



Daily SOON TIMES

Chief Editor
Shah Muhammad Awan

Saturday
May 11, 2024
Page: 4 Rs: 20
Vol: 4 Issue: 133
Sargodha
www.soontimes.pk

ABC Certified

Simultaneously Publishing from Islamabad, Sargodha & Karachi

+92 321 888 1135

Awards conferred on army officers, soldiers



Soon Times Correspondent
KARACHI

At a special investiture ceremony held at Karachi Corps, army officers and soldiers were conferred on Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military), Tamgha-i-Imtiaz (Military) and Tamgha-i-Basalat awards.

Corps Commander Karachi, Lieutenant General Babar Iftikhar was the Chief Guest on the occasion.

Next of kin of nine soldiers received Tamgha-i-Basalat on behalf of martyrs. Fourteen officers were awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military) while 19 officers were given Tamgha-i-Imtiaz (Military) for rendering meritorious services to the nation.

A large number of senior army officers and families of awardees attended the ceremony. The Corps Commander Karachi also interacted with the families of martyrs and paid rich tributes to their sacrifices.

CM Maryam Nawaz launches 'clinics on wheels' project

She also disclosed plans to build state-of-the-art cardiology hospitals in eight districts of Punjab.



Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE
Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz asserts that Punjab is moving towards development and prosperity. Addressing the 'clinics on wheels' project ceremony, the chief minister emphasised that this project would transform the health sector and facilitate the public.

She highlighted that the clinics on wheels project was equipped with all the basic medical facilities. The 200 clinics on wheels would be stationed at various points. The clinics will provide medical tests, screening, vaccination, as well as gynaecology services. Fifty out of the 200 mobile clinics will have ultrasound facilities. Through this project, as many as four million individuals will be facilitated, particularly in areas where hospital facilities aren't available. Local doctors from 36 districts will be given first priority to offer their services for this project. The shortage of nurses and paramedical staff is also under consideration. The chief minister said this project, initiated by Nawaz Sharif and halted during the previous government, was being reinstated. She insisted that her government was on a mission to provide health facilities at the doorstep. She also disclosed plans to build state-of-the-art cardiology hospitals in eight districts of Punjab.

CM Maryam inaugurated the clinics on wheels project where Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafiq, Imran Nazir, and Health Secretary Ali Khan were present.

PM Shehbaz Sharif directs formulation of trade policies to facilitate businesses

Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the authorities concerned to formulate the trade policies with a core objective of facilitating the business sector, calling for urgent measures to enhance the competitiveness of the country's exports.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting on the trade sector, called for steps to promote exports of non-traditional goods and instructed for immediate payment of the certified duty drawback for the exporters. Highlighting the significance of the private sector, he instructed to ensure consultation with them during the policy-making and implement the deletion policy to uplift the auto sector. Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the ministry to devise a comprehensive strategy to scrutinize the performance of trade and investment officers posted in Pakistan's



missions abroad, by rewarding the good performers and removing the incompetent ones. The prime minister told the meeting that he would personally carry out the fortnightly review of the export sectors. In the meeting, the prime minister was told that the discussion on the Free Trade Agreement between Pakistan and the Gulf states was in the final stage and transit trade agreements with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan had already been materialized.

Azerbaijan's Minister meets President Zardari



Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD

Azerbaijan's Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, Mukhtar Babayev, met with President Asif Ali Zardari in the capital. President Zardari underscored the necessity for global collaboration to address the challenge of climate change, emphasising the adoption of eco-friendly technology, promotion of forests, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate the impact of global warming.

He highlighted the importance of international cooperation in addressing environmental challenges and minimising adverse effects, extending congratulations to Azerbaijan for hosting the COP29 conference. Zardari expressed hope that COP29 would assist developing nations in meeting their financial requirements for environmental initiatives. The president also noted Pakistan's efforts in planting mangrove forests over millions of hectares to preserve the environment.

LHC orders de-sealing of Johar Town restaurants



Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE

The Lahore High Court has ordered the de-sealing of restaurants sealed in Johar Town. During the hearing of a smog-related petition, LHC's Justice Shahid Karim ordered the de-sealing of restaurants sealed in Johar Town upon the submission of affidavits/undertakings.

The court directed the lawyer representing the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) to ensure that if restaurant owners violated court orders again, they would be fined Rs1 million each. The court also allowed restaurants to remain open until 11pm on weekdays and until midnight on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Four perish As crane hits rickshaw, motorcycles in Gujranwala



Soon Times Correspondent
GUJRANWALA

Four people, among them a woman, perished when a crane hit a rickshaw and motorcycles due to a brake failure in Gujranwala here on Friday. According to rescuers, three people were injured in the accident that took place near Awan Chowk. Police officials associate the mishap with a brake failure of the crane.

Identity of the victims could not be ascertained immediately. A rescue team moved the injured to a nearby hospital for medical assistance. Police have registered a case and started investigation into the incident.

PA speaker suspends 27 MPAs in light of SC's decision on reserved seats

The suspended MPAs included 23 from PML-N, two from PPP and one each from IPP and PML-Q



Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE

In a major setback to the ruling alliance, Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan on Friday suspended the membership of 27 MPAs on reserved seats in the light of the Supreme Court's decision. Earlier this week, the Supreme Court had suspended the Peshawar High Court (PHC) and the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP)

decision to give the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) reserved seats to other parties. The opposition lawmakers welcomed the ruling and lauded the speaker with desk thumping. According to details, MPA Rana Aftab of SIC had raised a point of order demanding the suspension of MPAs after the apex court ruling on reserved seats. Speaker Malik Ahmad Khan termed

the point of order valid and suspended the membership of 27 MPAs on reserved seats. The speaker also read the judgement of Supreme Court in the house. The speaker's ruling would be implemented from today and the entry of all the suspended MPAs have also been banned. The ruling alliance lost 24 woman lawmakers and three minority MPAs in the light of the SC's judgement.

Tarar for measures at global level to counter misuse of social media, spread of fake news



Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD

Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ataulah Tarar said on Friday that there was a need for measures at the global level to counter the misuse of social media and the spread of fake news. "The Government of Pakistan recognizes the importance of freedom of the press and freedom

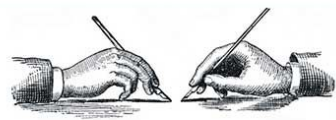
of expression, and it is determined to protect the rights of journalists", he said while talking to a delegation of Bangladeshi journalists visiting Pakistan who met him here. In the meeting, various important

issues were discussed including freedom of expression and economic initiatives of the government. The minister said that the government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was fully focused on economic stability. After the present government came to power, he said economic indicators were becoming positive, international journals were also predicting improvement in Pakistan's economy.

As a **CORRESPONDENT**

CONTACT US →

0321-888-1135
www.SoonTimes.pk



ACCOMMODATION PROVISION FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

In a bid to uphold transparency and fairness in providing accommodations to federal government employees, the Ministry of Housing and Works, under the directives of Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Dr. Shahzad Khan Bangash, Secretary Housing has taken decisive action. Notices being issued to all illegal and non-entitled allottees residing in Federal

Lodges, Gulshan-e-Jinnah complex, Chunni Lodge, and Ministry hostels of Ministry. In this regard, Ministry of Housing and Works provided an opportunity for a personal hearing to the allottees. Following the hearings, notices are being served to all such allottees who are not civil servants to vacate the accommodations. Once vacated, these accommodations will be allotted to entitled civil

servants who have been waiting in the queue for official accommodation for an extended period of time. Housing Ministry has made new rules for allotments of temporary accommodation in the Federal Lodges and Hostels. According to the new rules accommodations shall be allotted only to the Civil Servants posted at respective station of Lodges/ Hostels, holding substantive posts in BS-17 & above on regular

basis. There is a strict policy in place to ensure the vacation of apartments by unauthorized allottees. This aligns with the vision of Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada emphasizing that no relief shall be given to any such allottee. This proactive approach underscores the Ministry's commitment to fairness, equity, and efficient accommodation allocation to the entitled federal government employees.

Pigeon Flying - A Serious Hazard to Flight Operations



Saniya Ismail

Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority have launched a comprehensive public awareness campaign to address the growing threat of pigeon and kite flying near military and civilian airfields across the country. These activities pose a significant risk to aircraft safety and can result in catastrophic damage to multi-million dollar machines, jeopardizing national assets and operational capabilities. Bird strikes, including those involving pigeons, are a major concern for the aviation industry worldwide. In Pakistan, these incidents have caused millions of dollars in damages to aircraft and engines. Airports are responsible for implementing bird control measures, such as deploying bird shooters near runways and taking other preventive actions, however, the public's participation is crucial to effectively mitigate this hazard. The awareness campaign emphasizes the importance of responsible waste management and prohibition of pigeon flights close to airfields. Carcasses and offal left in open areas attract

large birds like eagles and vultures, which can collide with high-speed aircraft during takeoff and landing. These bird strikes can have devastating consequences, potentially leading to the loss of aircraft, pilots and precious lives. To address this issue, the authorities have taken several measures. Signboards and informative pamphlets have been placed around airports/airfields urging the public to properly dispose off animal remains. Shopkeepers, food outlets and hotel owners have also been educated about the importance of proper waste management to prevent attracting birds. The campaign also targets the hazards posed by kite and pigeon flying in the vicinity of PAF airfields. These activities can disrupt flight operations and pose a direct threat to aircraft safety. The authorities have directed the local police and district administration to enforce Section 144, which prohibits kite flying and selling, and to restrict pigeon flying near military and civilian airfields. The awareness campaign is being implemented across the country, with dedicated efforts at major airports like Islamabad International Airport, Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore, Jinnah International Airport in Karachi and Gilgit International Airport. At these airports, the management is collaborating with local authorities, community leaders

and religious organizations to raise awareness and ensure effective waste management. At Islamabad International Airport, a meeting of the Environmental Control Committee was also held to discuss the bird strike awareness campaign. Banners were displayed, and the authorities are working with the district administration and police to conduct public outreach. Similar initiatives have been undertaken at other airports, with informative pamphlets distributed, disposal bags provided and awareness sessions conducted with residents. Pakistan Air Force has also been actively involved in the campaign, with officers giving presentations on the threats posed by bird hazards and garbage dumping to national assets. The authorities have emphasized the need for joint efforts between the military, civil aviation and local communities to address this critical issue. The pigeon flying awareness campaign launched by the Pakistan Air Force and the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority is a crucial initiative to safeguard the country's aviation assets and ensure the safety of flight operations. So let us join hands together to support our Shaheens in educating the public, promoting responsible waste management and restricting hazardous activities near airfields, in order to mitigate the risk of bird strikes and protect the nation's valuable airpower capabilities.

Pakistan has long way to establish stable political system



Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaher

October 12, 2023.

Pakistan is facing many problems of rising inflation, food shortages, the threat of sovereign debt, and escalating violence, its political system entered 2023 with high stakes among the political elite, causing government paralysis and confidence. The democratic institutions are drastically going to be declined. Harsh politics are not new in a polarized Pakistan, but their combination with economic, humanitarian and security crises have made the country's current problems all the more pressing. The challenges facing this populous, strategically located and nuclear-armed Islamic nation are also spilling over into Pakistan's relations with countries and neighbors in the region.

On 25 July 2018, parliamentary elections took place, which were won by Imran Khan and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Party (PTI, Pakistan Movement for Justice). Even though significant restrictions were imposed during the election campaigning, the elections can be described as democratic, leading to the second peaceful change of government in succession. The new government had promised a number of socio-economic reforms and efforts against corruption. Therefore its record has been mixed, and its fiscal space is limited. The socio-economic situation remained difficult.

The latest round of political turmoil began in April 2022 with the overthrow of Imran Khan's government in a parliamentary vote of no confidence that exposed the collapse of the ruling military-civilian condominium and the clever dealings of the various 12 political parties. But rather than leave Khan alone, he has joined a spirited populist campaign that now looks likely to see him returned to office in the next national election. The current political deadlock is particularly over setting the date for those elections, constitutionally mandated for

Building on the momentum of his move, Imran Khan and his Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supporters are trying to hold early elections, while a coalition led by the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) party arrives as late as possible. To stay in power, the government relied on its patronage networks and resorted to politicizing key state institutions such as the judiciary, the accountability office, and the country's electoral commission. In mobilizing his supporters, Khan used inflammatory rhetoric and maneuvered politically in ways that many believe exceeded the limits of democratic competition. Pakistan's powerful military, temporarily on the sidelines but mindful of its institutional interests, arbitrates the bitter rivalry.

Pakistan's internal security is threatened by terrorism, extremism and separatist movements. The security situation in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in the former tribal areas and in the Province of Balochistan is constantly tense. Even though the security situation in significant parts of the country has improved, the government has so far not been able to enforce its monopoly on force throughout the country. Since the Taliban took power in Afghanistan, terrorism has begun to increase again, especially in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Many international actors are also closely following the political developments in Pakistan. Many countries are concerned about the ability of a troubled and politically paralyzed Pakistan to deal with the growing challenge of militant extremism. Although Khan has toned down some of his anti-American rhetoric, he continues to refer to the current government as "imported" and his often sympathetic views of the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban have worried American and European powers. Many Gulf States, which for years have relied on Pakistan's military to provide security for the government and value Islamabad's regional diplomatic role, need the security of a

politically predictable and stable Pakistan. The same is true of the international financial community which, along with the Saudis, Chinese and others, has invested heavily in Pakistan.

The year 2023 probably has many open questions. Among them, can Pakistan's warm political system succeed in curbing election violence? Will the army keep its promise not to interfere in the electoral process? Could the resounding triumph of Khan's conspiratorial populism reshape politics in a way that sets Pakistan on a more authoritarian path? How could a collapsing economy affect the political process, possibly postponing elections? The minor question is that Pakistan has a long way to go to establish a stable and functional political system, let alone build a democratic political culture.

Now all eyes are on how military-civilian relations that are shaping up under Asim Munir. Under Bajwa, the military consolidated its control over all sorts of behind-the-scenes politics. Bajwa presided over a close "same page" relationship with Khan. When this conflict occurred, the Muslim League (N) was eager to replace Khan as an ally of the military and head of the civilian government. Bajwa resigned saying that the army would no longer be involved in political affairs. Very few people in Pakistan believe him. With politics dominating the agenda this year and elections approaching, army chief Asim Munir has a chance to show the country whether he will follow in his predecessor's footsteps or chart a new course for Pakistan's civil-military relations. The political parties must also agree that in future the opposition parties will fulfill their duties but will not attempt to overthrow any existing government before the end of their term. All political parties must also express their commitment to maintain continuity in the economic policies of each government.

GRADUATION CEREMONY OF NO 59 COMBAT COMMANDERS' COURSE



Soon Times Correspondent Karachi

The Graduation Ceremony of No 59 Combat Commanders' Course was held at PAF Airpower Centre of Excellence (ACE). Air Vice Marshal Aurangzeb Ahmed, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Operations), was the Chief Guest at the occasion. Addressing the graduating Officers, the Chief Guest said that in future conflict Air Power would be the decisive factor, therefore, as guardians of the aerial

frontiers of the country, every individual of Pakistan Air Force has to prove equal to the task. He also emphasized the strategic goal of ensuring operational agility and readiness. Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Operations) highlighted that as per Worthy Chief of the Air Staff's vision, a transformative rebalancing drive is up and running in PAF which is premised on smart inductions on a fast operationalization cycle. He reiterated the pivotal role of

Combat Commanders in steering Pakistan Air Force towards its goal to becoming a "Next Generation Air Force". The Chief Guest also appreciated the tremendous efforts of the faculty and expressed his satisfaction that all schools of PAF ACE are working in complete harmony for training the future combat leadership of Pakistan Air Force. Earlier, the Chief Guest awarded certificates and trophies to the graduating officers who underwent a strenuous and professionally demanding course. Chief of the Air Staff Trophy for overall best performance amongst Combat Pilots was awarded to Squadron Leader Bilal Malik, while Air Officer Commanding Air Defence Trophy for overall best performance amongst Combat Controllers was awarded to Squadron Leader Atta Ullah Shahbazada.



Crackdown on smuggled fuel sellers



Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad:

In a groundbreaking initiative aimed at addressing gender disparities in the technology sector and advancing women's economic empowerment, the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has signed a project providing a generous funding of USD 8 million to support UN Women's Economic Empowerment (EEM) project. The project aims to increase digital enablement and innovation among women and girls aged 18 to 35 in Pakistan. The project marks a milestone in empowering young women economically. The project adopts a

comprehensive approach, focusing on two key strategies: enhancing opportunities in the technology sector and fostering an enabling environment for young women to thrive in technology-related fields such as IT-enabled services, software development and data analytics. His Excellency Park Ki-Jun, Ambassador of Korea to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan expressed, "Government of Korea is proud to support initiatives that promote gender equality and economic empowerment. This initiative exemplifies the shared commitment of Pakistan and Korea to harness the potential of technology for inclusive growth." In

empowerment. By equipping women and girls with digital skills, we not only bridge the digital divide but also unlock vast potential for their socio-economic advancement. This collaboration is a testament to our shared commitment to harnessing the power of technology to empower women and girls across the nation." Aligned with SDGs 17, focusing on 'Partnerships for goals', this project will bolster science, technology, and innovation capacities alongside women's economic empowerment. Je Ho Yeon, Country Director of KOICA, and Fareeha Umair, UN Women Portfolio Manager, also actively participated in the ceremony.

expressing gratitude, Lansana Womneh, UN Women Country Representative in Pakistan, highlighted the critical need for advancing digitalization efforts in Pakistan. He stated, "In a rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape, Digital empowerment stands as a catalyst, offering pathways to gender equality and economic

Citizens demand immediate investigation in renovation project of Civil Hospital

Soon Times Correspondent Sardogda:

In the name of repairing and renovating the old building of the Civil Hospital, more than one billion rupees is being embezzled some big political figures and top officers of Punjab. Poor material is being used in defective, dilapidated, outdated and sunken buildings. Their roofs are completely dilapidated while the front of the building is bent. New pillars are being built to keep it standing, indicating a major accident. These views were expressed by the citizens while talking to the media regarding the under-repair building. Citizens said why money is being invested in a



building which is unusable. This project was started during the caretaker period with the aim of being a waste of money. All the rain water would enter it and a new building could be built in its place. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz should order an immediate investigation into the use of defective materials in the building.

KOICA & UN Women Collaborate to Empower Women Through USD 8 Million Digitalization Project



Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad:

In a groundbreaking initiative aimed at addressing gender disparities in the technology sector and advancing women's economic empowerment, the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has signed a project providing a generous funding of USD 8 million to support UN Women's Economic Empowerment (EEM) project. The project aims to increase digital enablement and innovation among women and girls aged 18 to 35 in Pakistan. The project marks a milestone in empowering young women economically. The project adopts a comprehensive approach, focusing on two key strategies: enhancing opportunities in the technology sector and fostering an enabling environment for young women to thrive in technology-related fields such as IT-enabled services, software development and data analytics. His Excellency Park Ki-Jun, Ambassador of Korea to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan expressed, "Government of Korea is proud

to support initiatives that promote gender equality and economic empowerment. This initiative exemplifies the shared commitment of Pakistan and Korea to harness the potential of technology for inclusive growth." In expressing gratitude, Lansana Womneh, UN Women Country Representative in Pakistan, highlighted the critical need for advancing digitalization efforts in Pakistan. He stated, "In a rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape, Digital empowerment stands as a catalyst, offering pathways to gender equality and economic empowerment. By equipping women and girls with digital skills, we not only bridge the digital divide but also unlock vast potential for their socio-economic advancement. This collaboration is a testament to our shared commitment to harnessing the power of technology to empower women and girls across the nation." Aligned with SDGs 17, focusing on 'Partnerships for goals', this project will bolster science, technology, and innovation capacities alongside women's economic empowerment. Je Ho Yeon, Country Director of KOICA, and Fareeha Umair, UN Women Portfolio Manager, also actively participated in the ceremony.

Broiler meat production does not use any kind of adulterants: Masood Anwar



Soon Times Correspondent Rawalpindi:

A media talk was organized in Poultry Research Institute Rawalpindi in which Secretary Livestock Masood Anwar, Director General Research

Livestock Department Punjab Dr. Sajjad Hussain, Chairman Broiler Farmer Association Naveed Awan, Nutrition Expert Dr. Naveed Jadoon, Khalid Naem Khawaja, Director Poultry Research Institute Rawalpindi Dr.

Muhammad Sarfaraz Ahmed Chatta, Director Extension Rawalpindi Dr. Naveed Sahar attended and refuted the rumors spread on social media. Secretary Livestock Masood Anwar said that a negative propaganda is being done on social media about chicken and chicken meat. The rumor that chicken meat is not beneficial for health is completely false. In broiler meat production any kind of adulterants is not used. DG Research Punjab Dr. Sajjad Kashfi said that Pakistan poultry industry is an important part of the country's economy which is suffering due to this false propaganda. Dr Naveed Sahar Director Extension Rawalpindi said that broiler meat and eggs should be used abundantly. Director Poultry Research Institute Rawalpindi Dr. Sarfraz Chatta said that common chicken diseases are not transmitted to humans. Livestock Department has 6 fully functional laboratories which are fully equipped to diagnose any disease.

NFIC concluded its 2-day conference focusing on enhancing the effectiveness of Information Commissions across Pakistan

Soon Times Correspondent Lahore:

The National Forum of Information Commissioners (NFIC) successfully concluded its two-day conference in Lahore, focusing on enhancing the effectiveness of Information Commissions across Pakistan. The event, held in collaboration with the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), brought together key stakeholders, experts and policy makers across Pakistan. On the first day, the commissioners actively engaged with students, civil society organizations (CSOs), media representatives, advocates, and Public Information Officers (PIOs) during a public event. Panel discussions addressed critical challenges related to the implementation of Right to Information (RTI) laws, commission orders, citizen expectations, PIO issues, GIZ-supported initiatives such as women's facilitation and Khuli Kachehri sessions in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, aimed at improving public access to information.

Mr. Mukhtar Ahmad Ali, ED CPDI underscored the importance of strong and empowered Information Commissions to uphold the RTI and ensure public access to information. He remarked, vacancies since 2019 and 2018 have left crucial posts of two Information Commissioners unfilled, disrupting the quorum in KP commissions, including Sindh and Pakistan Information Commission. Additionally, the imminent conclusion of the Chief Information Commissioner's term in Punjab further accentuates the urgency for appointments. The lack of quorum poses a serious threat to the functionality of Information Commissions, prompting a call on government institutions to expedite the appointment process. The need for timely appointment of ICs was endorsed by all the Information Commissioners present in the meeting. The second day of the conference featured an integration meeting where the Commissions shared their progress and common issues faced by the Commissions. NFIC, established by CPDI in 2019, serves as a platform for collaboration and knowledge-sharing

among RTI Commission. Mr. Shoab Ahmad Siddiqui, CIC of Pakistan Information Commission reported significant progress in establishing the authority of the commission. Due to initial challenges with public bodies' responsiveness, efforts have been intensified, resulting in a notable reduction in complaint pendency from 3500 to 1500. Ms. Farah Hamid, CIC, KP Information Commission, highlighted significant challenges including lack of staff, vacant commissioner positions and insufficient budgetary resources for daily and monthly expenses. In her update, she noted that upon assuming office, there were 1700 pending complaints, now reduced to 1513. She personally conducted 126 hearings, disposing of 96. Since November 2023, the commission resolved 500 complaints. Currently, they receive an average of 25 complaints weekly. Dr. Awwaid Shah, CIC, Sindh, revealed the commission's proactive measures, including issuing periodic letters designating PIOs and promoting proactive disclosure of information to government departments.

Sardar Saleem Haider sworn in as Punjab governor

Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad:

Sardar Saleem Haider was sworn in as the new governor of Punjab in a ceremony held at the Governor's House on Friday. Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan administered the oath to the newly appointed governor. Earlier, the swearing-in ceremony of Sardar Saleem Haider as Punjab governor, scheduled for May 5, had been postponed till May 7, "due to inevitable reasons". Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Governor Faisal Karim Kundli and other dignitaries were among the attendees of the swearing-in ceremony.



As per media reports, the PPP chairman met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister's House last week to finalise the name for the key slot.

Both the leaders approved the name of Haider for governorship in Punjab. Saleem Haider's profile at a glance Saleem Haider — a PPP loyalist — belongs to Punjab's Attock district who also served as a former federal minister and prime minister's aide for overseas Pakistanis in the previous tenure of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government. Additionally, the politician is also the president of the Bilawal-led party's Rawalpindi division. Saleem will replace the current Governor Baligh Ur Rehman — who is a senior leader of the ruling PML-N. Baligh assumed office on May 30, 2022, after an ouster of former prime minister Imran Khan-led government in the Centre.

President Asif Ali Zardari last week approved the appointments of Saleem Haider, Faisal Karim Kundli and Jaffar Khan Mandokhail as governors of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, respectively. According to a statement issued from the President's Office, the head of the state accorded his approval based on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's advice in accordance with Article 101 (1) of the Constitution. The appointment came a day after PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, following days of consideration, named one of his party loyalists Saleem Haider for the key position of Punjab





Iranians vote in parliamentary runoff election after hard-liners dominate initial balloting



TEHRAN, Iran
Iranians voted Friday in a runoff election for the remaining seats in the country's parliament after hard-line politicians dominated March balloting. People in 22 constituencies across the country will elect 45 representatives from a pool of 90 candidates, 15 of whom are considered moderate. In the capital, Tehran, 16 representatives will be chosen from 32 candidates, all hard-liners. Final results are expected on Monday, though counts in smaller.



Georgia to push ahead with foreign agent bill despite 'misled'

TBILISI
Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze said on Friday that the government would push ahead with the bill on "foreign agents" despite opposition from what he cast as "misled" youngsters who feel resentment towards Russia. The legislation, which would require organisations receiving more than 20% of their funding from abroad to register as agents of foreign influence, has sparked street protests in Georgia by those who see it as authoritarian and Russian-inspired. Georgia's envoy to France resigned in protest over the bill on Thursday, becoming the first senior official to do so. The government says the law - which has been heavily criticized by the European Union and the United States - is needed in order to ensure that foreign funding of NGOs is transparent. Lawmakers are expected to begin debate on a third and final reading of the bill on Monday.



Israel strikes eastern Rafah as ceasefire talks end with no deal

Israeli forces bombarded areas of Rafah on Thursday, Palestinian residents said.

GAZA
Israeli forces bombarded areas of Rafah on Thursday (May 9), Palestinian residents said, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed US President Joe Biden's threat to withhold weapons from Israel if it assaults the southern Gaza city. A senior Israeli official said late on Thursday that the latest indirect negotiations in Cairo to halt hostilities in Gaza have ended and Israel would proceed with its operation in Rafah and other parts of the Gaza Strip as planned. Israel has submitted to mediators its reservations about a Hamas proposal for a hostage release deal, the official said. "If we must, we shall fight with our fingernails," Netanyahu said in a video statement. "But we have much more than our fingernails." In Gaza, Palestinian militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad said their fighters fired anti-tank rockets and mortars at Israeli tanks massed on the eastern outskirts of the city. Residents and medics in Rafah, the biggest urban area in Gaza not yet overrun by Israeli ground forces, said an Israeli attack near a mosque killed at least three people and wounded others in the eastern Brazil neighbourhood. Video footage from the scene showed the minaret lying in the rubble and two bodies wrapped in blankets. An Israeli air strike on two houses in the Sabra neighbourhood of Rafah killed at least 12 people, including women and children. Among the dead was a senior commander of the militant Al-Mujahideen Brigades and his family, and the family of another group leader, said medics, relatives and the group.

Biden-Netanyahu relationship is strained like never before. Can the two leaders move forward?

WASHINGTON
President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have long managed a complicated relationship, but they're running out of space to maneuver as their views on the Gaza war diverge and their political futures hang in the balance. Their ties have hit a low point as Biden holds up the delivery of heavy bombs to Israel - and warns that the provision of artillery and other weaponry also could be suspended if Netanyahu moves forward with a widescale operation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah. Netanyahu, for his part, is brushing off Biden's warnings and vowing to press ahead, saying, "If we have to stand alone, we will stand alone." "If we need to, we will fight with our fingernails. But we have much more than fingernails," he said. Biden has long prided himself on being able to manage Netanyahu more with carrots than sticks. But the escalation of friction over the past seven months suggests that his approach may be long past its best-by date.



With both men balancing an explosive Mideast situation against their own domestic political problems, Netanyahu has grown increasingly resistant to Biden's public charm offensives and private pleading, prompting the president's more assertive pushback in the past several weeks. Biden aides nonetheless insist the president is unwilling to allow the U.S.-Israel relationship to truly rupture on his watch. They cite not only the political imperative - a majority of Americans support Israel - but also Biden's personal history with the country and his belief in its right to defend itself.

Zuma in court seeking right to run in South Africa's pivotal election



JOHANNESBURG
South Africa's top court began hearing legal arguments on Friday on whether ex-president Jacob Zuma can run for parliament, a case whose outcome will affect a wide open national election on May 29 and could cause security problems if he loses. Zuma, 82, who was forced to quit as president in 2018 and was sentenced to jail in 2021, has fallen out with the ruling African National Congress and has been campaigning for a new party, uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK). Polls suggest the ANC will lose its majority after 30 years in power, and MK represents a threat to it, especially in Zuma's home province of KwaZulu Natal where he is popular. His presence on MK's list of candidates is crucial to the party's appeal. The case stems from a decision in March by South Africa's electoral commission to disqualify Zuma on the basis that the constitution prohibits anyone given a prison sentence of 12 months or longer from holding a parliamentary seat. In 2021, Zuma was sentenced to 15 months in jail for failing to appear at a corruption inquiry. In April, a court overturned the disqualification, saying the relevant section of the constitution applied only to people who had had a chance to appeal against their sentences, which had not been Zuma's case. The electoral commission challenged that decision in the Constitutional Court which began hearing the case on Friday with Zuma sitting in the courtroom. It has not said when it will issue its ruling. Koos Malan, a professor of public law at the University of Pretoria, said he expected the court to act quickly as it would be keenly aware of the charged political situation.

Sports & Showbiz News



Australia goalkeeper Williams to retire after Paris Olympics



MELBOURNE
Australia's long-serving goalkeeper Lydia Williams will retire from international soccer after the Paris Olympics, drawing the curtain on a career in women's football that has spanned nearly 20 years. The 35-year-old Indigenous Australian will bow out after more than 100 international appearances and five World Cups with the "Matildas". "This team is truly special, and I am proud of what it stands for, what it represents for a whole generation of women and girls," she said in a statement on Friday. "It's just getting started and I can't wait to cheer on the team from the sidelines when the next chapter of my life begins." Though Mackenzie Arnold has become Australia's first-choice keeper, Williams will hope to play a meaningful part in the squad's bid for a maiden medal in Olympic soccer at the July 26-Aug. 11 Games. Australia, semi-finalists at their home Women's World Cup last year, are drawn with Germany, Zambia and the United States in the group phase.



Leverkusen beat Roma to make Europa League final and extend unbeaten run

LEVERKUSEN
Bayer Leverkusen are through to the Europa League final 4-2 on aggregate after a stoppage-time goal from Josip Stanisic snatched a 2-2 draw at home on Thursday, extending their unbeaten run to a record 49 games. In a rematch of last season's Europa League semi-final, Roma came to Leverkusen 2-0 down after the first leg but levelled the tie up despite having little possession thanks to penalties in each half from Leandro Paredes. With the tie heading for extra time, Alex Grimaldo curled in a corner which goalie Mikel Svrilar failed to catch, the ball going into the net after bouncing off Roma defender Gianluca Mancini. Stanisic then kept Leverkusen's stunning record of late goals alive by scoring on the counter in the seventh minute of added time, breaking Benfica's European unbeaten record dating back to 1965. "We had chances to score goals early and didn't -- but they will in Dublin," Leverkusen boss

Alonso told RTL. "It was a special evening. There were tense moments but it showed the personality and the mentality of the team." "We didn't know ourselves how we were 2-0 behind," Leverkusen midfielder Granit Xhaka said. "To come back against a team like this is unbelievable -- our desire is incredible. We're in the final, we're on our way to making our dream a reality and will do everything to bring the trophy back to Leverkusen." Bundesliga champions Leverkusen will meet Atalanta, who beat Marseille 3-0 (4-1 on aggregate), in the final in Dublin on May 22 with hopes of a remarkable treble still alive. **SIX CHANGES FOR LEVERKUSEN**
Alonso again mixed things up tactically and made six changes including surprisingly leaving star attackers Florian Wirtz, Victor Boniface and former Roma striker Patrik Schick on the bench, instead leading the line with Adam Hlozek.

Taylor Swift fever grips Paris as Eras Tour launches in Europe

Taylor Swift-fever struck Paris on Thursday as the highest-grossing tour in history finally arrived in Europe, with fans treated to the first-ever performance of songs from her latest album. The Eras Tour began its European leg with four dates at the La Defense Arena in Paris. "I wish I could have toured Europe more. This is a dream crowd," the 34-year-old megastar told the ecstatic audience. There were deafening shrieks as images of typewriter sheets indicated that songs off the new album "The Tortured Poets Department" were starting late in the show. Emerging in a lycra-covered dress, she ran through several of the darker new tracks starting with "But Daddy I Love Him" and including "Fortnight", a particularly furious rendition of "Who's Afraid of Little Old Me?"

Defending champ Rybakina withdraws from Italian Open with illness

Web Desk
Defending champion Elena Rybakina has withdrawn from the Italian Open due to illness, the tournament said on Friday. The Wimbledon 2022 champion's withdrawal was announced hours before she was scheduled to begin her title defence against Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu. Kazakhstan's Rybakina would be replaced by Frenchwoman Oceane Dodin, the tournament said in a post on X. "We wish our 2023 champion a speedy recovery," they added. World number four Rybakina is scheduled to play in the French Open later this month.

