



**A convicted person makes judiciary controversial, bemoans Fawad**

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) vice president Fawad Chaudhry, while reacting to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif's statement on Friday, said a convict, fugitive person was engaged in making judiciary controversial. (Details on Page 3)



**Conspiracy hatched to portray Islam as 'extremist religion': NA Speaker**

NA Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Saturday said that a well-thought-out conspiracy was hatched to portray Islam, which is the religion of peace, as a conservative and extremist religion. He made these remarks while speaking at the Maleeka tul Arab conference held under the auspices of Mukhtar Organization Pakistan in connection with the death anniversary of Ummul Momineen Hazrat Khadeeja tul Kubra (S.A). (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

**Free flour bags**

RAWALPINDI: Women leave from wheat flour distribution center carrying heavy bags on their head. The federal government's well-intentioned initiative to provide free flour to the needy this Ramadan has been met with criticism after stampedes and disorder claimed at least six lives at similar distribution points across the country, in the City.



Photo: Online

**Four soldiers martyred as Iranian terrorists open fire in Balochistan**



**Spokesman Report**

RAWALPINDI : Four soldiers were martyred as a result of firing from the Iranian side, stated Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Saturday.

"A group of terrorists operating from the Iranian side attacked a routine border patrol of Pakistani security forces operating along the Pakistan-Iran Border," the statement read.

The incident took place in Jalgai sector of District Kech which resulted in the martyrdom of Naik Sher Ahmad, Lance Naik Muhammad Asghar, Sepoys Muhammad Irfan and Abdul Rasheed. No one has claimed the responsibility yet.

"Necessary contact with Iranian side is being made for effective action against terrorists on the Iranian side and to prevent such incidents in future," the ISPR said.

**Coalition govt demands simultaneous polls; warns deviation to create political crisis**

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: The coalition parties on Thursday expressed its "lack of confidence" in three-member bench of Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan hearing a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) petition against the delay in elections of the Punjab Assembly.

The decision was taken during a high-level meeting of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) parties, chaired by Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif to discuss the "overall political situation of the country", according to a statement issued by Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The coalition parties expressed lack of confidence in the Supreme Court bench — comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Muneeb Akhtar.

The meeting was summoned after the Supreme Court rejected the ruling alliance's plea for a full court bench in the election delay case. The apex court itself witnessed high drama, with two



judges recusing themselves from the remaining three-member bench.

Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail withdrew from the bench a day after Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan rescued himself from hearing the case.

During the meeting, matters relating to the country's overall situation, the alliance's future strategy and other issues were discussed in the meeting.

According to the statement, the meeting of PDM parties demanded that elections should be held in the country at the same time.

"Holding transparent and impartial elections is a funda-

mental constitutional requirement and deviation from it will push the country into political crisis," read the declaration.

The meeting fully supported the recent legislation of the Parliament and stated that the obstacles in the way of justice have been removed by this bill. The meeting urged all stakeholders to respect the parliament's supremacy.

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Last month, the Senate passed

the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill 2023, which aimed to clip powers of office of the chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) to take suo motu notice.

The bill was moved by Federal Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar in the Senate. The Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure), Bill 2023 was adopted by a majority vote of 60-19.

**Postponement of elections**

Earlier in March, Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced to delay of the Punjab by-elections which were scheduled to be held on April 30.

The ECP withdrew the Punjab Election Program notification issued on March 8 and decided to postpone the Punjab election and announced October 08 as the new date for elections in Punjab.

The ECP spokesman said that the president Dr Arif Alvi also been informed about the postponement of elections in Punjab, adding that the new election schedule will release soon.

Meanwhile, Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar briefed the

participants about the economic situation in the country.

Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui of Muttahida Qaumi Movement, Aminul Haque, Sardar Akhtar Mengal, Hashim Notezi, Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, Muhammad Tahir Bizenjo, Mehmood Khan Achakzai, Shafiq Tareen, Amir Haider Hoti of Awami National Party, Mian Iftikhar Hussain, Dr Khalid Magsi of Balochistan Awami Party, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Tahir Bashir Cheema, Nawabzada Shahzain Bugti, Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Khawaja Saad Rafiq, Rana Sanaulah, Rana Tanvir Hussain, Marriyum Aurangzeb, Malik Muhammad Ahmed Khan, Attaullah Tarar, Allama Sajid Mir, Aslam Bhotani, Moulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, Shah Awais Noorani, Kamran Murtaza, Mohsin Dawar, Farooq H Naik, Murtaza Wahab, Sheeraz Rajpar, and others attended the meeting.

**Govt moves SC to withdraw curative review reference against Justice Isa**

**News Desk**

ISLAMABAD : The federal government on Saturday filed a petition in the Supreme Court to withdraw curative review reference against Justice Qazi Faez Isa.

The government said it did not want to pursue the case and pleaded the apex court to allow the withdrawal of the petition against the senior judge.

A day earlier, President Dr Arif Alvi approved the withdrawal of the curative review reference and Civil Miscellaneous Application (CMA) against the judge of Justice Isa.

The president gave the approval on the advice of the prime minister in accordance with Article 48 of the Constitution. Dr Alvi also signed his power of attorney in favour of Advocate Supreme Court Anees Ahmed Shehzad.

**Gen Bajwa pressurized me to extend friendship with India: Imran Khan**

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE : Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan said that when the Supreme Court first restored the National Assembly through suo moto, then it was right, and now when the top court wants elections through it, the suo moto became wrong.

Talking to journalists in Lahore, he also said that Gen Bajwa had pressurized him to develop a friendship with India. He said that Bajwa was not a man of principles.

PTI Chief declared that if elections are not held in 90 days, there will be no constitution in the country.



The former Prime Minister said that the attack on his house in his absence had no justification. The caretaker government should have played the role of a neutral which it was not doing. He also alleged that CM Mohsin Naqvi, IG Punjab, and CCPO Lahore were criminals.

Mr Khan further said that Dr Arif Alvi is no longer play-

ing any role between the establishment and the party. If elections are not held in 90 days, we will take to the streets adding they have been completely blacked out by the media.

He said that the ruling people are trying to control social media as well. He also questioned under what law the dissolved assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be restored.

The ex-premier further said that they are also trying to control social media. Bajwa, Imran said, says something one day and denies it the next. Accountability against Bajwa should be initiated from within the army, Mr Khan desired.

**Imposing Imran, real cause to all problems: Khurshheed Shah**

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD : Minister for Water Resources Syed Khurshheed Ahmad Shah on Saturday said that imposing Imran Khan was the real cause to the problems being faced by the country.

If the Supreme Court did not find a way forward through the constitution of the full court, then there would be no other way, he said in a statement issued here.

He said fixing the actual responsibility for the political crisis, it should commence from General Pasha. Citing different retired generals, he said that General Pasha, General Zaheer Islam, General Faiz, all supported Imran Khan, he said. He regretted that grave constitutional crisis was created instead of resolving the political crisis in the country.

**PM pays tribute to martyred soldiers, condoles with families**

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD : Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Saturday expressed grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of four security personnel in an attack of terrorists in district Kech in Balochistan.

He paid tribute to the martyred Naik Sher Ahmed, Lance Naik Muhammad Asghar, Sepoy Muhammad Irfan and Sepoy Abdul Rashid.

The prime minister condoled and sympathized with the bereaved families of

the martyred. He said sons of the nation were sacrificing their precious lives for the defence, security and protection of the motherland.

"Nation salutes the martyrs who sacrificed themselves for the country."

He said eradication of terrorism was a national agenda and with the help of Allah Almighty terrorists will be eliminated.

He prayed for the elevation of ranks of martyrs and for patience to the bereaved families.

**Dar chairs meeting to review progress on Hajj Scheme 2023**



**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting to review progress on Hajj Scheme-2023.

Mufti Abdul Shakoor, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Secretary Religious Affairs, Special Secretary Finance and senior officers from Finance and Religious Affairs Ministries attended the meeting, said a press release issued here Saturday.

The meeting reviewed and discussed progress on the Hajj-2023.

Secretary Religious Affairs briefed the meeting that receipt of applications for the Hajj-2023 was closed on

31st March, 2023 as per the government policy.

It was also informed that 72869 applications had been received in the banks against the government regular scheme quota of 44190.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and interfaith Harmony also provided details about its foreign exchange requirement for the Hajj-2023.

It was desired by the Chair that complete and fully reconciled information regarding the final number of applications received under the Regular Scheme should be collected from the banks by Tuesday 4th April, 2023.

On receipt of complete information, the government shall review and decide the final number of intended applicants for Regular Hajj Scheme-2023.

## Group photo

ISLAMABAD: First Lady Begum Samina Alvi in a group photo with medical professionals at an awareness seminar in connection with Autism Spectrum Disorder at a hospital on Saturday.



Photo: PID

## Begum Alvi stresses upon greater awareness about ASD

## Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: First Lady Begum Samina Alvi on Saturday stressed upon greater awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to create greater understanding, encourage parents to seek early intervention therapies and ensure greater integration of persons with autism in society.

"Despite the prevalence of disabilities in our society, individuals with disabilities face many barriers to inclusion and participation. They may face discrimination, stigma, and lack of access to essential services, such as education, healthcare, and employment," the first lady was addressing a seminar on the occasion of World Autism day at Shifa International Hospital.

She said that it was their collective responsibility to

work towards breaking down societal barriers for the individuals with disabilities by promoting their greater inclusion in all sectors of society.

"This means creating accessible environments, promoting universal design, and ensuring that individuals with disabilities have access to the resources and support they need to participate fully in their communities,"

"Today, we reiterate our resolve to continue to work together to ensure that their rights are protected and that they are fully included in all aspects of society," she added.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was an international treaty that outlined the rights of individuals with disabilities and set standards for their inclusion in society, she added.

She said Pakistan had already ratified this convention and it had already enacted laws that provided for the rights of persons with disabilities.

Enumerating certain steps, she said, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) had introduced policies for students with disabilities and they were being provided fee waivers in Pakistan's higher educational institutions.

The first lady mentioned that they also initiated a campaign on the rights and facilitation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in 2022.

With the help of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) about 128.15 million awareness messages in Urdu had been sent on this topic in Pakistan, she said, adding through their awareness campaign on the rights of PWDs, they were sensi-

tizing the people of Pakistan about their rights and society's responsibility towards them.

She further informed that they also held meetings with the representatives of PWDs, the provincial government, NADRA, and social welfare departments to highlight the issues being faced by PWDs. Similarly, laws had been enacted that have made it mandatory for the issuance of building permits to all future public buildings in the capital to be accessible and PWD-friendly, she added.

She said that the individuals with disabilities had the fundamental rights to education and employment, but they often faced significant barriers in accessing these rights.

These barriers might be due to a lack of accessible schools and classrooms, specialized support and services, or

discrimination and stigma from employers, she added.

It was crucial to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to quality education that met their unique needs and to create inclusive workplaces that valued their skills and abilities, she opined.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Executive Officer of Shifa international hospital Dr. Zeeshan Bin Ishtiaque said that the hospital was committed to improving the lives of individuals with autism.

Dr. Nosheen Kazmi, a psychiatrist, said that every individual had to play a role in supporting autistic children and adults in society.

Muhammad Kashif Khan, AGM rehabilitation department, said that role of rehabilitation was vital in making a child with ASD functional and independent.

## Toshakhana case: Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi challenges NAB notices in IHC



## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi on Saturday moved the Islamabad High Court (IHC) against the call-up notices issued by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in a reference regarding Toshakhana gifts.

The former first lady has challenged the notices served on her on March 16 and 17 through her lawyer, Khawaja Harris. She has made the NAB chairman, and additional director of NAB Rawalpindi respondents in the case.

Bushra Bibi had pleaded the court to declare the notices null and void. She also requested the high court to bar the NAB from taking any disciplinary action against her on the basis of the notices. The petitioner asked the court to stop NAB from converting the case inquiry into an investigation.

The development comes after she failed to appear before the anti-graft watchdog to join the inquiry proceedings in the reference.

A notice issued to Imran Khan,

## City Desk

Bushra Bibi and others in the Toshkhana case in February this year states: "The competent authority has taken cognisance of an offence allegedly committed by the accused persons under the provisions of NAO, 1999. In this regard, the inquiry proceedings have revealed that during your tenure in office you retained some state gifts presented to you by various foreign dignitaries including the following luxury items — five Rolex wristwatches; one iPhone presented by Chief of Staff, Qatar Armed Forces, dated 14.11.2018; (No. E67574V3), a pair of cufflinks, one ring; unstitched cloth of pant coat from Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia dated 18.09.2020; Graff gift set containing one Graff wristwatch Master Graff Special Edition Mecca timepiece, one 18K gold and diamond Graff pen and a ring and pair of cufflinks with micro-painting of Mecca."

"You are therefore requested to join the inquiry proceedings before the Combined Investigation Team (CIT), NAB (Rawalpindi/Islamabad), Civic Centre, G-6, Islamabad," reads the notice.

## Derogation of judiciary, other institutions should be stopped: PAT

## Bureau Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) has asked political parties to stop 'derogatory attitude' towards the judiciary and other national institutions.

In a declaration, the PAT spokesperson Khurram Nawaz Gandapur said that the organisation of elections in 90 days is an inevitable constitutional requirement.

He said that Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) will actively take part in national politics. The PAT leader

expressed sorrow over the ruthless police action against the political workers.

The PAT leader demanded the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) take notice of injustices in the Model Town incident case.

Gandapur said that the free wheat flour campaign was turned into a bloody drive due to the mismanagement of the incumbent government.

He expressed fear that the US dollar price would be increased to Rs500 if Ishaq Dar remains finance minister of the country.

## Conspiracy hatched to portray Islam as 'extremist religion': NA Speaker

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Saturday said that a well-thought-out conspiracy was hatched to portray Islam, which is the religion of peace, as a conservative and extremist religion.

He made these remarks while speaking at the Maleeka tul Arab conference held under the auspices of Mukhtar Organization Pakistan in connection with the death anniversary of Ummul Momineen Hazrat Khadeeja tul Kubra (S.A) held at Islamabad.

The Speaker highlighted the role of Hazrat Khadija al Kubra (SA), the wife of



the Holy Prophet (PBUH), in relation to her services for the cause of Islam.

He mentioned that Hazrat

Khadija (SA) as the endorser of the first revelation of Islam who had established the largest business empire in the Arab

world and was renowned as Tahira, the purest lady.

However, the Speaker expressed concern that the

west may not be aware of the great personality of Hazrat Khadija (SA) due to the negligence of the Muslim Ummah in promoting her role in Islamic history.

He lauded the contribution made by Quaid e Millat e Jafariya Agha Syed Hamid Ali Shah Moosavi who played an effective role in commemorating the days attributed to Mashahere e Islam and highlighting their pious characters.

The event was participated by renowned dignitaries of different schools of thought, poets, and political, social and religious scholars who offered extraordinary tributes to the services of Hazrat Khadeeja al Kubra (S.A).

## Rana Sanaullah condemns attack on security forces

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah condemned the attack on Pakistan's security forces on the Pakistan-Iran border.

Rana Sanaullah condemned the attack on Pakistan's security forces on the Pakistan-Iran border and paid tribute to four martyred security personnel.

He said the sons of the soil were sacrificing their lives for the defence, security and protection of the motherland.

"Nation salutes the martyrs who sacrificed themselves for the country," Sanaullah said, adding that the entire nation is united with security forces in the war against terrorism.

## CTD operation in Central Punjab nine terrorists arrested

## Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Punjab arrested 9 alleged terrorists of banned outfits during operations. According to the spokesman, the CTD Punjab conducted 21 intelligence based operations in different districts of the province to effectively deal with any untoward incident of terrorism, in which 23 suspected persons were interrogated and 9 alleged terrorists were arrested with weapons, explosives and other prohibited materials.

The arrested terrorists include Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan members Muhammad Tayyab, Sher Muhammad and Tahir Mehmood, Lashkar Jhangvi members including Abdul Rashid

Ghazi, Nazir Ahmed, Muhammad Fahad, Muhammad Ashd, Muhammad Usman and Rehan, he added.

The spokesperson said that explosives 2481 grams, safety fuse wire 24 feet, detonators 15, one pistol 30 bore with bullets, 3 books of banned organization, 2 magazines, 8 stickers, 1 mobile phone and 14120 rupees in cash have been recovered from them.

He said that the terrorists had planned to sabotage across the province and wanted to target important installations and other religious places.

The police have registered 5 cases against the arrested alleged terrorists in Sargodha, Rawalpindi and Gujranwala and shifted them to an unknown location, he added.

that 340 combing operations were conducted during this week with the help of local police and security agencies. During these combing operations 15558 persons were checked, 41 suspects were arrested and 33 FIRs were registered while 26 recoveries were made

Shah Mehmood Qureshi Meet With MWM Party Leadership

Asim Tanveer Multan: Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran Khan gave Vice-Chairman Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi the task of communicating with various political parties. A meeting was held between the important leaders of the party. In this meeting, to ensure the protection of the supremacy of the Constitution, the inde-

pendence and autonomy of the judiciary, and to prevent the unconstitutional actions taken by the PDM against other opposition parties including the Tehreek-e-Insaf, they Discussions on joint efforts from our platforms were on the agenda.

In the meeting with Tehreek-e-Insaf and Jamaat-e-Islami, Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi clarified that he has given his stand in favor of the rule of the constitution and will continue to give it in the future. Vice Chairman Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf will continue this series of contacts with other religious and political parties for the sake of the country's political situation and the interest of the people

## Pakistan not failed state, says Maleeha Lodhi

## Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan ambassador to the United Nations, UK and the United States Dr Maleeha Lodhi said on Friday Pakistan was not a failed state but a state having failed governance.

She said prolonged and intense nature of the confrontation between the Pakistan government and former prime minister Imran Khan was unprecedented. She said political issues must be resolved solely by political means.

She said the only way forward was for "all sides to step aside and call for a ceasefire through interlocutors to

agree on a consensus for simultaneous provincial and national elections."

Ms Lodhi said that on the one hand, political parties invited army for intervention in political affairs and, on the other, they criticised the army for meddling in politics. She said the politicians must find solution to the political crisis by themselves.

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## Karachi ration stampede: Police arrest factory owner

## Bureau Report

KARACHI: Police on Saturday arrested the owner and administration staff of the factory linked with the deadly stampede in Karachi during ration distribution.

At least 12 persons including three children were killed in a stampede during the ration distribution at a local factory in Karachi on Friday. The sorrowful incident took place at a local factory near Siemens Chowrangi in Karachi's SITE area.

The arrest comes following the registration of case at the SITE A police station on behalf of Sub-inspector (SI) Malik Asif Zia under Sections 322, and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC).

## Islamabad court again defers Shahbaz Gill's indictment in sedition case

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court in the federal capital on Saturday once again deferred the indictment of PTI leader Shahbaz Gill in the sedition case.

Additional Sessions Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra has put off the indictment till May 6 on the request of Mr Gill and his legal team.

During the hearing, the judge asked: "You are going abroad and when will you return?" The PTI leader pleaded the court to show some leniency as he needed to go abroad. Later, judge Sipra deferred the process of framing charges against him till May 6.

# A convicted person makes judiciary controversial, bemoans Fawad

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE : Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) vice president Fawad Chaudhry, while reacting to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif's statement on Friday, said a convicted, fugitive person was engaged in making judiciary controversial.

Fawad Chaudhry said the fugitive person while sitting in London was threatening the judiciary. He said first the PTI government was overthrown through closed-door conspiracies and now the judiciary was being made controversial. He said a convict would not be allowed to dictate the Supreme



Court. Speaking to media along with PTI leader Mussarat Jamshed Cheema in Lahore on Friday, Fawad Chaudhry

said a convict would not be allowed to dictate the judiciary regarding the constitution of benches and hearings of cases. He should remember that his brother Shehbaz Sharif's government was also established after a suo motu notice.

Mr Chaudhry condemned the 'anti-judiciary campaign' by the rulers. He said the Sharif family was given the maximum opportunity by the judiciary to defend themselves. He said the country would follow the Constitution and law.

The PTI vice president said Nawaz Sharif had only one option left, which is facing the law after returning the money looted from the national exchequer.

## Conspiracy against SC being launched from London, says Elahi

**Bureau Report**



LAHORE : Punjab former chief minister Parvez Elahi said on Saturday the demand of the full court was laughable and the Supreme Court was facing conspiracy from London.

He claimed that the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia had refused to give the guarantee of Shehbaz Sharif and Ishaq Dar to the IMF while saying the international community now understood that the current government was feeble and lacked support of the common people. He expressed a view that the global community was seeing the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf as the next ruling party.

PTI's president said the current regime wanted to avoid polls and therefore it was talking about the formation of full court while saying the person who fled after telling lie was now ironically giving lecture to judiciary.

## Thousands Ramadan gift flour bags distributed to poor peoples: Amir Khattak

**Asim Tanveer**

MULTAN: Commissioner Multan Division Engineer Aamir Khattak said that 25 lakh 23 thousand 860 flour bags have been distributed in Multan Division under Ramadan package. Flour bags were distributed to more than 20 lakh families from March 19 to March 30. 240 thousand 242 flour bags were distributed in one day. Flour is being provided by making 663 counters at 74 flour distribution points in the division. These views were expressed by Commissioner Engineer Amir Khattak while presiding over the review meeting about the Ramadan package. He also directed to separate the counters of the people. He said that 1542 users, 151 civil defense personnel are on duty at various points in the division. The number of counters and users should be increased as required.

40 users per center at tehsil headquarters, 60 users per center at divisional headquarters. Checking counters, awareness centers should also be built for the convenience of citizens. He said that the Punjab government has given an ideal Ramadan package for the deserving class. The officers of the district departments and civil defense officials are also performing their duties.

Citizens are benefiting from the fruits of government subsidy by showing restraint. The rush has been reduced by establishing more flour points in the district. In the meeting, Additional Commissioner Sarfraz Ahmed, Additional Commissioner Deputy Commissioner Abida Farid, Assistant Commissioner Arshad Vito, on video link. Deputy Commissioners, officers of concerned departments were present

## Fail department provide facilities to prisoners for month of Ramadan

**Asim Tanveer**

MULTAN: Mohsin Rafique, Deputy Inspector General of Jails, Multan and Dera Ghazi Khan Region, made a quick inspection of District Jail Rajanpur and reviewed the night security and iftar arrangements. Superintendent Jail Rasool Baksh Kalachi was also with him on this occasion. The DIG made a detailed visit to all the barracks, cells, security ward, death penalty block and jail hospital inside the jail. Inspected prisoners' kitchen and also checked iftar equipment and quality of food. The DIG also visited the employees' mess and directed to further improve the quality of food. The DIG Jails stressed the need to further improve the lighting arrangements to the Superintendent Jails. He said that duty should be ensured at the security point in any case

## Education Training Workshop

Rawalpindi: University of Sunderland UK organized a one-day Education Training Workshop to train teachers in Rawalpindi. The workshop was conducted by Rakhshanda Ghoshal, former senior trainer of British Council and Fouzia Rizwan, Academic Consultant at EMS School and Project Evaluator at Teach for Pakistan. Regional Manager of University of Sunderland UK, Humair Ahmed, also addressed the workshop.



## PPP opposed PML-N's free flour distribution scheme: sources

**News Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) opposed Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N)'s free flour distribution scheme, ARY News reported citing sources.

According to sources, the PML-N initiated the Free Flour Scheme despite opposition from the coalition parties.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) strongly opposed the scheme and presented their reservations in the cabinet meeting to the prime minister. The PPP had suggested distributing money via BISP instead of free flour distribution, sources added.



Sources said the PML-N-led government is constantly ignoring the coalition parties. The Prime Minister made a mockery of the people when he went to the free flour distribution point via helicopter.

Further, the international media is also covering the long queues outside the free flour distribution points. The money distribution scheme has been successful in Sindh so far as the free flour distribution scheme has resulted in the death of several people. Earlier, a stampede during free flour distribution left two women dead and 45 others injured. Stampede at free flour distribution point at Quaid-e-Azam Stadium resulted in death of two women and injuries to 45 other people, rescue officials said. Rescue sources said that 19 injured persons were shifted to DHQ teaching hospital Sahiwal for medical attendance.

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## Thousands free wheat flour distributed among the deserving people: DC

**Raza Naqvi**

ATTOCK : Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza on Saturday while addressing the news conference has said that 3 lacs 36 thousand 205 bags of free wheat flour was distributed among the deserving people of the district at 32 points through a well organized manner. Responding different questions of the media persons, DC Attock told that free flour drive would be constituted till 25 Ramazan in compliance with the police guidelines of the Punjab Government. He said that the supply of free flour was launched throughout the district in coordination with all relevant department amid tight security to avoid any untoward stampede.

He said that the necessary arrangements for distribution of free flour were made at all the sale points established in six tehsils include Attock, Pindigheb, Jand, Fatehjang, Hassanabdal and Hazro as well as at all union councils levels which open from morning at 06 o'clock onward to facilitate the deserving people without any interruption. DC Attock said that separate distribution counters were set up for the gents, senior citizen and females where officials were also deployed to help the people on the spots. DC Attock said that free flour bag would be handed over only one person of the deserving family.

He also appealed to the deserving people to avail this facility at their nearest distribution point. He said the prices on other food items is also being strictly checked by the price magistrates to discourage the artificial inflation created by the illegal profiteers and hoarders particularly during the holy month of Ramazan. In addition to, critical bazars have also been set up at conspicuous places of the markets for provision of edibles on subsidized rates which aimed at to extend immediate relief to the common man.

## Mirpur Healthcare Community delegation calls on PM AJK

**Bureau Report**

MIRPUR: A delegation of Mirpur Healthcare Community called on Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan here today.

The delegation led by Dr. Adnan Marghoub and Dr. Ijaz Raja, while briefing the premier about the issues relating to the hospital and medical college, presented a charter of demands on behalf of the community. The charter of demand includes the increasing the honorarium of house officers and post-graduate trainees in the upcoming budget, increasing the salary of medical officers and specialists according to their respective cadres and grades, increase of salary and grant

of allowances to doctors working in remote areas, regularization of 120 doctors with more than five years of ad-hoc service who served during the Corona epidemic, addressing the shortage of staff at Kashmir Institute of Cardiology Mirpur on emergency basis, immediate appointment of Nephrologist at DHQ Mirpur, permanent appointment of Psychiatrist at DHQ Mirpur, establishment of Oncology Hospital in Mirpur for treatment of cancer patients, enhancing post graduate training opportunities, starting MSMD program organized by universities in various specialties, allocation of 100 kanals of government land for doctors in all three divisional headquarters Mirpur,

Rawalkot and Muzaffarabad etc. The prime minister, on the occasion, agreed upon all the demands and assured the visiting delegates that all their legitimate demands would be fulfilled and whatever problems faced by the community would be addressed on a priority basis. The Prime Minister also assured the delegation that during his next visit to the city he would pay a detailed visit to Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Medical College.

Of those who were part of the delegation included Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad Raja, Dr. Tahir Mehmood, Dr. Gohar Latif, Dr. Ahmed Naeem Kayani, Dr. Shoaib Khan, Dr. Majid Altaf, Sajid Ahmad Chaudhry and others, whereas Medical Superintendent Divisional Headquarters Teaching Hospital Mirpur Dr. Amir Aziz and Principal Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Medical College Professor Dr. Faisal Bashir was also present. Meanwhile, Central Chairman Zakat Council Chaudhry Muhammad Siddique called on Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan. Speaking on the occasion, the PM directed the concerned authorities to ensure fair distribution of Zakat among the poor and needy in Azad Kashmir. The PM said that as per his announcement, an amount of 6000 and 12000 rupees should be paid as zakat and dowry funds to the needy.

## Naseer Vohra praises Faisalabad Electric Supply



**Mian Rashid Asghar**

FAISALABAD: Naseer Yousaf Vohra President Markazi Cloth Board Ittehad Group Pakistan has expressed that, poor political interaction & energy crises are totally against the welfare and development of Pakistan & Pakistan needs for think tanks who may provide accelerative policies as per need and necessity of the people. He further expressed that criticism with the mind of positive reinforcement takes us on the real track, so we all must follow & understand the philosophy of Islam and adopt progressive ways of prosperity instead blaming falsely. He appreciated the Engineer Bashir Ahmad CEO, FESCO region who managed electricity during Sehar, Iftar and Taraweeh. Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) administration has completed all operational arrangements & finalized a comprehensive strategy across the region to ensure uninterrupted power supply to

consumers during this ongoing holy month of Ramadan ensuring further upcoming summer season strategies to keep running the wheel of industry which is the part & parcel of our industrial development.

Vohra further expressed that, Chairman FESCO (BODs) Malik Tahir Awan and CEO Engr. Bashir Ahmed observe eight districts of the region, including Faisalabad, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh, Sargodha, Mianwali, Bhakkar, Khushab and Chiniot, special desk/control room has been established to monitor the uninterrupted electricity supply during the month of Ramadan, which remained satisfactory operational 24 hours a day.

He further said that the monitoring cells established at FESCO Headquarters and all five circles & personally monitoring by Chief Executive FESCO Engr. Bashir Ahmed and General Manager Operations Rana Ayub. In the special control room, the duties to various assigned to monitor the smooth transmission of electricity at the time of Sehar, Iftar and Taraweeh presents that we are born independent for people's welfare.

He expected that all officers of Chief Engineer level will monitor the operational activities as monitors of these circles for immediate redressal of any emergency and consumer complaints.

He said that effort to deal with the consumers in a very friendly manner and taking steps to solve their problems immediately in the spirit of good services.

Vohra stressed on the need of hard work, because "No pain no gain" is the fundamental rule to go ahead.

**ISLAMABAD**  
15° - 23° Clear

**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr ..... 4:32 am  
Zohr ..... 12:12 pm  
Asr ..... 4:41 pm  
Maghrib ..... 6:28 pm  
Isha ..... 7:53 pm

**EMERGENCY**

Rescue (Police) ..... 15  
Bomb Disposal ..... 15  
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad ..... 1122 & 16  
Emergency Ambulance ..... 1122 & 4451122  
Motorway Police ..... 9266044  
Motorway Police ..... 9270601-20

**Women Police Stations**

Islamabad ..... 9222596  
Rawalpindi ..... 9270601-20

**ENQUIRY**

Edhi Ambulance ..... 115  
PIA Flight Info ..... 114  
PIA Cargo ..... 9280979  
Railway Inquiry ..... 117  
Railway Exchange ..... 9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi ..... 5555489  
CAA ..... 9281092

**HOSPITALS**

CMH ..... 561111  
MH ..... 561116  
MH ..... 561116  
Cantt Hospital ..... 9270907-11  
DHQ ..... 5556311-4  
RGH ..... 9290301-7  
Holy Family ..... 9290322-7  
PIMS ..... 9261170-79  
Polyclinic ..... 9218300-09  
Shifa International ..... 4603666

**DEPARTMENTS**

CDA ..... 9221334-43  
CDA ..... 9208301-04  
Met Office ..... 9250360-6  
RDA ..... 5555864  
TMA ..... 5770886  
Cantonment Board ..... 9270151-3  
Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation ..... 9209224  
Potohar Town ..... 9209224  
Rawal Town ..... 5773343

**COMPLAINTS**

Water Tanker Service  
E-7, F-10 & F-11 ..... 9204654  
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8 ..... 9203883  
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 ..... 9266316  
Wapda Islamabad ..... 9217579-80  
Sui Gas Complaint ..... 119, 9272249  
Wasa Water Tank  
Rawalpindi ..... 0331-5022125

# PPP MNA Qadir Mandokhail lashes out at PML-N ministers

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) MNA Qadir Mandokhail on Saturday lambasted the ruling Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) federal ministers Ishaq Dar and Rana Sanaullah over the IMF agreement and mishandling Imran Khan's arrest issue.

In an exclusive interview with ARY News, the PPP lawmaker, who also heads NA Committee on Affected Employees of federal government, criticised finance minister Ishaq Dar over his statement regarding 'not compromising on the country's nuclear programme' given in



the Senate. Demanding a probe against PML-N senator, Qadir Mandokhail said that PPP would not compromise on the country's nuclear and missile programme. The PPP MNA also lashed out at Inte-

rior Minister Rana Sanaullah and Punjab IGP for mishandling Imran Khan's arrest issue. "I told Rana Sanaullah to handle the situation wisely, but he failed in controlling the one person and the situation got worse."

In response to a question regarding Nawaz Sharif's return, Mandokhail said, "it is good that Nawaz Sharif not coming back to Pakistan as PPP getting stronger on the political front."

Qadir Mandokhail also opposed the ban on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). "I am not in favor of imposing a ban on any political party, we must fight them politically."

## PDM chief Molana Fazl rules out negotiations with PTI on elections

City Desk



ISLAMABAD :Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) chief Molana Fazlur Rehman on Saturday said the ruling coalition would neither negotiate nor hold any dialogue with the PTI chairman Imran Khan on elections.

Talking to the media after a PDM huddle, which boycotted the three-member Supreme Court (SC) bench hearing Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) elections case earlier today, he said the SC was hearing an important case regarding elections adding that two judges distanced themselves and another two dissented with a nine-member bench hearing the case. "The nation went into confusion upon judges' recusal and later two more judges rescued themselves ultimately leaving the case to a three-member bench", he added.

He said Mr Khan was brought to power through rigging in the 2018 general elections and asked if the suo motu notice was taken on the rigging.

He went on to say that morally, the remaining justices should also distance themselves from the bench adding that they should decide the case independently. "Elections should be held at one time to keep the country united", he added. Census was going on, he said, and once it was completed, delimitation would start.

The JUI chief said how politicians, the parliament, and the public should perceive the ongoing situation adding that it was the ECP's constitutional prerogative to announce a date for elections. "The suo motu case has been rejected by 4-3 and we do not put our weight behind a three-member bench", he added. Mr Khan wanted division, he said, between institutions.

## Eight criminals arrested, drugs and weapons recovered

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital police apprehended eight outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered drugs and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directives, the Aabpara police team arrested an accused namely Shahid Masih and recovered 515 gram hashish from his possession. The Tarnoli police team arrested an accused namely Adil and recovered one 8mm rifle with ammunition from his possession.

Similarly, the Sangiani police team apprehended an accused namely Ziafat Mehmood and recovered 1100 gram hashish from his possession. The Shalimar police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Ali Raza and recovered 225 gram heroin from his possession.

Moreover, the Shahzad Town police team arrested an accused namely Mehmood Ahmed and recovered 120 gram heroin from his possession. Noon police arrested an accused namely Onyedikachi Anthony and recovered 180 gram Ice and 250 gram heroin from his possession.

During the crackdown against proclaimed offenders and court absconders, the Islamabad capital police teams arrested two absconders and proclaimed offenders from different areas of the city. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

CPO/ DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in drug peddling and possessing illegal weapons and said that the safety of the lives and property of the citizens is our prime responsibility. The performance of police officials in this regard would be reviewed on a continuous basis, he maintained.

## IGP orders foolproof security for markets, holy places during Ramadan

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan directed senior police officials to ensure strict security measures at Masjids, Imambargahs and markets during the holy month of Ramadan, a police public relations officer said.

He further directed the police officials and said that actions against drug dealers and criminal elements should be intensified, fool-proof security arrangements should be made during Ramadan, negligence in protecting lives and property of citizens will not be tolerated.

He warned the officials that no laxity towards safety and security of the citizens would be tolerated and strict disciplinary action would be initiated against officials showing negligence towards official duty.

He categorically asked to focus on resolving the public complaints and take every possible step to provide maximum relief to citizens. For fool proof security, he directed to beef up security measures at all important locations and enhanced vigilance at checkpoints.

The IGP Dr Akbar Nasir Khan asked the police officials to accomplish all their responsibilities in a professional manner. He asked the officers to evolve a comprehensive strategy for prevention of crimes and elimination of drugs.

He further issued the directions to all incharges and officers to further tighten the security in the federal capital adding that the protection of citizens' life and property, government property are among the top priorities of Islamabad Capital Police.

## Wall painting

ISLAMABAD: A painter is making the paintings of historical buildings of the country on the wall of newly constructed flyover near Aabpara in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

## Pedestrians' rights to be ensured; action to be taken against those involved in wrong parking

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Capital Police has launched a campaign against those involved in parking their vehicles wrongly and creating problems in smooth flow of traffic by occupying foot-path areas.

Following the directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad police have launched a campaign and Chief Traffic Officer Islamabad is monitoring this whole campaign by himself.

The CTO Islamabad has directed all Zonal DSPs to ensure implementation of traffic laws and take action against those involved in creating problems for traffic discipline in the city.

The CTO Islamabad said that it is the right of pedestrians to use footpaths and no parking would be allowed there. He said that vehicles



should be parked at lots specified at shopping centers while awareness campaigns should be launched to educate citizens.

During the first phase of the campaign, action was taken against showroom and shopping malls' administrators in various areas of the city. Vehicles were removed from footpath areas and they were warned to follow rules otherwise strict legal action would be initiated against them.

During the ongoing month, the Islamabad police also issued 3600 fine tickets to those involved in wrong parking while several vehicles were impounded at various police stations for not vacating footpath areas. The CTO Islamabad said that it is our top priority to ensure convenience for road users by maintaining traffic discipline and every possible effort would be made for the purpose. He said that squads have been constituted for the purpose of removing illegal parking and vacating

## Meezan Bank surpasses USD 1.5 billion deposit inflows under Roshan Digital Account



Commerce Report

KARACHI: Meezan Bank, Pakistan's leading Islamic bank has surpassed USD 1.5 billion in deposit inflows under Roshan Digital Account (RDA). RDA was launched by the State Bank of Pakistan in collaboration with various banks across Pakistan with an aim to offer innovative banking solutions to Non-Resident Pakistanis who are interested in accessing banking and investment services in Pakistan.

Since the inception of RDA in September 2020, Meezan Bank has been playing an active role in supporting the initiative, with the ultimate aim of promoting financial inclusion and propelling the country's overall economic development. With over 88,000 accounts from 144 countries, the Bank's record deposit inflows reaffirm its position as the top performer in RDA in the industry, sustaining a market share of around twenty-five percent.

## Woman, minor girl taken into custody after recovery of narcotics from car

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Motorway police conducted a raid near the Chakri area and recovered a large amount of narcotics from a car.

The Motorway police team seized 2.5 kilograms of opium and 11 kilograms of charas from the vehicle. Police detailed that the stocks of narcotics were being smuggled from Peshawar but the drug smuggling bid was foiled after timely action.

According to the police, the on-duty officials tried to stop a suspicious vehicle but the driver ran away from the scene. After being chased, the driver fled to avoid arrest after leaving behind his vehicle.

Police took a woman and a five-year-old girl into protective custody present in the vehicle. The Motorway police spokesperson said that raids are being conducted to arrest the suspected man.

Earlier in the month, the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) arrested drug dealers for supplying drugs to educational institutions near Gojra.

## Maroof Int'l Hospital Islamabad commemorates World Autism Awareness Day

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Re-emphasizing its commitment and advocacy for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This year's theme was: Toward a Neuro-inclusive world for all: We are moving away from the narrative of curing or converting autistic people and instead focusing on accepting, supporting and including autistic people, and advocating for their rights.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2023 report stated that around 1 in 36 children is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), with boys being four times more likely to receive a diagnosis than girls. However, in Pakistan, many children remain undiagnosed or receive a late diagnosis, missing out on critical early development years. Ms. Tehreem

Bangash, Head of the Early Intervention Therapy Unit, highlighted the importance of raising awareness about autism spectrum disorder and identifying it early through early signs and symptoms.

Maroof Early Intervention Therapy Unit at Maroof Int'l Hospital is offering therapy services, assessments and training for children from 1 year to 12 years of age under the supervision of International Behavior Analysts (IBAO). Our team of Speech therapists, Occupational Therapists, psychologists, and special education needs coordinators are available to take care of your little ones.

On this occasion, Mr. Haroon Naseer the CEO of Maroof Int'l Hospital announced to give 50% percent subsidies on all the Consultations in Early intervention therapy unit of Maroof for the month of April. He also said that the increasing public awareness of autism



spectrum disorders and the betterment of public services provided to affected individuals are sources of immense encouragement for me. World Autism Awareness Day plays a crucial role in

promoting understanding and enabling parents to seek early intervention therapies. Moreover, it emphasizes the need for the complete integration of individuals with autism into society, urging

policy-makers to encourage schools to welcome students with autism. With adequate support, it is possible and necessary to educate them in the heart of their communities

According to Ms. Tehreem Bangash, the Early Intervention Therapy Unit at Maroof Int'l Hospital offers inpatient and outpatient consultation services and therapies six days a week. The unit provides a wide range of therapy services including Applied Behavior Analysis therapy, Speech therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physio Therapy, and Remedial therapy that are crucial for the development of these children. The unit has a team of highly qualified professionals such as Certified International Behavior Analysts (IBAO USA), Licensed Registered Behavior Technicians, Speech and Language pathologists, Occupational therapists, and a Special Education

needs coordinator. All of our services are evidence-based, and we take pride in being the only hospital in Islamabad to have a unit that is run by Certified International Behavior Analysts.

On this day, we should acknowledge the unique strengths and abilities of individuals with autism and work towards creating a more inclusive and accepting society that values diversity and celebrates differences. We should also continue to advocate for policies and programs that support individuals with autism and their families, and promote greater understanding and acceptance of this complex condition.

Dr. Mir Waheed, Medical Director of Maroof Int'l Hospital appreciated the team work of the Early Intervention Therapy Unit and reiterated the hospital's commitment to quality driven safe patient care.

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# اللہ رحم کرے

**Munir M Hasan, PhD**

The above title in Urdu is commonly heard from a large number of persons in Pakistan and elsewhere, whenever a calamity befalls on the people or even the nation passes a difficult time. Apparently, this phrase is spoken as a prayer (dua) to Allah to save them from those afflictions but, whenever I hear this phrase, I feel pity on the ignorance of the people. They should know that Allah is not like the rulers of Pakistan who put people in trouble without any justified reason. Allah is already very kind to his devotees when they in their lives follow the social instructions prescribed by Him, and He never puts a nation in trouble without a reason.

He puts a nation in trouble as punishment only when the people pay no heed to the instructions of Allah. So, with some reasonable knowledge of Qur'an, I immediately react to the uttering of these words and ask them what good social qualities you (not personally, but as a community) have so that Allah should shower His kindness and blessings on you. As I understand, the evil social practices and injustices prevailing in Pakistan have reached to a stage that these may only invite the scourge of Allah and not His kindness (رحم).

In large number of verses of Qur'an, Allah has described the punishments given by Him to various past nations. After reading those events in Qur'an, it is quite clear that in most cases the

punishment was not given because of their disbelief, not believing in Allah, but this punishment was given to them when they, as a nation, were involved in some sort of social disorder. For example, the people of Prophet Lut (لوط) were punished because they were practicing homosexuality.

The people of Prophet Shoaib were punished because their businessmen used to deceive people in weights Page 2 of 3 and measures, giving less to them in quantity. People of Aad (عاد) were punished because of their arrogance similar to the arrogance of the super power of today. And Fir'on (Pharaoh) and his people were punished because they used to treat the followers of Prophet Yaqoob (يحيى) inhumanly, and used to kill their male persons without any fault of theirs, thus doing injustice to them.

In ruling the world (becoming a prominent power of the world), Allah makes no difference between the believers and non-believers. That is the reason that these days Allah has given power in the world to those nations who are practicing better social order, especially doing justice to their own people.

In Muslim world in general and in Pakistan in particular, social virtues are intentionally ignored and all the social evils of the previous nations have become the order of the day. People tell lies knowingly.

They deceive others and do not fulfil their promises to the extent that they even do not honour their commitments taken on oath. It amounts to deceiving Allah, and they are not ashamed. They

forcibly occupy the property of others. The traders do not sell the pure items. Food items are mixed with impure and dirty items, so much so that even many medicines in the markets are counterfeit. And on top of it, the people of Pakistan are not getting justice from the courts.

The rulers of Pakistan make rules to benefit themselves and their cronies outside the bounds of justice prescribed

people, especially the rulers, of possible scourge/punishment from Allah on their evil actions, evil practices and injustices. Page 3 of 3 Eliminating social evils from the society is a mandatory act from Allah for all the people, to the extent of their reach, otherwise, even those who are not involved in these evils, even they are likely to face the punishment.

In verses 27:48-51 of the holy Qur'an, Allah has narrated a story of nine people who planned to kill someone and his wife, later to assure the relatives of the killed persons that they did not do it, and they were not even present at the murder scene. Allah not only punished those nine people, but destroyed the whole community, probably for not stopping those nine people from their corrupt practices. In verse 6:65 of the holy Qur'an, Allah has explained that Allah's punishment may come (1) from above the heads, (2) from under the feet, or (3) divide them into groups to fight each other.

Apparently, the people of Pakistan are already facing punishment of the third type in addition to the other types of punishment in one form or the other. So, with all these social evils prevailing in the society, and the nation (if at all the people of Pakistan may be called a nation) facing punishment, praying for the kindness of Allah by saying "اللہ رحم کرے" is nothing but a stupid joke and a useless exercise as Allah is not likely to approve these prayers. In fact, more punishment may be expected if the people, especially those in power, do not mend their ways.

**Eliminating social evils from the society is a mandatory act from Allah for all the people, to the extent of their reach, otherwise, even those who are not involved in these evils, even they are likely to face the punishment.**

by Allah. They think that by making a man-made rule, the things become legal. They don't realize that anything outside the bounds of Allah is illegal in the sight of Allah. These illegal benefits are, in fact, bribes. With all these social evils in the society, Pakistan has been converted into a society which deserves punishment from Allah. The religious speakers who spend a lot of time on telling people "short-cuts" to go to Paradise, do not have time to tell the

## UN calls for 'firm action' to protect Palestinians' human rights

The international community must take firm and principled action to protect the human rights and dignity of Palestinians, amid mounting violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the threat of even further annexation, an independent UN-appointed rights expert has said.

"The wave of deadly violence sweeping through the occupied West Bank since the beginning of this year is the inexorable consequence of an acquisitive and repressive occupation with no end in sight, and the culture of lawlessness and impunity Israel has nurtured and enjoyed," UN Special Reporter Francesca Albanese said in a statement.

Recent months have been marked by escalating unrest between Israelis and Palestinians. Israel's new hardline government has also pledged to expand West Bank settlements and annex occupied territory.

Ms. Albanese is the Special Reporter on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

She said Israeli violence – including the deadly raid in Jenin refugee camp on 26 January, in the old city of Nablus on 22 February, and in Jericho a week later – has left 80 Palestinians dead, and over 2,000 wounded, in less than 90 days. Thirteen Israelis also were killed by Palestinians during this period.

"Every loss of life, whether Palestinian or Israeli, is a tragic reminder of the price people pay for not addressing pervasive injustice and its root causes," she said. The rights expert noted that over the past decades, the international community has witnessed record-high numbers of Palestinian deaths and injuries.

Meanwhile, Palestinians have also endured confinement, land confiscation, home demolitions, fragmentation, discriminatory law enforcement, mass incarceration and other countless abuses, indignities and humiliations.

"Israel, emboldened by a lack of meaningful intervention, has consolidated its acquisitive and repressive occupation, with Member States offering little more than symbolic condemnation, humanitarians providing band-aid aid, and legal scholars entangled in theoretical debates," she said.

Her statement urged the UN to "move beyond simply counting casualties and calling for restraint."

The Organization "cannot indulge in the condescending acceptance of an irresolvable 'conflict' and the myth of conflicting narratives, and in urging the 'parties' to 'de-escalate tensions' and 'resume negotiations,'" she said.

"In reality, there are no equal parties nor a proper 'conflict,' but rather an oppressive regime that threatens the right of an entire people to exist," she insisted.

Furthermore, "tolerating annexation would legitimize aggression, bringing international law back almost a century: this is the reality the international community must stop immediately and reverse."

Ms. Albanese urged the international community to recommit to the ideals of the UN Charter, in the interest of both Palestinians and Israelis.

"To maintain its credibility and purpose, the UN must acknowledge that conflicting narratives and historical facts must be resolved through the lens of legality and justice, and work effectively to oppose any forms of annexation of occupied territory, realize the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and terminate the apartheid regime Israel is enforcing upon them," she added.



## TikTok hearing shows demise of US values

**Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan**

TikTok Chief Executive Shou Zi Chew testifies before a House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing as lawmakers scrutinize the Chinese-owned video-sharing app, on Capitol Hill in Washington, US, March 23, 2023. REUTERS/Evelyn Hockstein

After a one-sided congressional hearing lasting more than five hours on March 23, the US House Energy and Commerce Committee chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers said TikTok should be banned. By claiming, without providing any evidence, that the app has ties with the Chinese government just because its parent company ByteDance is based in China, she reflected the US' presumption of guilt.

It seems the true spirit of corporate governance, economic globalization, a fair global economic system, the basic principles of international marketing, trading and investment have been ruined by the US' congressional farce.

The US' constant use of national security as a pretext to twist international law and business rules is nothing but political manipulation, which will harm Sino-US trade as well as global trade. While the world seems to be moving toward embracing ChatGPT and advancing artificial intelligence, US policymakers are out to reverse the technological revolution through their politically fabricated conspiracies.

Unfortunately, TikTok has become the victim of US hegemony and imperialistic design. The proposed ban on TikTok became a hot topic for the international media, with most of them terming it irrational and illogical, and questioning the US' so-called corporate governance and financial transparency.

In its response, the Chinese Foreign Ministry strongly criticized the proposed unilateral ban on TikTok, urging the United States to stop its suppression of foreign enterprises, because it would eventually backfire.

TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew, a Singaporean citizen, appeared for the US congressional hearing and faced tough questions, with the House committee members claiming that the Chinese government could use the app's data for surveillance against the American people and thus undermine the US' national interests.

The hearing was full of hegemonic sermons and demonstrated that, despite its grand claims, the US does not have any objective rules and prefers to use the pretext of national security to arm-twist foreign companies into submission.

The US has been politicizing an innovative social media app that has provided entertainment for millions of American people and benefited a lot of micro businesses in the country. As such, the US' attempt to steal the app from ByteDance will have serious repercussions.

Despite the logical representations of Shou Zi Chew about his organization's openness, transparency, financial integrity and lawful operation, the House Energy and Commerce Committee was not willing to listen to him.

Speaking at a separate House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing recently, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said TikTok should be banned one way or another, because he did not know whether it would be enough for TikTok to be divested from its Chinese parent company to safeguard national security. By this logic, every social media app should be banned.

The Biden administration's so-called national security narrative has caused speculation among TikTok users, scholars and researchers. By forcing ByteDance to sell TikTok, the US is aiming to repeat its takeover of French power

company Alstom and its torment of Japanese chip-maker Toshiba. But the US' sinister move is doomed to failure, as the roadblocks faced by Donald Trump administration three years ago show.

Hopefully, the Biden administration will not succeed in banning TikTok, as the app has more than 150 million users in the US. It will not be easy for the US to take over TikTok either, as a deal should also be in compliance with Chinese laws.

In August 2020, China's Ministry of Commerce revised its restrictions on technology exports, including personalized content recommendations based on data analysis and a number of other technologies such as AI algorithms, which at the time was widely considered as China's countermeasure against a US attempt to take over TikTok.

From the crackdown on Huawei to the targeting of TikTok, every US move against Chinese companies is aimed at curbing China's advancement in the high-tech field. Before the farce over TikTok, the US put an additional 14 Chinese companies on its Entity List, forcing US exporters to conduct greater due diligence before shipping goods to them. Since companies added to the Entity List are mainly technology and solar power enterprises, it reflects the US' political frustration and technological inability to compete with China.

The bible of capitalism is being redrafted because of the US presidential election next year and the China hawks are desperately trying to create issues to lure voters to win the battle of the ballot. (Courtesy China Daily)

*The writer is executive director of the Center for South Asia & International Studies in Islamabad. The views do not necessarily reflect those of Daily The Spokesman.*

## UN offers no comment on Trump's indictment as US enters uncharted waters

**Spokesman Report**

The United Nations Friday declined any comment on the indictment of former US President Donald Trump by a Manhattan grand jury after a probe into hush money paid to adult film star Stormy Daniels, becoming the first former American president to face criminal charges even as he makes another run for the White House.

"We're obviously fully aware of what's going on. It's not that you can escape it by looking at the news here. At this point, in the process, we do not have a comment," UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in response to a question at the regular noon briefing at UN Headquarters in New York.

Facing criminal charges, Trump was weighing his next steps on Friday as the unprecedented turn of events in American history drew sharply partisan responses from Democrats and Republicans and heralds a tumultuous stretch for a deeply divided nation.

Trump is expected to appear before a judge in Manhattan on Tuesday.

A New York judge on Friday authorized Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg to make the charges public, but it was not clear when he would do so.

For nearly two weeks, Trump has been using the legal threats he confronts to raise money and rally supporters as he seeks his party's nomination to challenge Democratic President Joe Biden next year.

ue to campaign even as he faces charges. Mike Pence, Trump's former vice president, said the charges send a "terrible message" to the world about U.S. justice.

"I'm very troubled by it," Pence, a possible 2024 candidate, said at a forum in Washington. Senior Republicans in the House of Representatives have vowed to investigate Bragg and demanded he hand over documents and other confidential material from the investigation.

Bragg said on Friday that Congress does not have authority to interfere with a New York legal proceeding and accused the lawmakers of escalating political tensions. Bragg's office has been the target of bomb threats in recent weeks.

"You and many of your colleagues have chosen to collaborate with Mr. Trump's efforts to vilify and denigrate the integrity of elected state prosecutors and trial judges," Bragg wrote in a letter to Republican lawmakers.

Biden declined to comment on Friday as he left the White House for a trip to storm-ravaged Mississippi.

Trump alleges there are political motivations behind all four criminal investigations he is known to face – including federal probes into his retention of classified documents and attempts to overturn his election defeat, and a separate Georgia probe into his efforts to overturn his loss in that state.

He has also accused Bragg, who is Black, of racial bias.

Officials have stepped up security around the courthouse since Trump on March 18 called on his supporters to protest any arrest. A law enforcement source said police would close streets around the courthouse ahead of Tuesday's expected appearance.

# SCO International Marathon kicks off in Kunming, China

**News Desk**

BELJING: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) International Marathon kicked off in Kunming, China.

The Yunnan Provincial Sports Department, the Foreign Affairs Office of the People's Government of the Yunnan Province and the Kunming Municipal Administration organised the event, as per a statement issued by

SCO Secretariat here.

Distinguished guests, including SCO Secretary-General Zhang Ming, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Tajikistan to the People's Republic of China Zohir Ozod Saidzoda, Ambassador Extraor-



dinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the People's Republic of China Farkhod Arziyev, as well as other representatives of SCO countries' diplomatic missions, watched the event.

Speaking at the opening ceremony,

Zhang Ming emphasised the tremendous significance of the SCO Kunming Marathon.

He noted that the first marathon had been held in 2016 and that it had become a good tradition since then.

The event symbolizes friendship and cooperation between SCO countries and embodies the Shanghai Spirit.

The 2023 marathon involved about 20,000 professional and amateur athletes from 18 countries.

# CPJ urges Taliban to reverse decision to shut down women-run Radio Sada-e-Banowan

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD : The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an independent watchdog body, Friday called on the Taliban authorities to stop their crackdown on local media in Afghanistan and allow the independent women-run Radio Sada-e-Banowan to continue its work.

On Thursday, authorities in the city of Faizabad, in Badakhshan province, shuttered the broadcaster's operations and sealed its office, according to news reports and an employee of the radio station who spoke to CPJ on the condition of anonymity, citing fear of reprisal, CPJ said in a press release.

The officers at the scene, from the Taliban's Directorate of Information

and Culture and Directorate of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, accused the outlet of illegally airing music during the holy month of Ramadan. The Taliban banned playing and listening to music when it retook power in August 2021.

According to CPJ, the radio station employee who spoke to CPJ said she was not aware that any music had been aired, and believed that the decision was retaliation for the station's programmes focusing on women's education and job opportunities in Badakhshan.

"The Taliban should immediately reverse its decision shuttering the Radio Sada-e-Banowan broadcaster and allow the outlet to reopen and work freely," CPJ Asia Programme Coordinator Beh Lih Yi, said in a statement.

"The Taliban have deprived Afghan women of everything from jobs to education. Shutting down a women-run radio station shows there is no reprieve for the Afghan media even during the holy month of Ramadan. The Taliban must correct its course and stop cracking down on journalism," she added



Radio Sada e Banowan was established in 2014 and owned by Afghan female journalist Najla Shirzad. Local Taliban officials allowed the radio station to restart operations not long after the group retook power. It has six employees, according to the person who spoke to CPJ.

CPJ said it contacted Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid for comment via messaging app but did not receive any response.

In August 2022, CPJ published a special report about the media crisis in Afghanistan, showing a rapid deterioration in press freedom since the Taliban retook control of the country one year earlier, marked by censorship, arrests, assaults, and restrictions on women journalists.

# Moin ul Haque presents credentials to Mongolian President as nonresident ambassador

**News Desk**

BELJING: Pakistan Ambassador to China, Moin ul Haque presented credentials to the President of Mongolia, Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh as Pakistan's non-resident Ambassador in an elegant and impressive ceremony.

Conveyed greetings of Pakistani leadership and desire to strengthen ties between Pakistan and Mongolia, the ambassador tweeted.

Ambassador Haque also held a meeting with the Mongolian Foreign Minister Battsetseg Batm and exchanged views on expanding



cooperation in focused areas like textile, agriculture, etc. He also extended an invita-

tion to the Mongolian foreign minister to visit Pakistan.

During the visit, Ambassador Haque handed a copy of his credentials to Mongolian Deputy Foreign Minister Amratuvshin Gombosuren and discussed injecting new energy and substance into six-decade-old bilateral ties between the two countries.

Ambassador Haque also called on Mongolian Health Minister, S. Chinzorig and discussed cooperation in the health sector focusing on medical student exchanges, nurses training and supply of Pakistan's medical and surgical equipment to Mongolia.

# India regulator probing some Adani offshore deals

**Spokesman Report**

MUMBAI: India's market regulator is investigating possible violation of 'related party' transaction rules in the Adani Group's dealings with at least three offshore entities that have links to the brother of the conglomerate's founder, two people said.

The three entities allegedly entered into several investment transactions with unlisted units of the ports-to-power conglomerate founded by billionaire Gautam Adani over the last 13 years, said the sources with direct knowledge of the matter.

Vinod Adani, Gautam Adani's brother, is either a beneficial owner, director or has links with those three offshore entities, said the two sources, adding the regulator, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), is probing if lack of that disclosure violated 'related party transaction' rules.



Under Indian laws, direct relatives, promoter groups and subsidiaries of listed companies are considered related parties. A promoter group is defined as an entity that has a large shareholding in a listed company and can influence company policy.

Transactions between such entities

group, but he does not hold any managerial position in any of the listed Adani entities or their subsidiaries.

"This fact, like all other material information required to be reported, has been disclosed to the regulatory authorities in the past and also as and when required," the spokesperson added, without commenting on the regulatory probe into offshore entities.

The probe comes after U.S. short-seller Hindenburg Research's Jan. 24 report alleging improper use of tax havens and stock manipulation by Adani Group, among other things - charges it has denied.

Hindenburg's report eroded more than \$100 billion in the value of shares in Adani group of companies.

India's Supreme Court asked SEBI in March to investigate the Adani Group for any lapses related to public shareholding, related party rules or regulatory disclosures.

# ICBC to continue to promote international operations: Senior Executive

**Commerce Desk**

BELJING: Despite facing geopolitical risks, rising unilateralism and protectionism and strengthened requirements for compliance management this year, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) will continue to promote international operations, a senior executive of the Bank said on Saturday.

As China accelerates its opening-up policy, high-quality internationalized financial services will be needed for increasing cross-border economic and trade investment, expanding global industrial and supply chains, and promoting cross-border flows of enterprises and residents, said

Guan Xueqing, board secretary of ICBC, at a news conference announcing its 2022 annual results.

As China's largest state-owned commercial lender by assets, the ICBC said it will continuously expand and deepen global operations and create new drivers of growth.

During the process, it will ensure that operational risk is controllable, China Daily quoted Guan as saying.

"We will strengthen the linkage management of risks both domestically and overseas, enhance the compliance management capability of our overseas institutions, make proactive risk judgments, and

efficiently respond to various significant uncertainties that may arise in the future," he said.

Last year was the 30th anniversary of the internationalization of ICBC.

Over the last 30 years, the bank has gradually built a global service network covering 69 countries and regions.

In the past decade, the average annual growth of its overseas assets exceeded 10 percent, and the average annual growth of its pretax profits exceeded 8 percent, Guan said.

Last year, overseas institutions of ICBC posted a pretax net profit of \$3.9 billion, up 15 percent year-on-year.

The asset quality of its over-

seas institutions remained in good condition, with the nonperforming loan ratio being only 0.79 percent, declining by 0.12 percentage points, Guan said.

The volume of international settlement at its domestic branches increased by 8 percent year-on-year, while the volume of its cross-border settlement grew by 5 percent.

The bank made new breakthroughs in business expansion. From last year to the beginning of this year, China's central bank appointed ICBC as the clearing bank for Laos, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Brazil. Currently, ICBC acts as a clearing bank in 11 countries.



In terms of foreign investment and trade services, the ICBC provided strong financial support for key foreign-funded and foreign trade enterprises.

ers of growth, the ICBC was approved as one of the first pilot institutions for Southbound Trading under China's Bond Connect program and gained the qualifications for providing foreign exchange payment and settlement for parties to a cross-border e-commerce transaction.

These businesses are becoming the new driving force and growth points for the bank's international operations, Guan said.

Meanwhile, its front-line foreign exchange business operating capability and foreign exchange compliance management capability have significantly improved, he added.

# Iranian embassy condemns terror attack on Pakistan's security forces

**News Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Iranian Embassy strongly condemned the terrorist attack on Pakistani forces in the Kech district near the Pak-Iran border.

The Iranian Embassy spokesman said that the embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pakistan expressed sympathy with the families of those who lost their lives and prays for the martyrs.

In a statement, the spokesman stated that terrorism is the common pain of the two countries & the two Muslim nations have sacrificed precious lives in the fight against this plague.

"Undoubtedly, strengthening the joint cooperation between Iran and Pakistan will prevent terrorist groups from achieving their sinister goals," the spokesperson added.

# IMF approves \$5.4bn for cash-strapped Argentina

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) executive board on Friday announced a \$5.4 billion disbursement to Argentina, part of a \$44 billion loan program as the South American nation faces a severe economic panorama.

Argentina is the target of the largest assistance program currently under IMF implementation.

The new disbursement brings to \$28.9 billion the total funds already allocated to Argentina since the start of the assistance program in March 2022.

Argentina recorded 5.2 percent economic growth in 2022, a slowdown compared to 2021, but still tallying a second consecutive year of expansion, the first such two-year period of growth since 2010-2011.

Inflation, however, remained high at 94.8 percent, preventing the country from reaping the benefits of this upturn in activity.

The soaring inflation means most goods cost double what they did this time last year, and marks the return of near triple-digit inflation for the first time since the early 1990s.

A week ago Fitch Ratings downgraded Argentina's foreign currency debt to one level above default.

The debt downgrade from CCC- to C suggests that the ratings agency believes a default is "imminent," and comes shortly after a government decree forcing domestic public sector entities to swap their foreign currency-denominated debt for debt denominated in the domestic currency, the peso.

Argentine President Alberto Fernandez held an Oval Office meeting with US President Joe Biden two days ago in which he thanked Biden for US support for loans at multilateral lending agencies like the IMF.

The US is the nation with the greatest voting rights at the IMF.

The agreement signed in March 2021 between the IMF and Argentina, the 13th between the institution and the South American country since 1983, sets benchmarks for the country to deal with chronic inflation.

# Man fined Rs900,000 for taking 'too many' smoke breaks at work

**News Desk**

ISLAMABAD: A 61-year-old Japanese man was fined over Rs900,000 for taking too many smoke breaks at work despite receiving warnings numerous times from the office administration.

According to The Mainichi, a Japanese man was fined for over Rs900,000 for taking smoke breaks more than 4,500 times in 14 years.

The employee will see 10% salary deductions for over six months due to the smoking breaks.

It emerged that the employee took over 3,400 unauthorized smoke breaks during work, whereas, the human resource discovered a secret stash of tobacco owned by the man and two other employees in the organisation.

Soon after the man's supervisor warned him and the other employees against the dire consequences of smoking again in the office. However, the warning did not stop the three people from discarding their smoking habit, the report said.

Subsequently, the employees received a heavy fine.

As per law, Osaka has strict rules relating to smoking. It is banned on government premises such as offices and public schools since 2008. In 2019, the ban was extended to smoking while at work.

# Killer whale Lolita going to home waters after 50 years of captivity

Lolita, the killer whale that bewitched tens and thousands with its incredible acrobatics at Miami Seaquarium, will be sent back to its natural habitat in the Pacific Northwest, CNN reported as its captors have decided to end its fifty-year-old captivity.

After it was taken from the ocean in 1970 officials disputed its origin from where it belonged.

Eventually, on Thursday, after the agreement by various parties, it was decided that Lolita - also known as Tokitae or Toki- will be returned to the ocean.

Miami Seaquarium in a statement said: "Lolita will receive the highest quality care as the team works to make relocation possible in the next 18 to 24 months."

"I know Lolita wants to get to free waters. I don't care what anyone says. She's lived this long to have this opportunity. And my only mission is (...) to help this whale get free," said Jim Irsay, the Indianapolis Colts owner who is helping to pay for Lolita's move.

Irsay also said that the cost of relocating it could reach eight figures.

The announcement was made at a press conference addressed by Eduardo Albor, CEO of The Dolphin Company - operating the Miami Seaquarium, Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava; and other members of Friends of Lolita.

**Bull & Bears**  
PSX 100-Share  
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
40,000.83	39,848.35	
Day's High	Day's Low:	
40,000.83	39,729.44	
Index Value	Change	
68,756,703	+152.48	
Percentage	Time	
+0.38%	31 Mar, 2023 5:00 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
7,631.74	+11.31	
Percentage	Time	
+0.15%	31 Mar, 4:35 pm GMT+1	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
33,123.92	+264.89	
Percentage	Time	
+0.81%	31 Mar, 1:02 pm GMT-4	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
28,041.48	+258.55	
Percentage	Time	
+0.93%	31 Mar, 3:15 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	187.5	189.9
Bahrain Dinar	754.25	762.25
Canadian Dollar	206.5	208.7
China Yuan	41.16	41.56
Danish Krone	41.49	41.89
Euro	308	311
Hong Kong Dollar	36.11	36.46
Indian Rupee	3.45	3.56
Japanese Yen	2.25	2.3
Kuwaiti Dinar	924.86	933.86
Malaysian Ringgit	64.14	64.74
New Zealand \$	176.37	178.37
Norwegians Krone	27.16	27.46
Omani Riyal	736.57	744.57
Qatari Riyal	77.87	78.57
Saudi Riyal	75.5	76.5
Singapore Dollar	209.5	211.5
Swedish Korona	27.35	27.65
Swiss Franc	310.26	312.76
Thai Bhat	8.29	8.44
U.A.E Dirham	77.2	77.9
UK Pound Sterling	350.5	354
US Dollar	283.7	286.5

# Azerbaijan wants to further improve bilateral trade relations with Pakistan

**Tariq Khattak**

ISLAMABAD : Azerbaijan considers Pakistan and Turkiye as its special friends and wants to further strengthen bilateral trade and economic relations with them. Azerbaijan-Turkiye bilateral trade is approximately USD 6 billion and Azerbaijan wants a similar trade volume with Pakistan that would be very beneficial for both countries. This was said by H.E. Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan while exchanging views with the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI).

Khazar Farhadov said that direct flights between Azerbaijan and Pakistan operated by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) had improved bilateral trade three times between the two countries in 2022 and Azerbaijan Airlines will also start direct flights with Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad very soon and is also considering to start direct flights to industrial and export centres of Pakistan, which would further contribute to increase bilateral trade between the two brotherly countries. He said that Azerbaijan under the instructions of President of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev has given exemption from customs duty on



import of rice from Pakistan, and the Pakistani business community should take benefit of this facility. He said that Azerbaijan and Pakistan have formed Working Groups under Joint Ministerial Commission to increase bilateral cooperation in various sectors including agriculture, trade, banking, IT, tourism, transport, energy, health and said that ICCI should cooperate in identifying companies for these working groups so that private sectors could lead the promotion of bilateral cooperation in these sectors between the two countries. Ambassador

informed that 2023 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Heydar Aliyev, the founder of the independent state of Azerbaijan. He said that the Embassy of Azerbaijan in collaboration with ICCI is planning to organize a joint event on the founding role of Heydar Aliyev in development of Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations.

Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that Pak-Azerbaijan bilateral trade is not up to the real potential of both countries and stressed for exploring new

ways of increasing trade between both countries. He emphasized creating better awareness in the private sectors of both countries about each other's markets to increase business ties. He said that both countries are doing trade in limited items and there is a need of finding new product lines and avenues of cooperation for enhancing trade volume between the two countries.

Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President, ICCI said that both countries should encourage regular exchange of trade delegations to explore all untapped areas of mutual cooperation. He assured that ICCI would provide a list of companies for Working Groups to make them more effective and result-oriented.

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI welcomed the establishment of direct airlinks between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, which are very important to promote people-to-people and trade relations. He said that ICCI would cooperate in promoting "Made in Azerbaijan" in Pakistan and hoped that the Ambassador would also cooperate in promoting "Made in Pakistan" in Azerbaijan to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Raja Imtiaz, Rizwan Chheena and others were also present at the occasion.

## Beverages for Iftari

KARACHI: People are buying beverages from street vender along the road side at Ranchore Line area as people like such drinks for "iftari" during the holy month of Ramadan in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

## PHMA demands release of sales tax refunds before Eid

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PHMA) on Saturday asked the Federal Board of Revenue to speed up releasing value-added knitwear industry's sales tax refunds to help ease up its cash flow, especially for payment of wages to its workers on Eid days.

PHMA North Zone chairman Naseer Butt said that the value-added export-oriented industry is under extreme financial crunch and is facing losses of billions of rupees as its liquidity remains stuck due to delay in release of sales tax refunds.

Our members exporters have been complaining of facing inconvenience and inordinate delays in the payment of sales



tax refund claims, as the government has stopped releasing all the sales tax refund claims whereby exporters' precious liquidity worth billions of rupees have been stuck, he added. Naseer Butt observed that

a sharp decline in exports and foreign exchange earnings is hindering production while the government is not giving any heed to the repeated calls to save the export industries, which are facing the most difficult times in history.

He said that the industry continued to suffer due to shortage of gas and constant power breakdowns, shortage of industrial raw materials caused by restrictions on opening of Letter of Credits (LC), discontinuation of DLTL and Regionally Competitive Energy Tariffs.

The knitwear industry had earlier expressed satisfaction over the functioning of the FBR's FASTER system, which was processing claims electronically as per law and rules without any delay. The FASTER

system was introduced to end human intervention and process the sales tax claims electronically, while the new parameters introduced in the STGO involving FBR officials will defer the sales tax claims and again open the floodgates to corruption, he pointed out.

He said that a huge amount of exporters' liquidity is lying frozen with the FBR. As a result, the textile export industry has become unviable and is on the verge of collapse.

The PHMA chief appealed the FBR Chairman to remove the flaws and rectification of technical glitches in the FBR's sales tax FASTER system, which has been causing delays in the processing of sales tax refunds, resulting in a liquidity crunch and hampering exports.

## Inflation breaks all records, climbs to 35.37PC

**Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: Pakistan's monthly inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), reached an all-time high of 35.37 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in March, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) data showed Saturday.

According to data released by PBS, prices in urban and rural areas increased 32.97pc and 38.88pc year-on-year, respectively.

There was a huge increase in the food inflation rate, mostly because of the disruption of supply chains and weak checks.

Food inflation rose steeply to 50.2% in rural areas and it also significantly increased to 47.1% in cities last month, the PBS data showed.

Weekly inflation remains above 45pc

On the other hand, short-term inflation, based on the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), rose to 45.36 per cent on annualised basis during the seven-day period ended March 30, data compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) showed.

The SPI dropped 0.36pc week-on-week with a slight decline in prices of onion, toma-

atoes and cooking oil.

For the week under review, SPI was recorded at 249.66 points against 250.66 points registered last week and 171.82 points recorded during the week ended March 31, 2022.

Out of 51 items in the SPI basket, prices of 23 items soared while those of 11 items decreased, however, rates of 17 items remained unchanged.

PBS data noted decrease in prices of onions (15.10 percent), chicken (11.96 percent), tomatoes (10.26 percent), LPG (1.35 percent), cooking oil 5 litre (1.24 percent), vegetable ghee 1kg (1.07 percent), vegetable ghee

2.5kg (0.77 percent), pulse gram (0.42 percent), firewood (0.35 percent), pulse moong (0.22 percent) and mustard oil (0.17 percent).

The items whose prices increased the most over the same week a year ago were cigarettes (165.88pc), onions (127.07pc), wheat flour (123.22pc), gas charges for Q1 (108.38pc), diesel (102.84pc), tea Lipton (98.08pc), eggs (96.67pc), bananas (94.89pc), rice basmati broken (83.65pc), petrol (81.17pc), rice Irrigated (79.17pc), pulse moong (67.85pc) and potatoes (56.44pc).

## Jawad Sohrab Malik, BOI minister discuss business facilitation



**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD : Special Assistant to Prime Minister Jawad Sohrab Malik here on Saturday held a meeting with Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI) Chaudhry Salik Hussain to discuss the matters related to facilitation in businesses and hand holding prospective entrepreneurs in the country.

While appreciating the role of BOI as a premier investment promotion body in attracting, facilitating and promoting both local and foreign direct investment/FDI in Pakistan, Jawad Sohrab Malik highlighted the specific and genuine concerns

being faced by local business community and business houses.

The minister affirmed his resolve to address the issues of business community through streamlining business procedures and boosting measures such as "Ease of Doing Business" in order to enhance our global competitiveness.

Both sides agreed on exploring new investment opportunities in more sustainable sectors of economy through investor friendly policies for a competitive and thriving business environment in the country with the commitment to resolve and enhance the business competitiveness in the region.

## Food and debt crises stoking instability

**Tariq Khattak**

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Saturday said inflation and growing insecurity of basic necessities is increasing instability in Pakistan.

People have been killed and injured in stampedes at sites distributing free flour under a government-backed scheme to help families struggling with soaring costs of basic staples, it said.

Thousands of bags of flour had also been looted from trucks and distribution points by people which indicates the desperation among the masses, said Dr. Hanif Mughal, SVP of PEW.

The country is cash-strapped, inflation is very high, forex reserves are



insufficient and currency is depreciating which is a perfect recipe for civil disorder, he added.

He noted that floods have exacerbated the food crisis as they destroyed large swathes of crops while affected people are still waiting for any meaningful support from the government.



An estimated 800,000 hectares of agricultural land was wiped out driving up food prices in the country which is already struggling with inflation, he added.

Hanif Mughal said that presently more than 3.4 million children face chronic hunger while malnutrition among the poor has become more prevalent across the country.

Pakistan is facing a serious food and debt crisis and water stress has become widespread impacting women and girls that are responsible for water collection.

Hanif Mughal is also chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Shadbad said that Pakistan is facing problems due to corruption, incompetence, and endless elitism while Bangladesh has moved 13 notches up to the 75th position among 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index, surpassing its neighbours India and Pakistan.

## FPCCI denounces arrests & harassment of factory owners



**Commerce Desk**

KARACHI : Mr. Suleman Chawla, Acting President FPCCI, has offered heartfelt condolences to the families and loved ones of the tragic incident of stampede at a ration distribution drive in Karachi's SITE industrial area - resulting in the most unfortunate loss of precious human lives.

Mr. Suleman Chawla explained that it was being conducted, without an iota of doubt, with a highly-noble, praiseworthy and exemplary intention; and, was aimed at the cause of helping poor, destitute and needy people of the city; so that, they can feed their families with dignity in these times of staggering food inflation & shortages - which is unmatched in the history of Pakistan!

Mr. Suleman Chawla, nonetheless, strongly denounced the illogically premature, disheartening and threatening arrests & harassment of the factory owners and management staff of the factory that took a noble, humane and socially-responsible initiative in the holy month of Ramadan.

Mian Nasser Hyatt Maggo maintained that a meticulous inquiry should have been conducted before taking any punitive or disciplinary action; and, the entire business, industry & trade community of Pakistan is taken aback with such harsh legal proceedings, i.e. arrests & remands.

Engr. M. A. Jabbar seconded that opinion of Sindh provincial minister, Mr. Saeed Ghani, that the government should have a consultative process with the philanthropists & business community to formulate a practicable mechanism for the delivery of aid through Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) database; in order to make aid delivery safe, efficient and transparent.

# ARY and FairBreak Global join hands to broadcast women's cricket in Pakistan

By A Sports -

LAHORE: ARY Digital Network and FairBreak Invitational have partnered to bring 40 live women's cricket games to Pakistani audiences this year.

The FairBreak Invitational 2023 kicks off in Hong Kong from 3 April and all games will be live on A Sports HD, Pakistan's first HD sports channel, and ARY ZAP, ARY's flagship super application.

Billed as the first truly global women's cricket league, the FairBreak Invitational features 90 players from 36 countries. Pakistani superstars Sana Mir, Bismah Maroof, Fatima Sana, Diana Baig and Aliya Riaz will be in action for their second FairBreak appearance. In all, six teams comprising international cricketers will be taking part in the tournament.

FairBreak Invitational includes 20 matches in Hong Kong this April to be followed by 20 matches in Houston in September 2023.

This year's event will see a number of international cricket stars taking part in the competition. Some of the leading players include Sune Luus, Shab-



nim Ismail, Mignon du Preez and Laura Wolvaardt from South Africa, Lauren Winfield-Hill, Sophie Ecclestone, Katherine Sciver-Brunt, Dani Wyatt and Sophia Dunkley from England, Stafaine Taylor, Hayley Matthews, Deandra Dottin and Shemaine Campbelle from the West Indies, Rumana Ahmed and

Jahanara Alam from Bangladesh, and Chamari Athapaththu from Sri Lanka. FairBreak Global delivered the first FairBreak Invitational in May 2022 where 90 players from 35 countries took part and global TV audiences reached the 40-million mark.

Chairman ARY Group, Founder and

CEO ARY Digital Network, Salman Iqbal:

"I am delighted that ARY is partnering with the FairBreak Global. In the last few months, ARY has been at the forefront of promoting women's cricket in Pakistan."

It is my sincere hope that our coverage of the ICC U19 Women's World Cup, ICC Women's World Cup, the PCB women's exhibition games, and the FairBreak Invitational will inspire the next generation of women cricketers in Pakistan."

Founder of FairBreak, Shaun Martyn: "FairBreak is delighted to be partnering with A Sports - Pakistan's top HD channel, in showcasing 20 Live matches to be played in Hong Kong."

Pakistan's very own former captains Bismah Maroof and Sana Mir, along with Diana Baig, Aliya Riaz and Fatima Sana will be returning to compete in the tournament.

We take pride in being the pioneers of the first ever women's global T20 with 90 players from 36 countries playing 20 games to compete, in hope to inspire generations to come."

## PFF announces squad for Paris Olympics women's football qualifiers



Shoib.Jatt

LAHORE: The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) on Saturday announced a 22-member squad for the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics Football Qualifiers, starting in Tajikistan next week.

Goalkeeper-turned-midfielder Maria Khan, who replaced Hajra Khan as the national women's team's captain in August 2022, will continue to lead the side in the upcoming AFC Women's Olympic Qualifying Tournament.

The squad comprises six forwards, seven midfielders, six defenders and three goalkeepers.

According to the details, the national women's team will hold a three-day training camp in Dubai before flying out to Tajikistan on April 3 for the first round of the Olympic Qualifiers.

Pakistan will play their first match of the tournament against the Philippines on April 5. They face Hong Kong on April 8 before ending their campaign on April 11 with an encounter against home side Tajikistan.

26 Asian teams will participate in the first round of the Olympic qualifiers. They are divided into five groups of four and two groups of three teams.

The seven group winners from the first round will join Asia's five highest-ranked teams - North Korea, Japan, Australia, China and South Korea - in the second round of the Paris 2024 Olympic women's football qualifiers to be held in October.

The three group winners and one best-placed runner-up from the second round will play for the two spots for Paris 2024 Olympics in the final round to be held in November-December 2023.

## Sarfراز Ahmed backs opener Babar in T20s

By A Sports -

KARACHI: Former Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed once again came out in support of the current all-format captain Babar Azam and supported him as an opener in T20s.

Sarfraz, while speaking to ARY Digital's Ramadan Transmission Shan-e-Ramazan, rated Babar as the top batter in T20s and also supported his batting position in the shortest format.

"Babar is a top batter in the T20 format and there must be no doubt about his abilities," said Sarfraz.

"Even in my captaincy, I will let him play as an opener. Babar is a player who can anchor innings if he gets support from the other end. With him being an opener, any team can achieve a good total," he added.



Babar has been the most consistent batter for Pakistan in all formats but the right-handed batter often faced criticism for his strike rate and several former cricketers and fans demanded his demotion in the batting order.

Earlier this week, Sarfraz also backed Babar as Pakistan's captain and claimed that he is improving with

time. "There is always room for improvement. Babar is getting better as a captain. He has started doing good and I hope will keep on getting better," said Sarfraz.

"In Pakistan, making a mistake is a sin. I know Babar makes mistakes but give him some time. It takes time to become a captain and build a team. We need to be patient

and support Babar as he is our captain.

"Gradually, Babar will learn from his mistakes if he continues as a captain in the future. I have played under him recently, and I have seen improvement in his captaincy. He will do good for Pakistan."

Sarfraz is considered as one of the most successful Pakistani captains. He is the only Pakistani captain to have won two ICC trophies - the Champions Trophy and U19 World Cup, also shared a piece of advice for his successor Babar, stating that he needs to improve communication with his players.

"My suggestion to him is that he needs to improve communication with his players. Good communication will make his players confident and it will produce big results," he concluded.

## PCB starts sale tickets for three t20 matches V/S New Zealand Cricket Team

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Pakistan Cricket Board Start Sale Tickets For Three T20 Matches Played in Lahore.

Match Tickets available for the details for Rawalpindi and Karachi matches to be announced in due course

Online tickets will be available at pcb.bookme.pk from 11am

The tickets for the three T20 International Matches Between Pakistan and New Zealand in Lahore will go on sale on Sunday (2 April) at 11am. Pakistan and New Zealand Cricket teams play First



Three T20 Cricket Matches on 14, 15 and 17 April at the Gaddafi Stadium Lahore.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has set affordable ticket prices, ranging from PKR250 to PKR3,000. The following are the enclosure categories and prices:

• VVIP Enclosure (Wasim Akram) Ticket Rate PKR3,000

• VIP Enclosures (Fazal Mahmood and Imran Khan) Ticket Rate PKR2,000

• Premium (Raja's and Saeed Anwar) Enclosures Tickets Rate PKR1,000

• First class (Abdul Qadir, AH Kardar, Javed Miandad and Sarfraz Nawaz) Enclosures Tickets Rate PKR500

• General Enclosures (Hanif Mohammad, Imtiaz Ahmed, Inzamam-ul-Haq, Majid Khan, Nazar, Quaid, Saeed Ahmed and Zaheer Abbas) Tickets Rate PKR250

In the first phase, which commences tomorrow, the tickets will be available online at pcb.bookme.pk and fans can buy them using original ID cards. The fans will be required to bring their original ID or B-Forms (for those under the age of 18) to gain entry in the stadium.

The physical tickets will be available in the second phase from 6 April. The details regarding sale points will be announced in due course.

The ticket details for the matches in Rawalpindi and Karachi will be announced in due course.

## Award ceremony

Karachi: Governor Sindh Muhammad Kamran Khan Tessori presenting the award to Organizing Secretary Nadim Khan at the closing ceremony of the Karachi Games. Administrator KMC Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman is also present.



# Sinner downs Alcaraz to set up Miami final with Medvedev

Sports Desk

FLORIDA: Italy's Jannik Sinner turned on the style to end Carlos Alcaraz's hopes of the "Sunshine Double" and his reign as world number one, triumphing 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-2 in their Miami Open semi-final on Friday.

Sinner will meet Russian Daniil Medvedev in Sunday's final while Alcaraz will lose his number one ranking to Novak Djokovic.

Medvedev reached his fifth straight ATP Tour final with a 7-6 (7/5), 3-6, 6-3 win over fellow Russian Karen Khachanov.

The disappointment for the 19-year-old Alcaraz, the defending champion in Miami and coming off a title at Indian Wells, will be tinged with frustration after he struggled in the third set with leg cramps.

It had been an enthralling and entertaining power-hitting performance from both men in the first set, with an incredible 25-shot exchange in the seventh game, bring the crowd to their feet.

The intense, high quality set was eventually won by the Spaniard after a tie-break, but an inspired Sinner fought back in the second.

Sinner broke in the first game and although Alcaraz broke back to make it 2-2, the 21-year-old Italian sensed his moment was arriving and showed confidence in his powerful groundstrokes.

The world number one was moving with difficulty and was broken on his first serve in the deciding set. Looking in discomfort, he crouched down on his baseline in between points and

shot some worried and confused looks to his team in the stands.

Sinner chose some more conservative strokes and although Alcaraz appeared to recover a little, the Italian ran out the winner in three hours.

Alcaraz said his problems had appeared during a bathroom break after the second set.

"I went to bathroom for five minutes and yeah, everything went down for me a little bit. I stopped myself. I started cramping a little bit. You know, after a really tough match it's, well, it is tough to stop the match for five minutes," he said.

"I started cramping at the beginning of the third set, but it wasn't the reason for I lost the match. I came back...I started to feel better but of course Jannik, he was better than me in the third

set. That's the truth," he said.

Sinner had lost to Alcaraz in straight sets in their meeting at the same stage in Indian Wells and he said he could feel just how high the quality of their encounter at Hard Rock Stadium had been.

"When both players play tennis like this it is very nice to play, you can feel it with the crowds. There was just a great energy with everything. It is just nice to be part of matches like this," he said.

Sinner also said that he had suffered some cramping during the second set but recovered quickly.

"I knew that I had to go on and wait for the right moment," he said. "I feel ready to compete and I am happy to be in the final," he added.

The 27-year-old Medvedev,



playing against his boyhood friend, survived a second-set comeback but his trademark precision stroke play saw him through against the big-serving Khachanov in a high quality encounter.

The contest saw a series of long rallies as Medvedev fended off Khachanov's thumping shots from the baseline and then pinned his opponent back on his service game.

Medvedev hit 13 aces and

saved four of six break points as the match turned decisively in his favor when he broke Khachanov in the fourth game of the third set.

Medvedev won 82% (14 of 17) of his first-serve points in the final set and was relieved to have beaten a player who knows his game so well.

"In my opinion, it was a top match," Medvedev said. "In the first set when we lost our serves, it was just a good game from the returner."

"In the second set, I had one bad game and he won the set. I had one break point, I could have done better. He had a break point in the first game of the third set, I managed to play well. He had one bad game in the third set, I managed to take it and I am really happy to be through. It was a very tough match."

## Saqlain Mushtaq joins New Zealand as assistant coach for Pakistan tour

Former off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq is all set to perform his duties as the New Zealand team's assistant coach for the upcoming limited-overs series against Pakistan.

"I have accepted this role for a brief period after New Zealand Cricket approached me. I will only work with the team during their stay in Pakistan," Saqlain confirmed while speaking to Geo News.

"I am currently in the United States and will join the NZ squad upon my return on April 12," said the former interim Pakistan head coach.