

# QUETTA VOICE

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## Balochistan Health Minister Supports Congo-Affected Doctors in Karachi

Health Desk:

**KARACHI:** During his visit to Karachi, Balochistan's Caretaker Health Minister, Dr. Amir Muhammad Jogezi, displayed a commendable show of concern for the frontline warriors battling the Congo virus. Joined by Health Secretary Abdullah Khan, the minister took a hands-on approach, personally inquiring about the health of doctors and nurses affected by the virus.

### Free PCR Tests Of All 32 Doctors

In a significant announcement, he pledged to conduct free PCR tests for all 32 doctors at Aga Khan Hospital, reflecting a proactive stance in managing the situation.

The grim reality of the Congo virus's impact became apparent as 16 health professionals, including 11 doctors, succumbed to the infection. This prompted the declaration of an emergency across all government-run hospitals, highlighting the gravity of the situation.

### 2 Doctors Serious

Among the affected, two doctors are currently in critical condition, emphasizing the urgent need for concerted efforts to curb the spread of the virus. Tragically, the healthcare community lost one of its own, Dr. Shakaurullah Khan Baloch, to the re-



lentless grip of the Congo virus. His untimely demise serves as a poignant reminder of the risks faced by those at the forefront of the battle against infectious diseases.

### Govt Committed To Treat Congo Virus Patients

Minister Jogezi's visit not only demonstrated solidarity with the medical fraternity but also underscored the government's commitment to addressing the crisis head-on. In the face of adversity, the decision to prioritize free testing for healthcare professionals reflects a proactive and compassionate approach, aiming to safeguard those tirelessly working to protect public health.

The situation remains fluid, and the authorities are undoubtedly working tirelessly to mitigate the impact of the Congo virus on the healthcare system and, ultimately, the community at large.

## Aid groups call for immediate ceasefire in Gaza as death toll reaches 10,812

**GAZA:** A teenager has been arrested and is under investigation for assault after kicking a rabbi in the back in the Paris Metro, a prosecutor has said, against broader concerns over a recent surge in antisemitism in France.

According to Reuters, the prosecutor at the Bobigny Tribunal said the possibility of an antisemitic motive aggravated the potential charges.

The incident happened around midday on Wednesday and the victim was wearing a black suit and hat, attire often worn by Jewish rabbis, the prosecutor said. There have been 1,159 antisemitic acts in France since the Oct 7 attack on Israel, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said on Wednesday, nearly three times the number in all of 2022.

Some members of the Jewish community in France have said they feel afraid to leave the house wearing visible religious emblems such as the kippah, or skullcap worn by some Jewish men, and consider which synagogue to attend as some have tighter security protocols.

The president of Cyprus has outlined a proposal to open a maritime corridor to help deliver more aid to Gaza, a plan which he said could be operational quickly but which diplomats said faced challenges, Reuters reports.

Under the plan presented by President Nikos Christodoulides at a humanitarian conference in Paris, aid would be sent by sea to Gaza from the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, the closest European Union member state about 370 km (230 miles) away. "We hope immediately to implement it," he said of the 25-page proposal. The plan is aimed at expanding capacity for humanitarian relief to the Gaza Strip beyond limited deliveries being made through the Rafah crossing between Egypt and the Palestinian enclave since Israel began its air and ground offensive in Gaza. Christodoulides said the



operations centre would be based in the southern Cypriot city of Larnaca, where there is a port and airport, and where a coordination centre with 33 countries is already in place. British foreign minister James Cleverly said calls for a ceasefire in Gaza were understandable but the United Kingdom also recognised that Israel was acting for its own security, Reuters reports.

"Well, what we have said, is that calling for a ceasefire is understandable," Cleverly said during a visit to Riyadh, where he met Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud.

"But what we also recognise is that Israel is taking action to secure its own stability and its own security. Of course, we want to see this terrible situation resolved as quickly as possible," he added.

"The immediate challenge is the humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza," he said. "Well, calling for a ceasefire is the easy point. Actually, establishing peace is much more difficult, and we are committed to establishing peace and sus-

tainable peace that sees Israel secure but also sees security for the Palestinians," Cleverly said.

World powers need to stop talking about the idea of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict and instead put forward practical proposals to make it work once it ends, Italy's foreign minister has said, according to Reuters.

Speaking in Paris after a humanitarian conference on Gaza, Antonio Tajani said Rome had sent a naval hospital ship from Naples on Thursday morning to the region, but he emphasised resolving the conflict would need some more creativity to create a perspective for peace.

"We have to put ideas on the table. I don't find any other solutions than the United Nations if we want peace," he told reporters. "We have to move forward and try to convince." Tajani suggested that after the conflict in Gaza had been finished, creating a UN peacekeeping mission like in Lebanon could be one area to explore. Italy contributes some 1,300 soldiers to Lebanon. NEWS DESK

## CTD Thwarts Terrorist Attack, Neutralizes Three Terrorists in Khuzdar: Spokesman

Mir Salam Jogezi :

**QUETTA:** In a major breakthrough, the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD Balochistan) successfully neutralized three terrorists affiliated with a banned organization in an intelligence-based operation in Khuzdar. The operation, conducted in the Girisha tehsil Nal camp, thwarted the terrorists' plan to carry out a detonation.

The law enforcement officials, in an attempt to intercept the terrorists on motorcycles near the Kank area, were met with gunfire. In the ensuing encounter, all three terrorists were eliminated.

A significant cache of arms, ammunition, and explosives, including two sub-machine guns, pistols, hand grenades, a magnetic IED, and rounds, were seized from the possession of the deceased terrorists.

The spokesman for CTD Balochistan highlighted the swift response of the security forces, pre-



venting a potential terrorist attack. A case has been registered at CTD Khuzdar police station, and investigations are underway to apprehend any remaining members of the network.

This decisive operation underscores the commitment of the Counter-Terrorism Department to maintaining peace and security in the region.

The successful intervention not only neutralized a significant threat but also showcased the effectiveness of intelligence-driven counter-terrorism efforts in Balochistan.

## DNA samples of prime suspect match in Khairpur maid murder case: minister

**SINDH:** Sindh Caretaker Minister for Law and Human Rights Muhammad Omer Soomro has confirmed that the DNA samples of Pir Asad Shah, the prime suspect in the murder case of nine-year-old housemaid Fatima Furro, have matched with the semen obtained from the clothes of the victim.

The deceased girl was employed as a domestic worker at a haveli (mansion) owned by Asad Shah — a local influential — in Khairpur's Ranipura area and was found dead under mysterious circumstances on August 14.

Later, a post-mortem report confirmed the minor was also sexually abused.

A case was lodged on the complaint of her mother, Shabnam Khatoun, under Sections 302 (intentional murder) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of a common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) at Ranipura police station and an investigation was initiated.

During the investigation, the police arrested suspects Pir Asad Shah, his wife Hina Shah, his father-in-law Pir Fayyaz Shah, and Imtiaz Mirasi.

Soomro, while addressing a press conference on Wednesday, claimed that initially, the DNA samples of the prime suspect did not match as the officials of the health department had destroyed the specimen due to the influence of the suspect. The same, however, matched when the DNA samples were processed at a facility in Punjab, he added.

Earlier, a DNA report issued by the Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences in Jamshoro, a copy of which Dawn.com has seen, had stated that "mix DNA profiles" were obtained from semen stains on the clothes of the deceased girl.

The girl's father, Nadeem Ali Furro, had initially claimed that the girl was afflicted by some stomach-related ailment, as indicated by doc-



tors when she was taken to a local private hospital on the night of Aug 14-15.

Later, the girl died in her house after having been discharged from hospital.

Claims about her death spiraling as a result of torture came to the fore when videos of a girl bearing torture marks went viral. It was not known who leaked the videos. These videos were obtained by the police team, which also met some social activists from the area.

After the videos went viral in the district, police took notice of the matter and Sukkur Counterterrorism Department Deputy Superintendent of Police Abdul Qudous Kalwar met the girl's parents.

He later met social activists and viewed the viral videos, subsequently reporting to DIG Jiskani that the matter was serious and the exhumation of Fatima's body was required.

On Aug 17, Khairpur police also arrested a key suspect in the case, who was later remanded into police custody.

Another teenage housemaid alleged that she was tortured by Syed Asad Shah and his wife, Hina Shah, who have been detained.

Khairpur SSP Khoso said the 13-year-old girl made the claims in a video and police were making her statement part of the case file of the FIR lodged by Fatima's mother against Asad Shah and his wife. NEWS DESK

## Tandoor Association Announced Closure of Tandoors in Quetta

Manan Mandokhail:

**QUETTA:** The registered Anjuman Tajran Balochistan and Tandoor Association have jointly declared the temporary closure of tandoors starting today (Friday) until further notice. This announcement was made during a press conference at the Quetta Press Club on Thursday, led by Wali Afghan, the General Secretary of Anjuman Tajran Balochistan (Registered), along with Muhammad Nissem Khilji, Chairman of Tandoor Association, Haji Raza Khan Khilji, and Malik Wali.

The closure stems from the alleged targeting of Quetta's Tandoor community since November 1, in response to the federal government's decision to repatriate illegal immigrants. Approximately 300 ovens have been shut down.

Furthermore, the representatives highlighted the disparate treat-



ment, pointing out that workers and contractors in coal mines in various districts, including Dikki, Hamai, and Quetta, were allowed to operate under a specified procedure.

## Govt Must End Illegal Trawling in Gwadar: Maulana Hidayat

Staff Reporter:

**QUETTA:** Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman, Chief of Haq Do Tehreek, has urged both the provincial and federal governments to take immediate action to halt illegal trawling activities in Gwadar.

During a press conference at the Quetta Press Club, Maulana expressed deep concern over the government's failure to address the issue despite repeated ap-



peals for the local population.

**People Lost Jobs**  
Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman claimed that people are facing hindrances in conducting business activities at the coast, as emphasized that it has led to the loss of employment for thousands of fishermen, who depend on the coastal areas for their livelihood.

The HDT Chief called for urgent measures to put an end to these illegal practices, emphasizing the importance of preserving the economic well-being of the state as major sources of income

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## QUELLE VAINES

Editor: Asim Khan

### Healthcare Crisis in Balochistan Favors Karachi as Patient Destination

Editorial:

The recent exodus of Congo virus patients from Quetta to Karachi has unveiled the alarming state of government-run hospitals in Balochistan. The tragic loss of Dr. Shikarullah Baloch, who succumbed to the deadly virus en route to Karachi, serves as a poignant reminder of the dire situation.

#### 11 Doctors Tested Positive For Congo Virus

Most of the nearly dozen patients, including 11 doctors, have sought refuge in private hospitals in Karachi in their desperate fight for survival. This raises a crucial and deeply troubling question: when healthcare professionals themselves lack confidence and trust in Balochistan's healthcare system, how can we expect the general public to place their faith in it?

#### Investigation Into Outbreak of Congo Virus Is Imperative

First and foremost, a comprehensive investigation into the outbreak of the Congo virus within the Civil Hospital's trauma centre is imperative. It is vital to understand how and why approximately two dozen healthcare professionals fell victim to this deadly virus. We must conduct a thorough, transparent, and operating procedures for treating Congo virus patients were followed and determine whether the government has initiated an inquiry to address this critical matter.

Furthermore, the destination for Congo virus patients was intended to be the Fatima Jinnah Chest and TB Hospital, yet the patient was inexplicably admitted to the trauma centre of the Civil Hospital. These discrepancies warrant a thorough review.

#### Time Has Come For Complete Overhaul of Health Care System

It is disheartening that despite a substantial investment of over Rs. 50 billion in Balochistan's healthcare sector and a significant number of medical professionals, patients continue to be referred to Karachi for medical treatment. This trend underscores a lack of trust in the healthcare system within the province, and corrective measures are urgently required.

The time has come for a comprehensive evaluation and overhaul of Balochistan's healthcare system to regain the trust of both healthcare professionals and the general public. Only by addressing these critical flaws can we hope to build a robust and dependable healthcare system that serves the needs of the people.

## Food safety

By Navaira Ali Bangash:

FOOD safety and nutrition are closely linked. Just as nutrition is crucial to good health, food safety issues are critical for overall health and well-being. In short, it's all about whether what we eat, what we drink is safe for our health. This refers to using ingredients and additives, preparing and storing food in a way that minimises the risk of foodborne illness, biological, chemical and physical contamination can be hazardous. According to statistics, almost one in 10 people globally falls ill after eating contaminated food, while 420,000 die every year as a result of it.

Pakistan made its first food safety law back in the 1960s. Over the years, policymakers established clear standards regarding food safety and protection in the country, with the federal and provincial regulators trying to implement them.

However, in violation of these standards, the adulteration of packaged food by adding inferior or harmful ingredients to edible products, and the trend of cutting corners and dumping on consumers have persisted here. Local standards even prohibit the addition of certain dyes, colours or additives to packaged food products. With the laws in place and the regulators apparently enforcing them, and a formal well-documented food sector operating in the country, one would have assumed that ensuring food safety would not be much of a challenge, but the situation is, in fact, the reverse.

The grey food trade is booming in Pakistan

and formal channels suffer. Not only is the smuggling of food items detrimental to an already crippled economy, it also raises grave health concerns. Cooking oils, spices and dairy products are common carriers for spores and can be responsible for serious outbreaks.

Globally, food scares are not uncommon. Pesticide residues have been previously found in imported rice batches in many countries, leading to temporary bans and strict regulation of rice imports. The same is the case for many prohibited dyes and food colours. In 2018, Australian cantaloupes caused an outbreak of listeriosis in the countries they were exported to, leading to their recall.

In Pakistan, the smuggled food products situation was improving after SRO 237 was issued in 2019, but in the past few months, these smuggled food items seem to be back.

Porous borders and poor enforcement of food laws have boosted this illicit trade. Stakeholders, policymakers and the government should focus their attention on curbing the illegal inflow of these products from across the border for the sake of public health. Apart from health risks, the economy faces staggering financial losses due to these practices. Pakistan loses \$2.6 billion in tax revenues due to the smuggling of food items. Smuggled food cost is estimated at \$9bn. Uniform legislation should be in place to impose stringent measures. The Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority, Pakistan Customs and the Ministry of Commerce should ensure support to only the least developed countries.

By Khurram Husain:

### What China wants from Pakistan

WHAT China wants

from Pakistan is the same as what China wants from every other country, which is to endlessly run a trade surplus in their favour. There might be a few specific things beyond this, such as Gwadar for instance, but those are marginal and nowhere near as central to Chinese designs in Pakistan and the rest of the world as we might imagine.

Just add up the numbers. Since 2010, Pakistan has run a cumulative trade deficit with China equal almost to \$90 billion. This means capital worth \$90bn has flowed from Pakistan to China against goods and services coming the other way. The next big deficit region includes the other producing countries of the Gulf.

With the US, in the same period, Pakistan ran a trade surplus of \$12bn. For the EU, it is a trade surplus of \$1.2bn.

With the UK, it ran a trade surplus of almost \$12bn. For the EU, it is a trade surplus of \$1.2bn because the State Bank does not report EU trade data as a region, and the member countries have changed over the decade, making it difficult to manually compute the cumulative trade for these years. But it is safe to assume that there would be a sizeable trade

surplus here too.

The numbers paint a rather straightforward picture. Pakistan earns capital by participating in the economies of the US, UK and EU, and spends this capital in the economies of China and the oil-producing kingdoms of the Gulf.

The interesting thing is, if you look at the decade between 2000 and 2010, China would not factor as the top country with which Pakistan ran a trade deficit. It attained that position post-2010, and cemented it further with the second China Pakistan Free Trade Agreement agreed to in 2019.

This is not unique to Pakistan. There are not many countries in the world that run a trade surplus with China. The largest surplus that anyone ran with China last year, for example, was Taiwan, coming in at \$156bn.

Other countries that ran a trade surplus with China include Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brazil and a few others. By and large, the rest of the world runs a deficit. India, for example, ran a \$100bn deficit with China last year alone.

The difference between them and us, however, is they can afford this deficit whereas we

can't. Another difference is that India has worked to safeguard its trade interests with China, for example, by eschewing a bilateral free trade deal with them, while pursuing this with others in Southeast Asia instead.

Pakistan, on the other hand, has not only gone deeper into the loss-making relationship with China, but increased reliance on Chinese credit as well along the way. A report released by Aid Data, a research lab based in the College of William and Mary, provides some useful data.

Since 2000, China has committed \$70bn to Pakistan. This is not development finance, including emergency lending for budgetary support. Of that, \$56bn was committed in the post-2013 period, when the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) began. The report provides data on commitments, but not actual disbursements, but in some categories, it is easy to see how commitments would equal disbursements.

One of these categories is the general budget support. Of the \$56bn committed by China to Pakistan in the post-BRI period, \$16bn was for budget support. In the pre-BRI period,

the years running from 2000 to 2012, budget support credits were \$4.6bn.

Notice the trend? China begins extending more and more credit for budget support to Pakistan as the trade deficit grows. What is the purpose of these credits? To keep us in the game. So we can keep losing more and more to them with every passing year.

Let's emphasise something that should otherwise be obvious: China is doing nothing wrong here. This is, in fact, fairly normal trade policy for an emerging great power. All great powers have run a similar trajectory. They run trade surpluses with the rest of the world for prolonged periods, gathering more and more capital to advance their economy as the years pass.

Then they become exporters of this capital to others. Eventually, as their economy becomes the single largest producer of goods and services, as well as the single largest supplier of capital to the world, they remake the rules of the game to make their currency the medium of exchange in global trade settlements as well as the key reserve asset.

China is walking this timeline, although it has hit some snags in

graduating from the role of "workshop of the world" to the key financier of the world economy.

To repeat: China is doing nothing wrong, nothing sinister. This is normal trade policy for an emerging power, and its relationship with much of the world looks like this. It is Pakistan that has to learn something here. The first thing to do is to drain all emotion out of the relationship.

This business of "higher than the highest mountain" needs to end. Second thing is to take stock of the two free trade agreements we have had with China thus far, and decide whether we want to renew this in 2024 or not, and if so, on what terms.

Second most important thing is to realise that the game is all about earning capital, not borrowing it. Then they become exporters of this capital to others. Eventually, as their economy becomes the single largest producer of goods and services, as well as the single largest supplier of capital to the world, they remake the rules of the game to make their currency the medium of exchange in global trade settlements as well as the key reserve asset.

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## Elusive climate justice

By Ali Taqueer Sheikh:

### No other climate issue

has divided the Global South and Global North in international climate negotiations as much as the question of setting up of loss and damage fund (LDF). Developed and developing countries have shouted at each other in a catalogue of the deal because of the two distinct principles, if not paragraphs. Developing countries have traditionally argued for 'shared but differentiated responsibility'.

The EU also made its contributions to the fund conditional on contributions from China. It is a coded way of diluting the principle of historical responsibility by engaging with the emerging economies, as well as oil-rich economies such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as countries' contributors. The EU and US positions were based on Principle 6 of the Rio Declaration that recommends 'special priority' be given to LDCs.

The emphasis on LDCs excludes middle-income countries such as Pakistan that are disproportionately exposed to climate risks and disasters. As chair of the Group of 77, Pakistan drew attention to this issue. It has the ability and argued that loss and damage support should also be extended to vulnerable countries, even if they were not LDCs. Pakistan's LDF proposal was set up in the LDF for the first time held in November 2022. A transitional committee was created to resolve funding and operationalisation: the LDF. The key questions included: The basic difference between developed and developing countries are rooted in two distinct standpoints. The transitional committee failed to resolve them in its four meetings but eventually a special meeting in Dubai resolved the issue as follows:

Allocation: Developed countries have agreed to make financial contributions to the LDF on a voluntary basis only. There will be no type of contribution. Additionally, it is agreed that the LDF will seek contributions from bilateral and multilateral institutions, the private sector and, possibly, from carbon markets, including mechanisms, and other such instruments that can serve to complement the LDF. The LDF will be able to raise the fund through concessional loans, public and private sources. It is agreed that the measurable annual cost to developing nations will reach over \$400bn by 2030, and above \$1 trillion by 2050.

Eligibility: The eligibility criteria for prioritising financing have not been finalised and the final decision will hinge on several factors particularly sources of funding and the type of funds made available to the LDF. It is, however, certain that LDCs and small island developing countries will be given the first preference, while for other developing countries special-purpose windows are expected to be established. For countries such as Pakistan that experience large-scale rehabilitation, resettlement and reconstruction challenges (as seen after last year's floods), some trigger-based mechanisms could perhaps be developed for fast-track support in case of disasters. The LDF could use a combination of 'needs-

based' (a country's economic and financial limitations and vulnerability) and 'ability-based' (a country's ability and performance in utilising the allocated financial criteria to assign funds).

Several operational elements of the LDF remain to be negotiated. Yet, it is clear the LDF is not aligned with the aspirations of those developing countries who were seeking financial flows based on the principles of climate justice. From our point of view, the fund will take time to be operationalised, giving Pakistan time to reach the loss-and-damage-related commitments made in its revised Nationally Determined Contributions. The agreement finalised and the final decision will hinge on several factors particularly sources of funding and the type of funds made available to the LDF. It is, however, certain that LDCs and small island developing countries will be given the first preference, while for other developing countries special-purpose windows are expected to be established. For countries such as Pakistan that experience large-scale rehabilitation, resettlement and reconstruction challenges (as seen after last year's floods), some trigger-based mechanisms could perhaps be developed for fast-track support in case of disasters. The LDF could use a combination of 'needs-

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The consensus reached in the operationalising the fund is precarious and this, together with the war in Gaza, will cast a long shadow on the climate summit later this month. The proposed funding mechanism is potentially being entangled with several critical issues of the climate summit, particularly the phasing out of coal and other fossil fuels, approval of the Global Stocktake report, carbon trading mechanisms, and mobilising private sector finance for both adaptation and mitigation. It will now influence the man negotiating text and the outcomes of the Conference of the Parties.

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## Bars and ballots

By F.S. Aijazuddin:

IN the forthcoming 2024 US presidential election, no US voter with any sense would vote for Joe Biden. He is a heartbeat away from extirpation. Those who have taken leave of their senses will vote for Donald Trump. He is a judge's best friend away from a jail sentence.

At the moment, Trump faces 91 criminal charges. Imran Khan claims he has 150 cases arranged against him. Both describe their Watergate might have done, given the chance.

Trump's tenacity reminds one of the opening lines of a short story

by the champion of his opponents — he could still be re-elected as president.

According to one US legal expert: "The constitution has very few requirements to serve as president, such as being at least 35 years of age. It does not bar a judge or a convict or even serving jail time, from running as president and winning the election." The US and Imran Khan claims he has 150 cases arranged against him. Both describe their Watergate might have done, given the chance.

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by Ambrose Bierce, the 19th-century American satirist. He began: "The fact that Jim Jones was buried was not his incontrovertible proof that he was dead. Jim Jones was always a hard man to convince."

The fact that Trump could not win the election campaign is not an insurmountable obstacle to the presidency: Trump has always been a hard man to convince. There is a parallel between the forthcoming elections in the US and those in Pakistan. While the date of the US elections is graven in stone (even if the results are not, as Trump demon-

strated in Nov-ber 2020), the date of Pakistan's election has been treated as a bauble, a plaything in the hands of those who have used the law to trivialised their duty to the electorate.

Some might see that the president, the chief election commissioner and the chief justice (CJ) of the Supreme Court — all three being part of the same national executive — have been playing the cushion of responsibility against each other since August 2023, when the assemblies were dissolved. The CJ used the intervening time to develop a

thesaurus of excuses why elections could not be held within the constitutional time limit. Finally, after months of unconscious preparation, the CEC proposed Feb 11 to the CJ of the Supreme Court. His Lordship advised the CJ to postpone the election, while the CEC in August had refused to meet just for that purpose.

The CJ has often advised those appearing before him to avoid citing the US judicial precedents. He might consider

allowing this exception — a reference to the US Supreme Court decision of 1864. The divided states of America were in the throes of a civil war. In November, 1864, Abraham Lincoln (then president), had to choose between con-

stitution in case of disasters. The LDF could use a combination of 'needs-

lost. Instead, he won, both the election and in time also the war.

Here in Pakistan, we have been conquered by our own civic fecklessness. We have been ruled by our political inertia. We have allowed ourselves to believe that non-voting is subordinate to the whims of official functionaries.

We can vote only when we are allowed to — One more step backwards and we will be told that we have no say in what numbers, and which parties should be meddled into a parliamentary majority.

The year 2024 has

yet to etch its own history. The year 2019 is already a date in the annals. On July 22 that year, two men met in the White House — president Donald Trump and prime minister Imran Khan. Their formal par-

ties gushed with unfeigned emotion. The overflowed into an over-long tour by the president of his White House. (One Pakistani friend later complained that the guests tired before their host did.)

Today finds Imran Khan in a Pakistani jail. Donald Trump, if convicted, may soon find himself inside an American one.



## Changes in lockdown: Punjab allows markets, shops to open today, tomorrow

LAHORE (INP): The Punjab government has announced some changes in its four-day lockdown in eight districts of the province. It has now allowed markets in these smog hotspot districts to open today and tomorrow. The Punjab Department of Primary Healthcare has also issued an amendment notification. As per details of the new partial lockdown, markets, shops and shopping malls have been allowed to remain open today and tomorrow in the eight districts of

Punjab where smog levels have been found to be the highest and that are potential hotspots for conjunctivitis (eye infection). However, the shops and markets will remain closed on Saturday and Sunday, the notification said. It said the decision applied to Lahore, Nankana Sahib, Sheikhupura, Kasur, Gujranwala, Narowal, Hafizabad and Sialkot districts. Moreover, restaurants, cinemas, gyms, public and private schools, colleges, and universities, and offices will remain closed from Thursday to Sunday on account of Iqbal Day. On Wednesday, the provincial government had declared a smart lockdown to tackle the escalating air pollution levels and an alarming increase in conjunctivitis cases. A notification issued by the health department raised the red flag, citing the escalating threat of conjunctivitis, also known as pink eye. The notification read, "The spread of Conjunctivitis/Pink Eye due to bacterial or viral infection, smoke, dust, or chemical exposure is increasing day by day, which poses a serious and imminent threat to public health." Recognizing the importance of maintaining critical services, the government outlined exemptions for key personnel. Judges, lawyers, court staff, healthcare professionals, law enforcement agencies, essential service providers, WASAs, municipalities, WAPDA, NTDC, DISCOs, and SNGPL were among those exempted from the lockdown restrictions.



GAZA: Palestinian citizens wait their turn at the Rafah crossing to cross from the Gaza Strip to Egypt.

## Keeping lights off: Undocumented foreigners go underground in Pakistan

KARACHI (INP): After living in Pakistan for years, thousands of Afghans have gone into hiding to escape a government order to expel undocumented foreigners because they fear persecution under a Taliban administration in their homeland, rights activists say. "The gate is locked from the outside... we are locked inside, we can't come out, we can't turn on our lights, we can't even talk loudly," said a 23-year-old Afghan woman, speaking online from a shelter where she said dozens of others had holed up until earlier this week before moving on to a new hideout. Local supporters put a lock on the gate so neighbours believe the house is unoccupied, said other inmates. The woman, who is from the Afghan capital Kabul, said she fears prosecution if she returns to Afghanistan because she converted from Islam to Christianity in 2019 and renunciation of the Islamic faith is a serious offence under the strict Islamic law practised by the Taliban. She is one of thousands believed by rights activists to be in hiding in Pakistan to avoid deportation under a government push to undocumented migrants to leave the country. That includes over one million Afghans, many of whom

the Pakistan government says have been involved in militant attacks and crime. Authorities began rounding up operations across the country after a deadline for voluntary exits expired on Nov. 1. Sijal Shafiq, 30, a Karachi-based human rights activist who helped vulnerable Afghans find shelter before Pakistan's new expulsion policy, is one of several petitioners asking the Supreme Court to halt the deportation programme.

"I know several women, girls, who say they would rather die than return under the Taliban," Shafiq says, adding that they all had professional dreams and ambitions which would be impossible to realise in Afghanistan, where women are forbidden from most jobs and can travel only with a male escort. There was no immediate comment from a spokesman of the Taliban-run administration on whether those returning would be screened or prosecuted under their laws. Pakistan's foreign and interior ministries also did not respond to requests for comment about exempting at-risk individuals from deportation. The Pakistani government has so far brushed off calls from the United Nations, rights groups and Western em-

bassies to reconsider its expulsion plan or to identify and protect Afghans who face the risk of persecution at home. Western embassies, including the United States, have also provided Pakistani authorities lists of Afghans being processed for possible migration abroad and asked that they be exempt from expulsion, but the numbers are small compared to the people at risk. Reuters spoke to a dozen undocumented migrants trying to stay under the radar of the nationwide sweep. Because of their situation, they declined to be identified or asked that their full names not be used. They included a 35-year-old father, also a Christian convert, who fled to Pakistan with his nine-year-old daughter. Another young girl in the shelter said she fears for her life because she belongs to the ethnic Hazara minority, which has for years faced persecution from hardline Sunni extremists in Afghanistan.

"This is worse than prison," said a 22-year-old Afghan man who said he ensured the lights remained off at night. Some locals who are helping the Afghans arrange for food and water to be secretly smuggled into the shelter under the cover of night. Afghan singer Wafa, 28, fears her

apartment belonging to his relatives. He showed video clips of him playing the harmonium and rubab, a string instrument, some of which were on social media. "I was singing in my village for friends and relatives, we had lots of parties, singing parties," Saleh Zada said, speaking at a crowded low-income neighbourhood apartment belonging to his relatives. He showed video clips of him playing the harmonium and rubab, a string instrument, some of which were on social media. "I am a singer... I know what will happen to me when I'm back," Wafa said. Saleh Zada, a 32-year-old singer in Karachi, said he moved from Afghanistan a year ago.

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PESHAWAR: Shopkeeper busy in frying fish for customers at Qissa Khawani Bazaar.



WASHINGTON DC: Ambassador Masood Khan addressing a special ceremony to commemorate Iqbal Day, the birth anniversary of Allama Mohammad Iqbal.

## Special Federal Economic Zone to be established near Fateh Jang

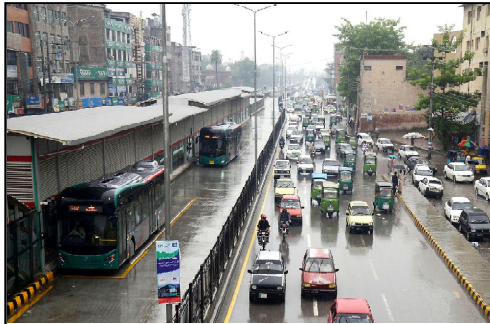
ISLAMABAD (INP): In a significant decision to boost industry a Special Federal Economic Zone will be established near Fatch Jang covering area of 85 square kilometers has already designated in this respect. This ambitious project aims to spur economic growth and development. The project includes the construction of a modern rail and truck terminal. Additionally, it will be seamlessly connected to the New Islamabad Airport through a 20-kilometer road that branches from the CPEC Motorway. Furthermore, a new Expressway spanning 25 kilometers will connect Gali Jagir on M2 Motorway to the M14 Motorway, creating a direct access route from Lahore Motorway.

The sources have revealed that the selected area for this Special Federal Economic Zone spans over 85 square kilometers, situated in Tehsil Fateh Jang and linked with Islamabad Airport. This vast region will encompass various villages, including Duhok Syedan, Hastal, Majhia, Taj Bara, Souk, Pandelath, Gali Jagir, Nikodar, Makki Dohok, Shahro Saadullah, Shahro Bahadur, Shahro Chirag, Laniwala, Gada, Rai Nika, Ismail, Bari, Pabag, Dohok Mond, Dohok Kiran Wali, Aruriya, Dalhal, and Kot Fateh Khan. This development falls within the Fateh Jang Tehsil, District Attock. The Federal Special Economic Zone will source its water supply from the Indus River, facilitated by a 54-kilometer-long water supply line originating from Khushalgarh near Jund. Moreover, a mini dam will be constructed in Thatti Gujran to meet the water requirements of the zone. The Goira Sharif

Fatch Jang Jund railway line, which is only five kilometers from the zone, will be modernized. A railway cargo terminal at Jaafar village will be constructed, connecting to the Havelian dry port. A new railway line spanning 5 kilometers from Jaafar village to the zone, significantly enhancing transportation capabilities.

This development is expected to create numerous employment opportunities for local residents, bringing prosperity and economic growth to the region. The zone's strategic location and enhanced connectivity are poised to drive commerce and trade efficiently. The Federal Special Economic Zone will play a crucial role in international trade. It is located 1,730 kilometers from Gwadar with a travel time of 22.5 hours. The zone is also just 1,200 kilometers away from Kashgar, making it ac-

cessible within 24 hours. The Board of Investment will serve as the supervisory authority for the Federal Special Economic Zone. The Government of Punjab is collaborating closely with the federal government on this project, and the implementation of Section Four is underway. Sources indicate that the entire area may eventually be incorporated into the federal capital, receiving the status of Islamabad district. Furthermore, two additional Special Economic Zones (SEZs) will be established in the province, along with one in the federation, all under the purview of CPEC and featuring substantial investments from China. This visionary project ushers in a new era of growth and development for the region, with the potential to redefine the economic landscape.



PESHAWAR: A view of rain in provincial capital.

## UK government faces homelessness row as poverty grows

LONDON (INP): The UK government is facing a backlash after a senior minister said some people were homeless out of choice, and as one charity said its distribution of emergency food aid has hit record levels. A cost-of-living crisis in the G7 nation and the world's sixth-biggest economy, fuelled by high inflation, has left many Britons struggling to make ends meet, as bills for food, energy, rent and mortgages increase. But Home Secretary Suella Braverman sparked outrage and claims of being tone deaf to the issue, after saying she wanted to stop homeless people pitching tents on public streets. "We cannot allow our streets to be taken over by rows of tents occupied by people, many of them from abroad, living on the streets as a lifestyle choice," she wrote on X, formerly Twitter. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has since appeared to distance himself from his hardline interior minister, while other colleagues condemned her language. According to government figures published in October, 104,510 households were in temporary accommodation in England in the year ending March 2023 — up 10 percent on the same time in 2022 and the highest since records began in 1998. A report on homelessness by Herriot-Watt University in Edinburgh said 290,000 eligible households nationwide sought help from local authorities for homelessness between 2017 and 2022. Figures released in August by the London Assembly, meanwhile, recorded 3,272 people sleeping rough in the British capital between

April and June 2023 — nearly half of them on the streets for the first time. The homelessness charity Crisis blamed a lack of "affordable homes" for fuelling homelessness and said even more people would be destitute if they were not provided with tents. "Laying blame with people forced to sleep rough will only push people further away from help into poverty, putting them at risk of exploitation," it wrote in an open letter to the government. The government has repeatedly vowed to end so-called no-fault evictions, in which landlords can force out tenants from rental properties without giving a reason. No-fault evictions have surged, as landlords who bought cheap buy-to-let properties when mortgage rates were low are selling up as their repayments become more costly. Polly Neate, chief executive of the housing charity Shelter, said ministers had failed to grasp the scale of the housing emergency. "Decades of inaction has left us with runaway rents, rising evictions and record levels of homelessness and ministers are blaming everyone but themselves," she said.

She called for more social housing to be built and more affordable private rental accommodation. Meanwhile the Trussell Trust, the UK's largest food bank network, said on Wednesday that the number of food parcel handouts has risen to unprecedented levels. It said it had provided 1.5 million emergency food parcels to people between April and September 2023 — a 16 percent increase on 2022 and the most it has ever distributed at this point in the year.



## Pakistan participates in CIIE with its largest effort ever

SHANGHAI (INP) 19 Pakistani exhibitors are participating in the ongoing 6th China International Import Expo (CIIE) being held from 5th to 10th November in Shanghai, which has made a remarkable mark by showcasing Pakistan's largest effort ever.

The expo, which has been held annually in Shanghai since 2018, is a major platform for promoting international trade and cooperation, according to a report published by China Economic Net (CEN) on Thursday.

"Pakistan's active participation in this prestigious event highlights its commitment to strengthening economic ties with China, Pakistan's second largest export destination, and exploring new avenues of collaboration," said Hussain Haider, Consul General in Shanghai. One of the key highlights of Pakistan's participation in the 6th CIIE is its focus on promoting its diverse range of export products. From leathers and surgical instruments to agricultural goods and handicrafts, Pakistan has showcased its rich cultural heritage and economic potential.

Pakistan's pavilions, adorned with vibrant displays and inno-

vative products, have attracted the attention of exhibitors and visitors alike.

Recognizing the significance of CIIE, the Pakistani Ministry of Commerce has extended its full support to the participating businesses. Various incentives, including financial subsidies and facilitation services, have been provided to ensure a successful exhibition experience.

This proactive approach by the government was widely appreciated by the Pakistani exhibitors and further enhanced Pakistan's image as an attractive investment destination.

CIIE is one of the biggest signs of the opening-up of the Chinese economy. It is encouraging that China's "dual circulation" development model provides more space for international high-quality imports, Haider said.

Pakistan's exports to China in September have surged by an impressive 100.5% compared to the corresponding month during the previous financial year, which bodes well. The CG said the country needs to sustain its exports to China and take advantage of the opening up of the Chinese

economy and the free trade agreement that offers a lot of concessions.

Since the beginning of this year, the two countries have signed protocols on export of boiled beef, dried chillies and dairy products from Pakistan to China, achieved access to fresh cherries from Pakistan to China and reached an agreement on export of animal skins from Pakistan to China. The Pakistani Ministry of Commerce is assisting more Pakistani companies to meet the import requirements of the General Administration of Customs of China for the aforementioned categories and expanding the export of more quality products such as surgical instruments and sports equipment. The Consul General also highlighted the importance of trade exhibitions and fairs as platforms for promoting Pakistani products in China. He urged Pakistani exporters to participate in such events to showcase their products and establish direct contacts with potential Chinese buyers as these interactions provide an opportunity for both sides to explore potential collaborations, joint ventures and partnerships.



PARIS: Federal Minister for Education & Professional Training Madad Ali Siddiqi presenting Pakistan's perspective at High Level Debate of 42nd UNESCO General Conference.

## ICCI proposes highest civil award of Pakistan for Indonesian Ambassador

ISLAMABAD (INP) Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and Business Community proposed to give the highest civil award of Pakistan to the Ambassador of Indonesia to Pakistan, Adam M. Tugjo for extraordinary services in strengthening the bilateral economic, trade, political and diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Addressing the farewell dinner in his honour hosted by the ICCI's President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtari, the Indonesian Ambassador said Indonesia and Pakistan have huge potential to increase their economy and the role of business communities of both sides was significant in this regard.

He said there are many potential sectors including tourism, trade, technology, energy and agriculture through which the two countries can expand their relations and by finding new economic sectors for increasing bilateral ties.

He said, "Indonesia and Pakistan are connected by historical religious ties and we have to transfer this legacy to our next generation for which both nations are responsible."

Ambassador Tugjo said that the best memories of his life are associated with Pakistan. This country is extremely hospitable and it is unparalleled in its natural beauty.

The Indonesian envoy said that his experiences as the ambassador to Pakistan were very wonderful. The business com-

munity here has a lot of potential, and it is hoped that the leadership of Pakistan's business community, especially the ICCI will play an unparalleled role in increasing the economic and trade relations between Indonesia and Pakistan.

He said that there are strong possibilities of Pakistan-Indonesia direct flights being operational and by finalizing soon, direct air connectivity will be established between the two countries.

The Indonesian ambassador said that the free trade agreement between Pakistan and Indonesia will be finalized soon after which mutual trade between the two countries will increase further.

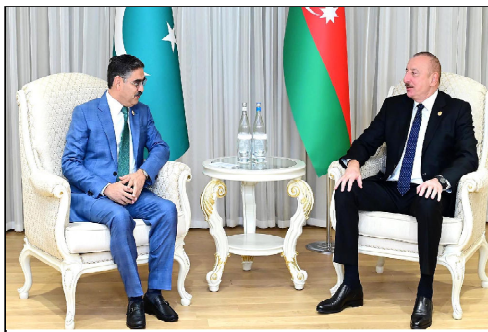
He said that he had done a lot of work to increase the mutual relations and more work was needed to strengthen the relations between the two countries. The Ambassador said that Indonesia can be a gateway for Pakistan in ASEAN countries. In the same way, Pakistan can develop trade routes for Indonesia in South Asia and Central Asian countries.

ICCI, President Ahsan Bakhtari said the role of the business community was very important in increasing trade relations between Indonesia and Pakistan and for this role of ICCI was significant in this regard. He said that tourism, IT and textiles are important sectors for strengthening mutual economic and trade relations in both countries.

Ahsan said that mutual trade between Pakistan and Indonesia is \$5 billion dollars, and needs to be further increased, for which ICCI will play its important role.

The ICCI president said that the trade between ASEAN and Pakistan is currently \$11 billion, which is much less than its potential and more work was needed. He expressed the hope that Indonesian Ambassador Adam Tugjo will give his best position to improve the image of Pakistan on his return from Pakistan and he will show a better image of Pakistan.

On this occasion, General Secretary of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Zafar Bakhtari said that direct air and free trade agreement between Pakistan and Indonesia are the need of the hour and their implementation is inevitable. He said that the economic and trade relations between the two countries will increase with direct flight, but also the mutual relations between the two nations will be established. On this occasion, Additional Secretary, MOFA, Rizwan Saeed Sheikh said that Pakistan and Indonesia can help each other provide trade corridors. He said that the geo-strategic location of both countries can strengthen the geo-economic benefits of both countries. Indonesia and Pakistan have strong political ties, which need to be strengthened in the Business to Business side, he added.



TASHKENT: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meets the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on the sidelines of 16th Summit of ECO.

## President, PM urge nation to follow Iqbal's teachings to make country prosperous

ISLAMABAD (INP) President Dr. Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar have paid rich tribute to Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal on his 146th birth anniversary.

In their separate messages, they said Dr. Allama Iqbal was the great benefactor of the Muslims of sub-continent, who envisioned the idea of a separate homeland for them and later his dream was translated into reality.

President Dr. Arif Alvi in his message said Iqbal was a great thinker who imbued in Muslims the spirit of unity, through his writings and poetry.

He said in order to make Pakistan a prosperous nation, we need to follow Allama Iqbal's teachings on Islam and his philosophy of "Khudi" that believes in the promotion of

self-respect and human dignity.

In his message on Iqbal Day, the Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar said Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal awakened the consciousness of the Muslims of the subcontinent about their basic rights which created a spirit of unity among the Muslims.

The Prime Minister said Iqbal's philosophy of Khudi is a unique transformation for humanity to achieve success in this world and hereafter.

He said Iqbal dreamed of a Pakistan a country of peace, political tolerance and brotherhood. The Prime Minister urged the youth to play a key role in the service and development of the country with positive and progressive thinking as envisioned by Allama Muhammad Iqbal.

Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi has said Allama Iqbal's philosophy and thought is a beacon of light for the humanity. In his message on the occasion of 146th birth anniversary of Allama Muhammad Iqbal, he said the national poet taught the young generation to create their own world instead of depending on others by giving a passionate message of 'Khudi'. He said Iqbal made a practical effort to awaken the Muslims from their slumber for their true identity. He said the solution to the multifaceted challenges we face today lies in the universal teachings of Iqbal. The Information Minister said the youth can truly serve Pakistan and the Muslim Ummah by adopting Iqbal's thought.

## IMF demands Pakistan impose tax on retail, real estate, agri sectors

ISLAMABAD (INP) The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has demanded Pakistan impose tax on retail, real estate and agriculture sectors.

This has been revealed during the ongoing technical-level talks between Pakistan's economic team and a visiting delegation of the IMF.

During the negotiations, further demands put forward by the IMF have emerged.

According to the Federal

Board of Revenue (FBR), in case of a shortfall, a fixed tax could be imposed on retailers. The FBR may exercise its powers to levy retail tax after December.

The World Bank says there is room for the collection of Rs3 trillion in annual taxes from agriculture and real estate sectors.

The bureau said that it was necessary to consult the provinces over imposition of taxes on the agriculture sector. The IMF has also called for a tightening of

enforcement for real estate taxes. The global lender has also suggested effective enforcement of the tax policy in sectors where collection was low.

The FBR has also submitted a prospective revenue report for the end of the current year to the IMF. The visiting mission is supposed to respond to the revenue report within two days.

The IMF team was also briefed on the task force on tax policy and administrative affairs.



ISLAMABAD: First Lady Begum Samina Awi addressing the concluding session of a consultative meeting on the Formulation of Federal and Provincial Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Strategic Action Plan.

## Research-based education vital for societal progress: Governor

MULTAN (INP) Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman underscored the paramount importance of research-based education and training as the cornerstone for societal advancement and prosperity.

The Governor expressed these remarks in an insightful third convocation at the Muhammad Nawaz Sharif Agriculture University (MNSUA), here on Thursday.

Addressing the students, he highlighted the transformative power of individual capacity building, stressing its positive impact on families, the nation, and humanity.

The event witnessed the conferral of numerous accolades, including gold medals and 2038 degrees bestowed upon graduates.

Balighur Rehman passionately advocated for a holistic approach to education, urging the fusion of training and academic pursuits to propel students forward.

He highlighted the significance of respecting others, po-

lite discourse, need for investment in human resources, and the importance of research in today's world.

He wished the students to critically assess the urgency of information on social media before accepting it. He urged students to discourage the spread of hatred.

Balighur stressed the students to check meal times for the promotion of education and health. Funds for higher education were raised from 2013 to 2018. Corruption is cancer and the building, stressing its positive report of Amnesty International.

The students must engage in well-reasoned debates by upholding respect and dignity. He also championed the commercialization of research and the promotion of a knowledge-based economy.

Punjab Governor also inaugurated a sports complex costing Rs 250 million to promote healthy activities. Besides this, he also inaugurated the wheat sowing campaign in the varsity. His initiatives align with the mis-

sion to develop the institution into a world-class university.

Vice Chancellor Dr Asif Ali expressed gratitude for the collaborative efforts of the Punjab Government, the Higher Education Commission, and philanthropists in the university's development. Asif remarked that varsity teachers play an important role in the provision of quality education to the region.

He shared ambition 15-year ambitious plan to elevate university standards at the international level. The varsity is heading towards a knowledge-based economy, he added.

The occasion was graced by prominent personalities, including academic leaders, government officials, and distinguished guests, marking a significant step towards educational and agricultural advancement in the region.

On this occasion, Vice Chancellors of different universities of the region, officers from south Punjab secretariat and a good number of students were also present.



KARACHI: 80 Indian fishermen released by Pakistani authorities.