engr Manzoor Elahi, President Khyber Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Syed Jawad Hussain Kazmi, VP Frontier Custom Agents Association.



HYDERABAD: A worker is busy operating a power loom to prepare cloth in a local factory.

### Short-term inflation eases by 0.10 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 0.10 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on August 22, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 321.72 points as compared to 322.03 points during the past week. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 16.69 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban

centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. Likewise, SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732, witnessed decrease of 0.24 per cent and went down to 310.29 points from last week's 311.04 points. The SPI for the consumption groups of Rs 17,732-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175 decreased by 0.22 percent, 0.15; 0.12 percent and 0.05 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 21 (41.18%) items increased, 9 (17.64%) items decreased and 21 (41.18%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded major decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included tomatoes (21.96%).



QUETTA: A vendor displaying fresh Melon (Garma) at Joint Road Quetta to attract customers to experience the sweet, juicy flavor of locally grown fruit.

### Naem Mir says: Tax table being reviewed to address trader's apprehensions

FAISALABAD (APP): Coordinator to Prime Minister for Tajir Dost Scheme Muhammad Naem Mir has said that tax table is being reviewed to address apprehensions of traders.

Addressing a meeting in the committee room of DC Office here, he said that main objective of PM's Tajir Dost Scheme is to facilitate traders for tax filing. Under this scheme, the traders could get them registered as filer through mobile app without the

help of any consultant. This scheme would help the non-filers to file their income tax returns easily.

He said that under Tajir Dost scheme, the tax table is being reviewed so that apprehensions of the traders could be redressed. He said that powers of tax collection are being transferred at regional level and now Regional Commissioner FBR could review the tax table after consulting the traders and addressing their apprehensions.



## Punjab Health minister emphasizes commitment to providing best health facilities

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique reiterated the government's commitment to enhancing healthcare services across the province. In a meeting with Professor Javed Akram, Head of the Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine (PSIM), and other key officials at the Department of Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education, the minister emphasized the ongoing efforts to provide the best health facilities to the masses. During the discussion, he highlighted that the PSIM has been instrumental in advancing medical services globally, including within Pakistan. He further stated that, in line with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's vision, significant improvements are being made in the healthcare system and available facilities. "Allah Almighty has given us a rare opportunity to serve patients in government hospitals," he remarked, underlining the importance of this responsibility. Professor Javed Akram announced that the PSIM is organizing an international conference in November, aimed at furthering medical education.



LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif in a meeting with Professor Javed Akram, Head of the Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine (PSIM), and other key officials at the Department of Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education.

## Justice Chaudhry Iqbal recuses from hearing case against internet shut down

LAHORE (Online) Justice Chaudhry Muhammad Iqbal of Lahore High Court (LHC) has recused from hearing petition against internet shut down and installation of firewall. The petition against internet shut down and installation of fire wall came up for hearing in LHC Friday. Justice Chaudhry Muhammad Iqbal while recusing from hearing petition filed by Judicial Activism Panel ordered to transfer the case to the court of Justice Shakil Ahmad. The court said Justice Shakil Ahmad is hearing cases similar to this case. The petitioner had taken plea internet and social media apps have been shut down in the country without giving any reason and notice. Every sphere of life and business is being affected due to internet shut down. It was further said in the petition that shutting down internet runs contrary to fundamental human rights. The court was requested to nullify the federal government decision for shutting down internet besides issuing order for complete.



LAHORE: Provincial Ministers for Health Khawaja Salman Rafique and Khawaja Imran Nazeer preside over the 7th meeting of cabinet committee for Dengue and other diseases.

## Governor Kundi thanks PM in construction of Dera-Rajanpur road

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Friday expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Federal Minister for National Highways Abdul Aleem Khan and the officials of the National Highway Authority (NHA) for their support in the construction of 329 kilometers Dera Ismail Khan to Rajanpur road. In a video message, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi said that the construction work on this vital road will begin this year. He said that the road will be upgraded from a two-lane to a four-lane highway with the support of the Asian Development Bank, holds immense importance for both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. Tenders for the project have already been issued that would usher new era of development, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi added. The Governor also highlighted that construction work on the Ramak to Tibba Qaisarani section of the road will start within this year. The project is divided into four phases, with the Dera Ismail Khan to Ramak to Punjab Tibba Qaisarani section covering 96 kilometers. Additionally, Kundi mentioned that tenders for the Dera Ismail Khan Chashma Lift Canal project will soon be issued. The Prime Minister has allocated 19 billion rupees from the federal budget for this project. Kundi thanked Federal Minister Musadiq Malik and the Chairman of WAPDA for their roles in this initiative. The Governor also revealed that the No Objection Certificate (NOC) for the Dera Ismail Khan International Airport has been issued, with construction expected to start next year. Kundi emphasized that these mega projects will significantly contribute to regional development, highlighting that practical steps are being taken rather than just making promises. The road and canal projects are set to be inaugurated later this year, while the airport project will commence in the coming year.

## ANF recovers 234 kg drugs in four operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations managed to recover 234 kg drugs worth Rs 20 million and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He said that 123.6 kg opium and 108 kg hashish were recovered from a vehicle intercepted on M-1 Motorway Islamabad and two accused were arrested. In another operation, 1.5 kg heroin was recovered from a woman netted near Kamalpur Interchange, Faisalabad. 400 grams ice was recovered from an accused rounded up on Hub River Road Karachi.

## GB govt forms committee to address dam affected people's grievances

GILGIT (APP): Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan while addressing a high-level meeting regarding the implementation of CBMs for the Diamer Bhasha Dam and Dasu Dam said that these dams are of utmost importance for Pakistan's prosperity. CM GB said the people of Diamer have made sacrifices for the completion of these projects. It is our collective responsibility to address the genuine concerns and apprehensions of the affected people, he added. He said the non-implementation of CBM's has raised severe concerns among the people of Diamer. He added that in a recent meeting with the Chairman WAPDA, the issue of CBM's was also discussed. In the meeting, Brigadier @ Shoaib Tahir, General Manager of Land Acquisition and Resettlement, and General Manager/Project Director Diamer Bhasha Dam Engineer Nizakat Hussain presented the revised CBM plan on the directives of the Chairman WAPDA and briefed about it. On this occasion, the Chief Minister formed a special committee comprising elected members of the Assembly from Diamer.

## 4 of family found dead in car

SARGODHA (APP): Four members of a family were found dead in a car, in the jurisdiction of Bhera police station on Friday. Motorway police received a call about a suspected car (LEF-7339) at Bhera motorway interchange. On information, the motorway police reached the spot and found five member of a family in a precarious condition in the car. Rescue-1122 volunteers shifted the victims to a hospital where Romeela (60), Mehwish (30), Samer (28) and Auon (4) expired while Umar Qasim (30) was still under treatment. The victims were belonged to Lahore. Doctors said the consumption of tainted food was the cause of death.

## Meeting appreciates govt plans, efforts to protect minorities' rights in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): A meeting was held at the Civil Secretariat on Friday to highlight and appreciate the Punjab government plans and efforts to protect rights of religious minorities in Punjab. Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora, presiding over the meeting, said that the Punjab government was taking all possible steps to protect rights of religious minorities to ensure elimination of the sense of deprivation that emerged in the past among the religious minorities. Chairperson of Punjab Women Protection Authority Hina Parvez Butt highlighted the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's Digital Punjab and development of the province. She said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, the rights of women, especially those belonging to religious minorities, were being safeguarded. She added that women in Punjab were making significant contribution to development of Pakistan, and they were prominently visible in every field.



HYDERABAD: People are using boat for transportation due to non-availability of bridge to cross the canal, at Channel Mori in Hyderabad.

## Eman Shah says: GB govt's Rs 5bn fund to bridge healthcare gaps for deserving patients

ISLAMABAD (APP): Advisor to Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan, Eman Shah Friday said that Gilgit-Baltistan government has taken a major step towards bridging the region's healthcare gap with the establishment of a Rs 5 billion endowment fund, where the fund will cover treatment costs for deserving patients, alleviating financial distress and ensuring timely medical care. The government's commitment to prioritizing citizens' health and well-being is further demonstrated by plans to increase the fund annually, he said while talking to PTV news. The establishment of the endowment fund is a testament to the Chief Minister's vision for a healthier Gilgit-Baltistan, he added. By providing financial assistance to deserving patients, the government aims to reduce the burden of medical expenses on low-income families and ensure that everyone has access to quality healthcare, he mentioned. For deserving patients in Gilgit-Baltistan, the endowment fund brings a ray of hope, he said, adding, many patients in the region have been unable to access medical treatment due to financial constraints where this fund will now provide them.

# International News

## Kamala Harris accepts Democratic nomination ahead of US elections with pledge of 'new way forward'

WASHINGTON: Kamala Harris accepted the Democratic presidential nomination in Chicago on Thursday before a rapturous crowd, pledging a "new way forward" if she beats Republican Donald Trump in November's blockbuster election. The 59-year-old sought to strike a presidential tone as she delivered a message of unity and opportunity for Americans following one of the most extraordinary turnarounds in US political history. She lashed out at Trump, accusing him of trying to "take our country" backwards and of cosying up to foreign "tyrants" like Russian President Vladimir Putin. "On behalf of everyone whose story could only be written in the greatest nation on earth, I accept your nomination to be president of the United States of America," the vice president said to huge cheers. "I will be a president who unites us around our highest aspirations," she vowed. The convention became a giant party to celebrate Harris's astonishing ascent from something of a political afterthought to Democratic standard bearer upon President Joe Biden's surprise decision to end his reelection bid. A sea of waving Stars and Stripes flags and chants of "USA" filled the arena as jubilant Democrats anointed Harris. She was later joined on stage by her running mate Tim Walz and their families, as they held their arms aloft while 100,000 red, white and blue balloons tumbled from the ceiling. Country act The Chicks sang a version of "The Star-Spangled Banner" while pop star Pink also performed as the Democrats rolled out a list of celebrity backers. Harris pledged to be a "president for all Americans" in a bid to reach out to undecided voters. With the November election, Americans have a "fleeting opportunity to move past the bitterness, cynicism and divisive battles of the past — a chance to chart a new way forward," she promised. Harris then took aim at 78-year-old Trump, whose campaign has been upended by having to face a woman two decades younger, rather than the increasingly frail Biden, 81. "We know what a second Trump term would look like," she said, referring to a right-wing think tank's blueprint for a future Republican government. "It's all laid out in 'Project 2025,' written by his closest advisors, and its sum total is to pull our country back to the past."

## France's Macron holds talks with key political players in a bid to form a new government

PARIS: After the excitement of the Paris Olympics and a Mediterranean vacation, now French President Emmanuel Macron has to figure out how to make his country governable again. Faced with a hung parliament, social tensions and ballooning debt, Macron kicked off talks Friday with key political players in a bid to choose a new prime minister who would form a government and end the deadlock created by snap legislative elections last month. Members of the left-wing New Popular Front coalition that won the most seats pressured Macron for a quick decision. Their nominee for prime minister, little-known civil servant Lucie Castets, said after Friday's meetings in the Elysee Palace that she was ready to govern, and ready for compromise to get things done. But the party only has about a third of the seats in the National Assembly, France's powerful lower house of parliament, and no party has a majority. Macron's centrist alliance came in second and the far-right National Rally came in third. There's no rulebook that requires Macron to name a candidate from the party that won the most seats, or lays out a timeline for a decision. The absence of any dominant political bloc is unprecedented in France's modern Republic.



US Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff, US 2024 Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris, Minnesota Governor and 2024 Democratic vice presidential candidate Tim Walz and Tim Walz's wife Gwen Walz hold hands at the end of the fourth and last day of the DNC at the United Center in Chicago, Illinois.

## India's Modi meets Zelensky on historic Ukraine visit

KYIV: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky on a historic visit to Kyiv on Friday, where he is pushing for a solution to end more than two years of war with Russia. Modi embraced Zelensky — who looked visibly emotional — at the Mariinsky palace in Kyiv, in the first ever visit by an Indian premier to Ukraine. The Indian leader is casting himself as a possible peacemaker between Moscow and Kyiv. But his visit comes at a dramatic moment in the two-and-a-half year war, with a diplomatic settlement appearing more elusive than ever. Kyiv's forces are mounting a major incursion into Russia's Kursk region while Moscow's army is advancing in eastern Ukraine.

## 21 Indians dead, more feared missing after bus plunges into Nepal river

NEW DELHI: Half of the passengers in a bus carrying 43 Indians died on Friday when the vehicle plunged into a rain-swollen river in neighbouring Nepal, according to a spokesperson for the Himalayan nation's armed police. A total of 21 people died and 22 were injured, Shailendra Thapa, a spokesperson for the armed police, said, adding that all 41 passengers and two crew were Indian and headed to the capital Kathmandu from the tourist city of Pokhara when the accident occurred. Roads in the mountainous region can challenge drivers as they are often narrow and treacherous, making it tough to manoeuvre large vehicles around hairpin curves. Rescuers pulled 22 people from the rain-swollen waters of the Marsyangdi river in the Tanahun district, about 118 kilometres from Kathmandu, of which 12 were seriously injured and airlifted to the capital. Police and army teams climbed down long metal ladders to reach the river, using ropes to pull the injured and dead.

## 27 killed as Israeli tanks push deeper into Gaza

CAIRO: Israeli forces pressed deeper into areas of the central and southern Gaza Strip as they battled Hamas fighters, while Palestinian health officials said on Thursday that Israeli strikes had killed at least 27 people across the enclave. The new escalation comes hours after US President Joe Biden pressed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the urgency of sealing a deal for a truce in Gaza and the release of prisoners, the White House said. Separately, US and Israeli delegations started a new round of meetings in Cairo on Thursday to secure a ceasefire deal. Months of on-off talks on a ceasefire have circled the same issues, but Israel and Hamas have stuck firmly to their demands. In the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya, a strike on a house killed 11 people, including children and women, the bodies of some of whom had been burnt, according to the territory's Civil Emergency Service. Medics said another strike killed six people, including a local journalist, in a house in Al-Maghazi camp in the central Gaza Strip, while five others were killed in separate strikes in the south. Later on Thursday, five Palestinians were killed and several wounded in an Israeli airstrike that hit people near a square in Khan Younis, health officials said. The Israeli military said its forces had intensified their operations in Deir Al-Balah, in central Gaza.

## UK PM tells China's Xi he hopes for 'honest' discussions

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer told Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday he hoped they could have "honest" discussions about thorny issues as they held the first call between leaders of the countries in over two years. The formal conversation was the first between the pair since Starmer won power last month, and was also the first official call between a British leader and Xi since March 2022. The chat comes amid a period of strained relations between London and Beijing over espionage allegations and Beijing's tightening control over former British colony Hong Kong. The two remain major trading partners, however, and are both permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. According to a Downing Street readout of the call, Starmer noted hope that he and Xi "would be able to have open, frank, and honest discussions to address and understand areas of disagreement when necessary". Such issues include "Hong Kong, Russia's war in Ukraine, and human rights," the readout said. China was Britain's fifth-largest trading partner as of 2023, according to UK statistics, but diplomatic relations were icy under Starmer's predecessor Rishi Sunak. Soon after taking office in October 2022, Sunak declared an end to the so-called "golden era" of UK-China relations trumpeted by former prime minister David Cameron. Sunak characterised China as a "systemic challenge" to UK values. Espionage allegations have since presented additional hurdles to repairing relations, with Beijing saying in June that Mi6 recruited Chinese state employees to spy for the UK.

## 10 migrants drown as boat sinks on Serbia-Bosnia border

SARAJEVO: Authorities recovered 10 bodies, including an infant, after a boat carrying migrants capsized on Thursday in the Drina River on the Serbia-Bosnia border, but officials said other people were believed missing. Police said the vessel was carrying several migrants when it flipped near Ljubovija in Serbia, a transit country on the so-called "Balkan route" that migrants use to reach the EU.





ISLAMABAD: As per PM's directives, NDMA convened the fourth meeting of National Disaster Response Committee (DRC) at NDMA HQs in Islamabad. The meeting was chaired by Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives and co-chaired by NDMA Chairman Lt. General Inam Haider Malik.

## Malik urges PTI to shun hate rhetoric, promote peace

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Petroleum Dr. Musadik Masood Malik on Friday warned the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership, particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Chief Minister Shaukat Tarar, to shun hate rhetoric and promote peace. Malik said the PTI leadership is not only undermining national harmony but also compromising the country's stability and security. He said the PTI leadership is not only undermining national harmony but also compromising the country's stability and security. He said the PTI leadership is not only undermining national harmony but also compromising the country's stability and security.

## Bilawal condoles over martyrdom of police officials in Punjab

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, has expressed deep grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of 14 police officials in an attack by bandits in Punjab. According to a press release issued here by the party secretariat, he strongly condemned the incident, emphasizing that maintaining law and order was the responsibility of the provincial government. Bilawal Bhutto urged the provincial government to deal with the criminal elements with an iron hand. "I hope that those responsible for the martyrdom of these 14 brave Punjab Police officials will soon be brought to justice," Bilawal Bhutto added.



HUB: Chairperson BISP Senator Rubina Khalid and Advisor for Industries Mir Ali Hassan Zehri attending a briefing by Firm supplying nutrition food items for World Food Organization

## Fare of Umrah flights decreases by Rs. 20,000: Governor appreciates launch of Quetta-Jeddah Umra flights & further discount in fares by PIA

QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has appreciated the initiatives of Pakistan International Airlines regarding launch of the special direct Umrah flights from Quetta to Jeddah and reduction in their (flights) fares. In an official statement issued here on Friday, the Governor said that he is very much pleased with the announcement made about discount in the fares of special Umrah flights to be operated between Quetta and Jeddah. He said that further discount in the fares is double advantage for all Pakistanis living in Saudi Arabia and especially for the Umrah pilgrims travelling from Quetta to Jeddah, which offers them an easy access on one hand and important saving on the other hand, he added.

## ECP forms inquiry panel to probe Ijaz Chauhan's secret foreign visit

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has formed a five-member inquiry committee to investigate allegations of violation of the code of conduct by Punjab Election Commissioner Ejaz Anwar Chauhan on Friday. According to media reports, the Provincial Election Commissioner of Punjab, Ejaz Anwar Chauhan, has been directed to submit a written response within 10 days. According to the order issued by the ECP, Ejaz Anwar Chauhan is accused of concealing foreign travel to Canada without obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC). As per the ECP order, it is also alleged that Provincial Election Commissioner Ejaz Anwar Chauhan did not show interest in his supervisory role. Reportedly, on August 5, 2024, Provincial Election Commissioner Punjab Ejaz Chauhan, who is a grade-20 officer, was made Officer on Special Duty (OSD). Ejaz Anwar Chauhan took charge of his responsibilities as Punjab Provincial Election Commissioner on January 18, 2024. Be



QUETTA: Director General Public Relations Balochistan Muhammad Noor Khetran distributing certificates among participants of two-days training regarding Public Awareness and Access to Information. Provincial Secretary Information Imran Khan is also present

## PM directs to instantly constitute SMEDA, other vital institutions' Boards

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday chaired a meeting on matters related to the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), emphasizing the crucial role of SMEs in Pakistan's economy. He said the small and medium enterprises act as the backbone of the country's economy. Expressing dismay over the non-functioning of the SMEDA Board, the prime minister directed its immediate constitution, stressing that boards of all institutions vital for the country's economy should be established without delay. Additionally, he called for promoting subcontracting in industries and taking all possible measures to integrate Pakistani industries into the global supply chain. The prime minister also ordered to take necessary steps to ensure appointment of the SMEDA's Chief Executive Officer. Additionally, he also directed to include the people from the private sector in the steering committee. During the briefing, the prime minister was informed that for the first time, SMEDA Development Fund had been launched for which an amount of Rs 30 billion had been allocated for 6 years. Out of the total, Rs 5 billion have already been provided for the year 2024-25, the meeting was told. It was informed in the meeting that, there were currently 5.2 million small and medium enterprises in Pakistan, which account for 40 percent of the country's GDP whereas 31% of country's exports depend on the SMEs. Apart from non-agricultural employment, SME sector provides 72% of employment while some Rs 491 billion have been provided in the form of bank credit for the SME sector so far, but the bank credit for the SME sector needs to be taken up to Rs 800 billion, the meeting was told. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahmad Khan Cheema, Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain, PM's Coordinator Rana Ishaq Afzal, and other relevant high officials.



QUETTA: A delegation led by Chairman Quetta Welfare Council Haji Daud Jamal Bareeh meeting with Governor Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail

## Standing body for fisheries meets, discusses matters of fisheries department

QUETTA: The Standing Committee for fisheries met with the Chairman of the Committee and Member Provincial Assembly, Maulana Hidayatur Rehman Baloch in the chair on Friday. The meeting attended by the members of Standing Committee Abdul Majeed Badini, Zaid Ali Reki, Ms. Safia and parliamentary secretary for fisheries, Barkat Ali Rind was briefed about the matters related to the fisheries department. During the course of meeting, important issues being faced by the department were also discussed. The committee was informed that the sea area of Balochistan spreads over 17,180 square kilometers. The committee was also briefed about the dangerous ratio of extreme exploitation of the resources of fisheries sector. The light was shed on the need of effective procedure of improvement and rehabilitation. Speaking on the occasion, chairman of standing committee stressed the need to increase POL for the effective patrolling. He also urged the government to allocate budget for maintenance of the boats of the department so as to stop the illegal trawling.

## 1.5 million street kids at risk; MoHR calls for urgent legal reform

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Human Rights called for urgent new laws to protect Pakistan's 1.5 million street children, who face severe abuse and exploitation due to displacement, poverty, and violence. According to estimates, there are 1.5 million street children in Pakistan. Once on the streets, these children face heightened risks of abuse, including child labor, exploitation, trafficking, and arbitrary arrest, he added. The time has come to give serious attention to the plight of street children, especially since the Ministry of Human Rights has committed to addressing school dropout issues. He emphasized that only education can make a difference. migration, extreme poverty, and a rising count of runaway children fleeing homes, workplaces, and schools due to violence. According to estimates, there are 1.5 million street children in Pakistan. Once on the streets, these children face heightened risks of abuse, including child labor, exploitation, trafficking, and arbitrary arrest, he added. The time has come to give serious attention to the plight of street children, especially since the Ministry of Human Rights has committed to addressing school dropout issues. He emphasized that only education can make a difference.



QUETTA: Chairman Standing Committee Maulana Hidayatur Rehman presiding over a meeting regarding Fisheries Department

## Pakistan sees annual exodus of 0.8m workers seeking jobs abroad on protected visas

ISLAMABAD (INP): Approximately 0.8 million Pakistanis travel abroad each year to seek and obtain jobs in different countries, using valid protected work visas issued by the Protectorate of Emigrants. According to an official source from the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Overseas Pakistanis who are not registered with OPF can do so voluntarily by paying a one-time fee of Rs. 4,000 and meeting the standard terms and conditions. There are two categories for OPF membership: Compulsory Category I for those registered with the Protectorate of Emigrants and proceeded abroad, and Voluntary Category II for those who have been abroad for at least a year but are not registered with the Protectorate of Emigrants. This category includes indefinite stay abroad, valid work/employment visa holders, students (male/female) aged 18 and above. been registered with BE&OE, and 250,000 membership cards have been issued to Overseas Pakistanis. Overseas Pakistanis who are not registered with OPF can do so voluntarily by paying a one-time fee of Rs. 4,000 and meeting the standard terms and conditions. There are two categories for OPF membership: Compulsory Category I for those registered with the Protectorate of Emigrants and proceeded abroad, and Voluntary Category II for those who have been abroad for at least a year but are not registered with the Protectorate of Emigrants. This category includes indefinite stay abroad, valid work/employment visa holders, students (male/female) aged 18 and above.



QUETTA: MPADr. Muhammad Nawaz Kibzai meeting with Provincial Minister for Finance Mir Shoab Nausherwani

## NDMA convenes 4th session of Disaster Response Committee

ISLAMABAD (APP): As per Prime Minister's directives, NDMA convened the fourth meeting of National Disaster Response Committee (DRC) at NDMA headquarters here on Friday. The meeting was chaired by Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning and Special Initiatives and co-chaired by NDMA Chairman Lt General Inam Haider Malik, a news release said. The session focused on evaluating the progress of directives issued during the third DRC and updates were provided on response undertaken by the provincial departments during rain emergencies. The plans to address potential emergencies that are likely to happen in the next monsoon spell specifically in South Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan were discussed. Representatives of Pakistan Railway and National Highway Authority apprised the forum about damages of infrastructure and communication lines during localised rain emergencies. Officials of NDMA provided an overview of the anticipated impacts, situation of water reservoirs and risk calculations prepared by NEOC for the current monsoon along with NDMA's preparedness and plans. NEOC also gave an appraisal of the weather outlook of regional countries and the on-going flood situation in Bangladesh. Chairman NDMA informed the house about the arrangement and plan for humanitarian relief operations for flood-stricken areas of Bangladesh as and when it is required. Planning minister appreciated the role of NDMA, Federal and Provincial Authorities to ensure a prompt and effective response to monsoon-related emergencies.

## PTA intensifies crackdown against illegal issuance of SIMs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office in Lahore, in a close collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circle, conducted a raid against a telecom franchisee located at Depalpur, District Okara. According to a press release, prior to this, hundreds of complaints were received from poor female residents of the area regarding the misuse of their fingerprints and the unlawful issuance of SIMs under the guise of distributing Rashan through the BISP program. During the raid, the FIA seized 25 suspicious SIMs, and 2 suspected BVS devices. The Retailer of the franchise was arrested at the spot and FIR has been registered by the agency. FIA Cybercrime Circle is further investigating the case. This action was the result of complaint filed by the PTA with the FIA, concerning the illegal activation of SIMs through the sales channel. The crackdown is part of PTA's ongoing efforts to curtail illegal issuance of SIMs and underscores Authority's dedication for eradicating the menace.



PESHAWAR: Jamat-e-Islami (JI) Chief, Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman along with others addresses to media persons during press conference, at Markaz-e-Islami in Peshawar.

## AC Hub hands over important medicines to MS of JGQH

QUETTA (APP): Assistant Commissioner (AC) Hub Muhammad Ali Durani handed over necessary medicines to Medical Superintendent (MS) of Jam Gulam Qadir Hospital (JGQH) on Friday. The medicines, including ringolact drips 1000 ml and 500 ml slime infusion and injection 18 cottons of 500 mg, were provided for JGQH by Otsuka Company. The Assistant Commissioner Hub visited different wards of the Hospital. The MS briefed the AC about the provision of the health facilities to the patients in the hospital and other issues of it. He informed that the work of restoring the solar system of the hospital has also been started. He said that these medicines would help in timely first medical aid in casualty section of the hospital. The MS thanked the AC and the Otsuka Company for provision of the medicines to the hospital.

## DC warns of stern action against violators: Quetta district admin issues revised price list of different edibles

QUETTA: The Quetta district administration has issued revised price list of different edibles warning the shopkeepers and vendors to follow the same, otherwise stern action would be taken against them. The official price list was decided during the meeting chaired by the Deputy Commissioner Quetta, Saad bin Asad here the other day. The concerned officials as well as the representatives of different associations and traders were present in the meeting. The meeting fixed the prices of different edibles after thorough consensus and discussion. As per the official hand out issued here, the rate of mutton has been fixed as Rs. 1900 per kilogram with Rs. 1050 per kilogram fixed for the beef. Similarly, the rate of fine quality rice has been fixed as Rs. 290 per kilogram and rate of tota (pierced) rice was fixed as Rs. 180 per kilogram. The price of per kilogram sugar was fixed as Rs. 150. Similarly, the per liter milk would be sold at Rs. 190 and per kilogram curd would be sold at Rs. 200. The rate of tandoori roti (naan) was also fixed. As per the revised list, naan weighing 165 grams would be sold at Rs. 20 while naan of 330 gram would be sold at Rs. 40. The Deputy Commissioner Quetta said that the implementation on new price list would be made from today.