



# Daily SOON TIMES

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## Rs10bn approved for Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif Kisan Card

### CM announces 1,224 flats for labourers, hostels for women



**Soon Times Correspondent**  
**LAHORE:**  
The Punjab government on Wednesday approved Rs10 billion for the Chief Minister Punjab's Kisan Card.  
In the meeting of the Provincial Development Working Party, 23 schemes were approved. The funds were approved in the fourth meeting of the financial year 2024-25. A total of Rs77 billion were approved for 23 schemes in the agriculture and roads sectors.  
Planning and Development Board Chairman Barrister Nabil Awan presided over the meeting. Rs1.25 billion were approved for the establishment of model agriculture malls in Punjab, and Rs67 billion were approved for 21 development schemes of roads sector in various districts of Punjab.  
The sanctioned funds will be used for the construction and repair of roads in Murree, Gujrat, and Hafizabad. Construction and

repair of roads in Rawalpindi, Chakwal, Attock, and Jhelum have also been approved.  
The provincial working party approved funds for the construction and repair of roads in Narowal, Kasur, Pakpattan, and Chiniot. Secretary P&D Board Dr Asif Tufail attended the meeting.  
Members P&D Board and officers of concerned sectors also took part in the meeting.  
Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz has announced 1,224 flats for labourers in Taxila and Sundar labour colonies without any cost.  
The key decisions were made about labourers' welfare in a session chaired by the chief minister. During the session, the Labour Department's performance was reviewed and officials briefed the CM on the performance.  
The projects related to workers scholarship programme, labour colonies, and health facilities for labourers were reviewed in the session.

## Bill presented in NA to amend Citizenship Act



**Soon Times Correspondent**  
**ISLAMABAD:**  
A bill to amend the Pakistan Citizenship Act 1951 has been brought to the National Assembly.  
In the assembly session being presided over by the speaker, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Azam Nazir Tarar presented the bill, which states that the father and mother of a child born in Pakistan must be Pakistani, enabling him to get his or her citizenship of Pakistan.  
He said that a new amendment is being introduced stating that if either parent is a Pakistani citizen, the child can be granted Pakistani citizenship.

## Action of security forces in Peshawar, 4 jawans martyred



**Soon Times Correspondent**  
**Rawalpindi:**  
A joint intelligence based operation was conducted by Security Forces and Police in general area Hassan Khel, Peshawar District on reported presence of a high profile terrorist. During conduct of the operation, after intense exchange of fire, three terrorists including HVT, Terrorist Commander Abdul Raheem were sent to hell. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from killed terrorists. Terrorist Commander Abdul Raheem was highly wanted by the Law Enforcement Agencies and Government had fixed Head money of PKR 6 Million on

him, as he remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities, and was also responsible for Shahadat of Captain Hussain Jehangir Shaheed and Havildar Shafiq Ullah Shaheed on 26 May, 2024. Today's operation has avenged the heinous act and has brought the main perpetrator to justice. However, during intense exchange of fire, four brave sons of soil, Sepoy Muhammad Idrees (age: 34 years, resident of Swabi District), Sepoy Badam Gul (age: 34 years, resident of Kohat District) of Pakistan Army and Sub Inspector Tajmir Shah, (age: 38 years, resident of Peshawar District) & Assistant Sub Inspector Muhammad Akram (age: 34 years, resident of Manshera District) of CTD/KPK, having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat. Pakistan's Security Forces stand shoulder to shoulder with other law enforcement agencies to ensure peace and stability across of Pakistan and such sacrifices of our brave men further strengthen ourselves.

## Shehbaz harps on 'tough decisions' mantra in face of stringent IMF demands

### During cabinet meeting, PM asks ministries to step up performance

**Soon Times Correspondent**  
**ISLAMABAD:**  
Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has underscored the need for tough decisions, stating that IMF's targets cannot be achieved through mere rhetoric.  
Chairing the cabinet meeting here on Wednesday, the premier said the ministries must step up their performance because the targets set by the global lender could not be achieved through mere rhetoric.  
Shehbaz stressed the importance of self-responsibility in achieving economic goals, and urged institutions and provinces to maintain close cooperation towards achieving this end.  
The premier ordered immediate relief on electricity bills, highlighting the urgency of improving electricity transmission lines and tackling electricity theft to save significant costs.  
During the meeting, Shehbaz also



stressed the need for stringent security measures during Muharram.  
Shehbaz described his recent visits to Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and his meetings with Russian President Putin and discussions in China as fruitful.  
He said the state Pakistan was in was in time to everyone, adding that "my focus remains on action".  
**Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif**

## PTI's Sanam Javed gets clean chit in Gujranwala case



**Soon Times Correspondent**  
**LAHORE:**  
The Lahore High Court discharged dihard PTI worker Sanam Javed on Wednesday, in a May 9 riots case lodged against her in Gujranwala.  
A two-judge bench, led by Justice Asjad Javaid Ghural, heard Sanam's appeal against her physical remand in the Gujranwala case.  
The court, while granting the petition, ordered that she be discharged from the case.  
Sanam Javed had moved the Lahore High Court against the decision of the Gujranwala anti-terrorism court regarding her physical remand in a May 9 riots case.

## Opposition seeks permission to establish temporary chamber outside Punjab Assembly



**Soon Times Correspondent**  
**LAHORE:**  
The opposition in Punjab Assembly moved an application to establish a temporary chamber outside the assembly.  
The MPAs of Sunni Ittehad

Council said that the opposition chamber has been locked and therefore they wanted to establish a temporary chamber outside the assembly.  
MPAs Awais Virk and Farrukh Javed Moon submitted the application to secretary Punjab Assembly on Wednesday seeking permission to establish a 'tent chamber' on temporary basis.  
According to application, the SIC also sought permission for the 11 MPAs who were earlier suspended by speaker.



## Establishment 'must step back' to ensure transparent elections: Imran Khan

**Soon Times Correspondent**  
**Islamabad:**  
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) incarcerated and beleaguered founding chairperson Imran Khan emphasised the urgent need for the

establishment to step back to ensure transparent elections in the country.  
"If we want to save the country, the establishment must step back to move towards transparent elections," the former premier asserted during an

informal talk with media in the Rawalpindi's Adiala jail today.  
The PTI supreme highlighted the drastic increase in national debt, stating that in 2021, it was Rs2.8 trillion, but within four years, it had surged to Rs8 to Rs9 trillion.

## IHC's Justice Tariq Jahangiri receives 'suspicious' calls and messages



**Soon Times Correspondent**  
**Islamabad:**  
High Court's (IHC) Justice Tariq Mahmood Jahangiri has been targeted by suspicious calls and messages, it was revealed on Wednesday.  
Sources from the judiciary disclosed that the caller purported to be the Director-General of the FIA (Federal Investigation Agency). However, subsequent investigations determined that the FIA DG did not place any such call. The individual behind the suspicious communication attempted to directly contact Justice Jahangiri.  
In response, the top jurist has directed the court registrar to promptly inform the FIA, providing them with the mobile number associated with the incident.  
According to insiders, the suspicious call was directed to

Justice Jahangiri's office at the Islamabad High Court just two days ago. Additionally, messages were sent to the judge's personal mobile number from the same suspicious source.  
Previously, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) has decided to confront head-on the alleged government-backed social media campaign targeting its judges, particularly Justice Tariq Mahmood Jahangiri, with a robust institutional response.

# SLASHING YOUR BILLS SHARING YOUR BURDEN

Realizing the Plight of People  
Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Announces

## Historic Relief Package of 50 Billion PKR

To share burden of 94% of domestic electricity consumers.

### Delivering Relief of 4-7 PKR Per Unit

TO ALL DOMESTIC CONSUMERS USING ELECTRICITY UP TO 200 UNITS/MONTH DURING SUMMER MONTHS (JULY TO SEPTEMBER)

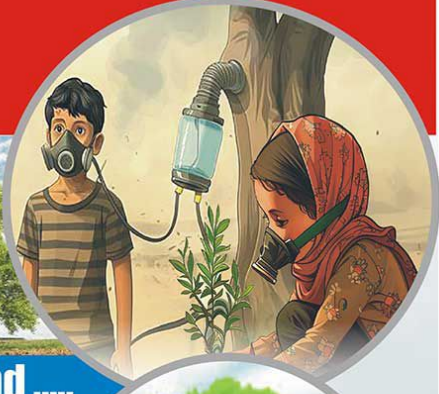
\*K-Electric consumers are also beneficiaries of this relief

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN





**Saman Rai**  
 Director General  
 Population Welfare Dept



# World Population Day

Everyone must be counted. Leave no one behind .....

As the theme of this year's World Population Day reminds us, investing in inclusive data collection is important to understanding problems, tailoring solutions, driving progress towards a resilient and equitable future. Over the past three decades, societies around the world have made remarkable progress in improving population data gathering, analysis, and use. New population figures, disaggregated by age, ethnicity, gender, and other factors, now reflect the diversity of our societies more accurately. These advancements have significantly enhanced the delivery of health care

before. However, the most marginalized communities remain underrepresented in data, profoundly affecting their lives and well-being. World Population Day 2024 is a moment to ask who is still going uncounted and why – and what this costs individuals, societies, and our global efforts to leave no one behind. It is also a moment for all of us to commit to doing more to ensure that our data systems capture the full range of human diversity so that everyone, can exercise their human rights and can reach their full potential. To realize the rights and choices of those on the margins of our

fertility rate, gender parity in school enrolment, information on sexual and reproductive health, and much more. Together, these data shine a light on the health and rights of people around the world, especially women and young people. These mega trends have far-reaching implications. They affect economic development, employment, income distribution, poverty and social protections. They also affect efforts to ensure universal access to health care, education, housing, sanitation, water, food and energy. To more sustainably address the needs of individuals, policymakers must understand how many people are

desired fertility. A woman dies every two minutes due to pregnancy or childbirth (and in conflict settings, the number of deaths is twice as high). Nearly one third of women have experienced violence. More than two thirds of the 800 million people globally who cannot read are women. The dramatic growth of the world's

generations to come. The data are damning. Women and girls who are poor, belong to ethnic, racial, and indigenous minority



globally, leading to substantial improvements in sexual and reproductive health and the ability to exercise rights and choices. Increasingly, new technologies are enabling more detailed and timely measurement of people's experiences than ever

societies, we must count them – because everyone counts. When data and other systems work for those on the margins, they work for everyone. This is how we accelerate progress for all. The World Population Dashboard showcases global population data, including

living on the planet, where they are, how old they are. More than 40 per cent of women around the world cannot make decisions on reproductive health and reproductive rights. As few as one in four women across low- and middle income countries are realizing their

population has been driven largely by increasing numbers of people surviving to reproductive age, and has been accompanied by major changes in fertility rates, increasing urbanization and accelerating migration. These trends will have far-reaching implications for

groups, or are trapped in conflict settings, are more likely to die due to lack of access to timely health care. The situation calls for global action to dismantle unjust and discriminatory structures that prevent millions from realizing their full rights and potential.

## Rulers Ramp Up Spending as Citizens Grapple with Soaring Costs



Written by: Amjad Rana

The masses are facing a critical time due to a dangerous price hike, while on the other side, the rulers have increased their expenditures in the current budget and are enjoying more luxurious facilities. Meanwhile, people are struggling with their utility bills, which have tripled in just one month. The 17-year agreement with the IPP involving circular debts was set to expire in 2024. If the government had wanted, it could have freed itself from this expensive electricity. However, this government, which claims to support the poor, has extended the IPP contract further from April 1, 2024. Now we will have to endure this expensive electricity contract until 2031. The nation should be prepared while the budget allocated for the convoy of President Asif Ali Zardari's vehicles has been increased by 400%. While President Arif Alvi's vehicles cost Rs 09 koror annually, President Asif Zardari's vehicles will cost Rs 44 koror. The budget has been approved. The original 17-year agreement with Independent Power Producers (IPPs) was signed to provide electricity but involved circular debts, which are financial obligations that cycle through various entities without being fully paid off. This agreement was set to expire in 2024. Circular debt is a significant issue in the energy sector. It occurs when power producers are not paid by distribution companies, leading to a chain reaction where producers can't pay fuel suppliers, and so on. This debt was a part of the agreement with IPPs. This would have been an opportunity for the government to renegotiate or seek alternative, potentially cheaper sources of electricity. Despite the possibility of ending the agreement, the government chose to extend it further as it implies a continuation of expensive electricity rates. The

contract has now been extended to 2031. This means that for an additional seven years, the country will be bound by the same terms, which are likely to involve high costs. The extension of this contract implies continued financial strain due to high electricity costs, which could affect the economy and the cost of living. The message urges the nation to be prepared for these ongoing expenses, the extension of the IPP contract until 2031 means that the high costs associated with this agreement will continue, impacting the nation's economy and potentially the cost of living for the citizens. expensive electricity contracts with IPPs and the associated circular debts requires a multifaceted approach. The government should initiate negotiations with IPPs to seek more favourable terms. This could include lower tariffs, revised payment schedules, or other adjustments that reduce costs. Implement measures to improve the efficiency of power generation and distribution. This can reduce losses and lower overall costs. Work on restructuring the existing circular debt to make it more manageable. This might involve converting debt into long-term bonds or seeking international financial assistance. Provide targeted subsidies to vulnerable populations to offset the impact of high electricity costs while longer-term solutions are implemented. Invest in alternative and renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower. This reduces dependence on expensive IPPs and creates a more sustainable energy mix. Enhance the regulatory framework governing the energy sector to ensure better oversight and management. This can prevent the recurrence of such costly agreements. encourage private sector investment in the energy sector to foster competition and bring down prices. This could be through public-private partnerships or incentives for new entrants. Invest in modernizing and expanding energy infrastructure, including grid upgrades and energy storage solutions. This ensures reliable and efficient energy distribution. Implement comprehensive policy and reforms to address systemic issues in the energy sector. This includes transparency, accountability, and effective management practices. Promote

energy conservation and efficiency among consumers through awareness campaigns and incentives for using energy-efficient appliances and practices. Seek support from international financial institutions and development agencies for technical and financial assistance in energy sector reforms. Explore opportunities for regional energy cooperation and trade to access cheaper and more reliable energy sources from neighbouring countries. Engage all stakeholders, including IPPs, government agencies, and civil society, in the decision-making process to ensure broad-based support and successful implementation of reforms. Establish mechanisms for regular monitoring and evaluation of the implemented measures to track progress and make necessary adjustments. Short, medium, and long-term solutions, the government can address the challenges posed by expensive electricity contracts and circular debts, ultimately leading to a more sustainable and affordable energy sector. Here's a more explanation including the impact on the budgets for the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers (CMs), and Governors. The budget allocated for the convoy of vehicles for high-ranking officials in Pakistan, such as the President, Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, and Governors, is a significant part of government expenditures. Recent changes in the budget allocation have raised concerns. The annual cost for the convoy of President Arif Alvi was Rs 09 koror. With the transition to President Asif Ali Zardari, this cost has increased dramatically to Rs 44 koror annually, marking a 400% increase. This budget increase has been officially approved. The Prime Minister's convoy traditionally has a significant budget, reflecting the importance and security needs of the position. Details about the specific budget changes for the Prime Minister's convoy under the new administration have not been provided, but it is expected that the budget for the PM's convoy remains substantial. Each province in Pakistan is headed by a Chief Minister, and their security convoys also represent a significant expenditure.

## Increasing Energy Needs & Necessity of Renewable Energy Advancements



By: Iftikhar Uddin Anjum

In the 21st century, the necessity of advancing renewable energy technologies has become more evident than ever before. With the twin crises of climate change and energy security looming large, the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources is not only imperative but urgent. One of the most pressing reasons for advancing renewable energy is its critical role in mitigating climate change. The burning of fossil fuels for energy is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, which are driving global warming and causing severe weather events, rising sea levels, and disruptions to ecosystems. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels requires rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy systems. Renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, and hydroelectric power, produce little to no greenhouse gas emissions, making them essential for reducing our carbon footprint. Dependence on fossil fuels, particularly oil and gas, poses significant risks to energy security. Fossil fuel reserves are concentrated in a few regions, often leading to geopolitical tensions and supply disruptions. Renewable energy sources, on the other hand, are abundant and widely distributed. Harnessing these resources can reduce reliance on imported fuels, enhance energy independence, and improve national security. The transition to renewable energy presents substantial economic opportunities. Investing in renewable energy infrastructure can create jobs, stimulate technological innovation, and drive economic growth. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the renewable energy sector employed over 12 million people globally in 2020, and this number is expected to

rise significantly as the transition accelerates. Solar power harnesses energy from the sun using photovoltaic (PV) cells or solar thermal systems. Technological advancements have significantly increased the efficiency of solar panels while reducing costs. Innovations such as perovskite solar cells, which promise higher efficiencies at lower production costs, and bifacial panels, which capture sunlight from both sides, are pushing the boundaries of what solar technology can achieve. Solar power has become one of the fastest-growing sources of electricity globally, with installations increasing exponentially. Wind energy is captured through wind turbines that convert kinetic energy from the wind into electrical power. Both onshore and offshore wind farms have seen tremendous growth. Technological advancements have led to larger, more efficient turbines that can generate more power with less wind. Offshore wind farms, in particular, benefit from stronger and more consistent winds, making them a promising area for expansion. Floating wind turbines are also being developed to harness wind energy in deeper waters where traditional fixed-bottom turbines are not feasible. Hydroelectric power is generated by harnessing the energy of flowing water, typically from rivers or dams. While traditional large-scale hydroelectric projects have been criticized for their environmental and social impacts, small-scale hydro and run-of-the-river projects offer a more sustainable alternative. Advances in turbine technology and improved grid integration are making hydroelectric power a more attractive option for renewable energy generation. Biomass energy is derived from organic materials such as plants, agricultural residues, and waste. It can be used to produce electricity, heat, and biofuels. Technological advancements in biomass conversion processes, such as anaerobic digestion and gasification, are improving the efficiency and sustainability of bioenergy. Additionally, second-generation biofuels, which are produced from non-food crops and waste materials, are reducing the competition between biofuel production and food supply. Geothermal energy exploits the heat

from the Earth's interior to generate electricity and provide heating. Enhanced geothermal systems (EGS), which create artificial reservoirs to access heat at greater depths, are expanding the potential of geothermal energy beyond regions with naturally occurring geothermal activity. Advances in drilling technology and reservoir management are critical for making geothermal energy more widely available and cost-effective. The most significant benefit of renewable energy is its potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change. By replacing fossil fuels with renewables, we can decrease air pollution, reduce the occurrence of respiratory diseases, and minimize the environmental degradation associated with fossil fuel extraction and use. The renewable energy sector is a major driver of economic growth. Investments in renewable energy create jobs across various sectors, including manufacturing, installation, maintenance, and research and development. According to IRENA, achieving the energy transition in line with the Paris Agreement could add \$98 trillion to the global economy by 2050. Renewable energy can improve energy access, particularly in remote and underserved areas. Off-grid renewable energy solutions, such as solar home systems and mini-grids, are providing electricity to millions of people who previously lacked access. Furthermore, the decentralized nature of renewable energy systems enhances energy security by reducing dependence on centralized power grids and imported fuels. Renewable energy systems can increase the resilience and reliability of energy supply. Distributed generation from renewable sources can reduce the vulnerability of the energy system to natural disasters, cyberattacks, and other disruptions. Energy storage technologies, such as batteries, are further enhancing the reliability of renewable energy by addressing the intermittency of sources like solar and wind. Despite the numerous benefits, several challenges and barriers hinder the widespread adoption of renewable energy. One of the primary challenges of renewable energy is its intermittency. Solar and wind power are dependent on weather conditions,





## Commissioner approves the budget of MC for financial year 2024-25

**Soon Times Correspondent**  
Sargodha:  
Commissioner and Administrator Municipal Corporation Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti has approved the budget of the Municipal Corporation for the financial year 2024-25. The total estimate of the budget is 2 billion 2 crore 10 lakh rupees. The budget meeting was held in the commissioner's conference room yesterday. The budget has earmarked Rs 91.54 crore for salaries, Rs. 33.50 crore for pensions and Rs. 2.45 crore for government payments, Rs. 4 crore for

new development programme, Rs. 6 crore 12 lakh for ongoing development works, Rs. 7 crore 50 lakh for solid waste grant and Rs. 2 crore 34 lakh for ongoing street lights installation scheme. CO MC Tariq Paroya, Deputy Director Technical Rana Shahid Imran, MO Finance Rao Naeem Anjum and other municipal officers attended the meeting. The commissioner also sought recommendations for the purchase of small machinery and vehicles required to improve the sanitation system in the inner blocks. He directed to repair damaged machinery of MC. He directed to prepare a recommendation for residential

construction for Municipal Officers and relocation of Map Branch. It was decided that a crackdown will be launched after Ashura against the owners of the houses violating the building laws. Notices will also be issued to the owners of vacant plots which are being used for garbage collection to get four walls of their plots otherwise their registrations will be cancelled. The Commissioner commended MO Planning and his team for recovering Rs 28 crore against the target of Rs 25 crore set in the financial year 2023-24.

## 1559 flour mills go on strike against withholding tax

**Soon Times Correspondent**  
Sargodha:  
More than 1559 flour mills across the country, including Sargodha, have started a strike against the withholding tax. Wheat supply and flour milling will be completely stopped from today. Negative propaganda is being done to thwart the strike, but the flour mill owners have come together on one page. These views were expressed by Flour Mills Association leader Mian Muhammad Naseem, Rao Sajid Mehmood, Muhammad Usman, Amjad Lak and others while talking about the strike. They said that from today the owners of 1200 flour mills in Punjab, 192 in Sindh, 145 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 22 in Balochistan have announced their full participation in the strike. While the

Grocery Merchants Association and Flour Dealers have also announced their full support. They said that it is not possible to document the withholding tax for flour dealers and vendors. Abolishing the fixer rate of 0.25% annual turnover tax on flour mills has created difficulties. Instead of imposing tax on flour mill owners, FBR should not allow any shop to operate unless FBR certificate is pasted in that shop. Implementation of Section 236-G on Distributors, Dealers and Wholesalers will have separate laws for filers and non-filers. A filer will pay Rs 500 on a sale of Rs 1 lakh while a non-filer will pay Rs 2500. What will the non-filer earn by paying so much tax? they added.

## Captain martyred in firing exchange with terrorists buried in his native area

**Soon Times Correspondent**  
Rawalpindi:  
Captain Muhammad Osama bin Arshad Shaheed (age: 24 years, resident of Rahevalpindi district), who was martyred in a fierce exchange of fire with terrorists in North Waziristan district yesterday, has been buried

with full military honors in his native area. A large number of senior serving military officers, soldiers, family members of the martyr and local people participated in his funeral prayer and burial. The war against terrorism will continue until the end of the scourge of terrorism from the homeland.

## 50 Probationers donate blood to thalassemia patients

**Soon Times Correspondent**  
Lahore:  
Punjab Probation and Parole Service, Home Department, Lahore arranged a Blood Donation Camp with the collaboration of Aleem Dar Foundation for the patients of thalassemia disease. Around 50 Probationers from different

courts of Lahore donated blood to save lives. Mr. Shahid Iqbal, DG Punjab Probation and Parole Service noted that the probationers may be utilized to serve the humanity. Ms Maheen Soltat, Probation Officer, District Courts, Lahore organised the Camp along with other

probation officers. Mr. Shahid Iqbal DG Punjab Probation and Parole Service, Mr. Aleem Dar President Aleem Dar Foundation and Mr. Ali Meeser Famous Anchor were also present. At the end of the ceremony, certificates were awarded to the Probationers for donating blood.

## Full court meeting summoned by CJP Isa on SIC reserved seats begins

**Soon Times Correspondent**  
ISLAMABAD  
The full court meeting summoned by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa regarding the reserved seats of the Sunni Itehad Council (SIC) has started. According to the sources, the CJP called the 13-judge full court earlier on Wednesday. All the judges

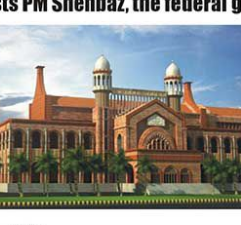


Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Yaliya Afridi, Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Ayesha A. Malik, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Syed Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Shahid Waheed, Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan - are attending the meeting. The bench has to decide whether reserved seats will be given to the SIC, or to other

parties, or the issue will be sent to parliament to decide. It may be noted that the bench had on Tuesday reserved its decision after concluding hearing but the CJP did not pronounce the judgement. He said that he would consult with bench members before announcing the decision. And the court staff also confirmed to media that the decision would not be pronounced on Tuesday. It is still unclear whether the bench would announce verdict today or later.

## Government's decision allowing ISI to tap phones challenged in LHC

**Petition filed by citizen lists PM Shehbaz, the federal govt, and PTA as respondents**  
**Soon Times Correspondent**  
LAHORE:  
The Lahore High Court (LHC) has received a petition contesting the government's decision to grant the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) the authority to tap phones. This follows the Shehbaz Sharif-led coalition government's justification of the controversial move under the banner of "national security."



powers, pointing out the absence of specified parameters to prevent misuse. Vowing to challenge the government's move, the former ruling party has questioned "who will monitor misuse of such powers as no parameters have been specified." "A fascist government" Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub reportedly slammed the government, saying that "only a fascist government would grant an intelligence agency complete authority to tap citizens' phones", adding that "PM Shehbaz Sharif has practically cut his own throat with this decision."

The petition, filed on Wednesday, by citizen Fahad Shabbir, lists the PM Shehbaz, the federal government, and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) among its respondents. The petition claims that a notification issued by the government permits the ISI to intercept citizens' phone calls, despite the absence of established rules under the PTA Act's relevant section. "The Constitution of Pakistan upholds the privacy and freedom of expression of its citizens," the petition argues. The beefed-up powers given to ISI have arrived on the heels of a high court judge's slap on the wrist over "the criminal act" of phone surveillance, which has sparked a firestorm of criticism amid concerns of misuse of powers and violation of fundamental

rights. The petition filed in LHC also references a ruling from the Indian Supreme Court, declaring phone tapping a breach of constitutional rights. The petition requests the court to invalidate the notification and suspend its enforcement until a final verdict is delivered. It also calls on the government to draft rules under Section 56 of the PTA Act. While the ruling coalition has dug in its heels, staunchly defending the move to legitimize ISI's beefed-up powers, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) have come out swinging, condemning the notification that grants sweeping powers to the spy agency under the guise of national security. In a strong rebuke yesterday, PTI questioned the oversight of such extensive

the government, saying that "only a fascist government would grant an intelligence agency complete authority to tap citizens' phones", adding that "PM Shehbaz Sharif has practically cut his own throat with this decision." The opposition leader said that the move could backfire and could have great consequences, further incorporating that "this SRO will be the tool the ISI uses to blackmail and subjugate all politicians and media persons, including Bilawal Bhutto, Asif Zardari, and Maryam Nawaz". The PTI leader announced his intention to challenge the notification in court through his lawyer, Dr Babar Awan. "This SRO is unconstitutional and against the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution," he protested. PBC alarmed by 'sweeping powers'

## Food crisis in the offing as flour millers announce nationwide shutdown

**Soon Times Correspondent**  
LAHORE  
The Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA) on Wednesday announced strike against imposition of withholding tax by shutting down the mills for an indefinite period. PFMA Punjab Chairman Asim Raza announced the decision of closure of flour mills, saying imposing tax on flour was unfathomable and unacceptable as it was an essential edible item used in every household of the country. He said the flour millers would never become tax agents for the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). According to sources, wheat washing in more than 1,500 flour mills of the country has been halted. Flour packing and supply will also be stopped from July 11. Angry flour millers threaten countrywide



shutdown PFMA central chairman Chaudhry Amir Abdullah had announced suspension of flour mills' operations after persistent deadlock with the government for not lifting the withholding tax on the flour. "Instead of taxing the common man's roti, the government should announce withdrawal of this unnecessary withholding tax," he said. He lambasted the FBR for being unable to meet grinding tax targets and leaving the masses burdened with excessive taxes.

## Establishment of a virtual police station for children protection in Punjab proposed

**Would provide registration of complaints and legal consultations against children abuse**



**Soon Times Correspondent**  
LAHORE  
Child Protection Bureau Chairperson Sara Ahmed has proposed the establishment of a virtual police station

for children protection like a virtual women police station. Punjab Assembly MPA Sara Ahmad has submitted the resolution in the Assembly Secretariat.

The resolution implies that the motive behind virtual police stations is to establish a designated virtual platform for the protection of children. It is stated in the resolution that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and Punjab IG are quite concerned about the issue of child abuse and working on it for its eradication. Virtual police station will provide legal consultations and registrations of complaints about issues like child abuse and exploitation. The resolution mentions that Punjab Assembly vows for its commitment for protection and welfare of children. The virtual police station will provide a cooperative and safe environment for children's upbringing.

## Monsoon rains expected across Pakistan from today

**Soon Times Correspondent**  
Islamabad  
The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has announced the onset of monsoon rains in several regions across the country, with the downpours starting today and continuing until July 16. Monsoon winds from the Arabian Sea are set to bring rain to Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Punjab, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The department forecasts a significant amount of rainfall during this period, urging residents and

local authorities to remain vigilant and prepared for potential weather-related disruptions. From July 11 to 15, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan will also experience rainfall. In addition, certain areas in Balochistan are expected to receive showers from July 12 to 14, adding to the widespread impact of the monsoon season. Sindh's regions of Sukkur, Larkana, and Jacobabad are likely to see thunderstorms and rain on July 12 and 13.





## Congo UN peacekeepers pausing pullout, no timeline for next phase



**KINSHASA**  
The U.N. peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo will pause its withdrawal, with no timeline set for the next phase following the initial one in June, the government and mission said.

In September last year, President Felix Tshisekedi asked the mission to fast-track the withdrawal of peacekeepers who were deployed to the Central African country to quell insecurity caused by armed groups fighting over territory and resources.

The first phase of the withdrawal, in South Kivu province, was completed on June 25, Congo's ambassador to the United Nations, Zenon Mukongo Ngay, said on Monday. It had been scheduled for completion by April.

At the United Nations in New York on Monday, "What's next, as we said, (is) we pause, we prepare, and we see what comes next based on the reality."

## Norway to donate six F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine



**OSLO**  
Norway will donate six F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine, the Norwegian government said in a statement on Wednesday as NATO leaders attended a summit in Washington.

Leaders of NATO member states are poised to unveil new aid for Ukraine to help it defend itself following Russia's invasion in February 2022. Hoping to change the course of the war, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wants the 32-member collective security alliance.



# Ukraine will stop Putin, Biden tells NATO in forceful speech

Biden spoke off of a teleprompter with a strong and confident voice and largely avoided verbal flubs

**WASHINGTON**  
US President Joe Biden pledged to forcefully defend Ukraine against Russia's invasion at the NATO summit in Washington on Tuesday, using the global stage to try to show allies at home and abroad that he can still lead.

Biden, 81, has endured 12 days of withering questions about his fitness for office as some of his fellow Democrats on Capitol Hill and campaign donors fear that he will lose the Nov. 5 election after a halting debate performance on June 27.

"(Vladimir) Putin wants nothing less, nothing less, than Ukraine's total subjugation... and to wipe Ukraine off the map," Biden said in his welcome to NATO member states to the summit, referring to the Russian president. "Ukraine can and will stop Putin." The White House is hoping he can turn the page on a difficult period in his presidency with his highest profile policy speech since the debate, although some diplomats at the summit said the damage was hard to erase. On Tuesday, Biden spoke off of a teleprompter with a strong and confident voice and largely avoided the verbal flubs and signs of confusion that marked his debate performance.

## Two Israelis critically hurt in Hezbollah retaliatory attack on Golan, says ambulance service

**DUBAI**

Two people were critically injured when Hezbollah fired dozens of rockets at the Golan Heights on Tuesday, Israeli's ambulance service said, as the Lebanese militant group retaliated after a former bodyguard of its leader was killed in an Israeli strike.



Israeli ambulance service said in a statement that paramedics had reported two casualties "in critical condition" after red alert sirens went off in the Israeli-occupied Golan. Israel's military did not confirm the casualties.

Earlier in the day, an Israeli airstrike hit a vehicle in Syrian territory on the Damascus-Beirut highway, killing one of Hezbollah leader Sayed Hassan Nasrallah's former bodyguards, who security sources said was recently involved in transporting weapons for the Iranian-backed group.

Hezbollah said that it had fired dozens of Katyusha rockets at the Golan Heights in retaliation. The Israeli military said 40 projectiles had crossed from Lebanon into the Golan.

Hezbollah mourned former bodyguard Yasser Nair Qarnabsh without elaborating on his role in the organisation. Two security sources said he had become a mid-ranking Hezbollah official involved in the transport of weapons.

Israel typically does not discuss attacks by its forces in Syria.

## Modi tells Putin that 'heart bleeds' when children are killed in war



**MOSCOW**  
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday that the death of innocent children was painful and terrifying, a day after a lethal strike on a children's hospital in Kyiv.

The pointed remark by the visiting Indian leader was an implicit rebuke to Putin, who moments earlier had welcomed him to the Kremlin with a warm statement on the importance of the strategic ties between the two countries.

Ukraine says it has recovered fragments of a Russian Kh-101 cruise missile at the children's hospital, which was hit on Monday during a wave of Russian attacks that killed at least 41 Ukrainians across the country.

Russia said, without providing evidence, that it was a Ukrainian anti-missile system that struck the hospital.

"Whether it is war, conflict or a terrorist attack, any person who believes in humanity, is pained when there is loss of lives," Modi said.

"But even in that, when innocent children are killed, the heart bleeds and that pain is very terrifying."

It was not the first time that Modi has appeared to criticise Russia over its actions in Ukraine. In September 2022, he told Putin that "today's era is not an era of war", and Putin said at that time he understood Modi's concerns.

India, however, has not condemned Russia's invasion and has taken the opportunity to buy record amounts of discounted Russian oil as sanctions have decimated Moscow's trade with the West.

# Sports & Showbiz



## Wahab dismisses allegations of pressurising selection committee



**LAHORE**  
Wahab Riaz has rubbished the allegations of putting pressure on the selection committee of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for picking favourite players. The former pacer shared his response on social media after he came under fire following his removal from the selection committee.

Talking to X, he wrote: "I don't agree with what he's stating. I don't agree with what he's stating in the members of the selection committee, how can I vote dominate?" He said everything is documented on record in the meeting minutes.



## 'Enough chances for Babar': Shahid Afridi wants real surgery in team

Shahid Afridi, the former captain of Pakistan national cricket team, has said that he was unable to "comprehend" the recent removal of Wahab Riaz and Abdul Razaq from Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) selection committee.

The removal of Riaz and Abdul Razaq comes after a disappointing performance from the national team during the T20 World Cup 2024 as the PCB management had lost confidence in the duo and their opinions had not been taken into account for some time now, according to sources.

While speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Afridi, 47, broke his silence over the recent removal of the former cricketers from the selection body as part of PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi's much needed "surgery" for the body.

Afridi, who is currently participating in the World Championship of Legends 2024 in England as part of Pakistan Champions, told reporters that he did not understand PCB's latest move when asked about it.

He emphasised that Riaz and Abdul Razaq are not the only members of the selection committee and there are several other people involved as well.

"I just found out that they sidelined Abdul Razaq and Wahab Riaz," he said. "I don't understand this kind of

'surgery'."

Afridi also said that whatever "surgery" is needed, it must be done once and for all. He added that whoever is brought forward now must be given ample time to improve their captaincy skills.

While discussing the performance of Babar Azam, Pakistan's current T20 captain, Afridi highlighted that the 29-year-old cricketer has been given many chances to prove his captaincy skills.

"As far as Babar is concerned, no captain has been given such open chances (to prove their captaincy)," Afridi told reporters, highlighting that Azam had played in several international tournaments.

However, he did not seem impressed by Azam's captaincy skills despite the "incredible" opportunities he had. About the removal of Riaz, 39, and Abdul Razaq, 44, sources stated: "Their influence was significant in the selection of the T20 World Cup squad and they showed more support to players who did not perform well."

Meanwhile, Mohammad Yousuf, Asad Shafiq and Bilal Afzal are still part of the seven-member panel which also includes the captain and head coach.

## Police arrest Ayesha Jahanzeb's husband for inflicting wounds on her



**LAHORE**  
Famous anchorperson Ayesha Jahanzeb's husband has been arrested by police on the charges of torture and domestic violence.

She lodged a case against her husband on allegations of abuse at the Sarwar Road police station.

Ayesha alleged that she had been tortured twice by her husband in the last year alone. Badly bruised, she said she had now sought a legal recourse for the safety of her children and herself.

On her request, police took swift action, leading to Haris' arrest. Following his arrest, Haris was produced before a judicial magistrate who approved physical remand for two days.

Ayesha has initiated a legal battle against her husband and is determined to seek justice for the physical abuse she endured.

The case has brought to light the serious issue of domestic violence, sparking discussion about the protection of victims.

## Injured De Minaur pulls out of Djokovic quarter-final



**LONDON**  
Australian Alex De Minaur pulled out of his Wimbledon quarter-final against second seed Novak Djokovic on Wednesday due to a hip injury, sending the Serbian into a record-equalling 13th semi-final at the grasscourt Grand Slam.

Ninth seed De Minaur sustained the injury in the closing stages of his 6-2 6-4 4-6 6-3 fourth-round win over Frenchman Arthur Fils on Monday.

"I'm devastated to pull out due to a hip injury, a little tear of the fibre cartilage that is at the end of or connects to the adductor," said De Minaur, who stunned Djokovic at the United Cup team tournament in the opening week of the season.

"I felt a loud crack during the last three points of my match against Fils and got a scan yesterday and it confirmed this was the injury and with high risk of making it worse if I was to step on court."

The 25-year-old has reached two Grand Slam quarter-finals, losing to Dominic Thiem at the 2020 U.S. Open and Alexander Zverev at this year's French Open.

"I knew the results (of the scan) yesterday, but hoped I would wake up today and feel some sort of

miracle," added De Minaur, who is enjoying his best season on the tour having reached the top 10.

"The problem with me going out and playing is one stretch, one slide, one anything can make this injury go from three-to-six weeks to four months."

The Australian is now in a race to be fit for the Olympics, where the tennis event begins at Roland Garros on July 27.

De Minaur's withdrawal meant seven-times champion Djokovic equalled Roger Federer's record of 13 appearances in the Wimbledon semi-finals.

Djokovic is also looking to match the Swiss maestro's tally of eight titles at the All England Club and the 37-year-old will next face American Taylor Fritz or 25th seed Lorenzo Musetti, who meet later.