

## PM Shehbaz pledges gender equality, unveils endowment fund

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday reaffirmed his commitment to gender equality, stressing that women's empowerment could only be achieved through equal access to education, skill development and employment opportunities.

"It's our mission and an unwavering commitment to ensure emancipation of the country's female population," he said while addressing an event in Islamabad marking International Women's Day, observed globally on March 8 to celebrate women's achievements and advocate for their rights. Prominent women from various fields, including cabinet members, legislators, entrepreneurs and activists, attended the event at the Prime Minister's House. It was organised by the Ministry of Human Rights and the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). During the event, PM Shehbaz launched Islamabad's first-ever Gender Parity Report, prepared by the NCSW and UNFPA. The report identifies challenges and solutions in key areas such as education,

health, governance, political representation and justice. The prime minister pledged collaboration with provinces to enhance women's participation in economic programmes and announced the establishment of a Working Women's Endowment Fund to support women in overcoming contemporary workplace challenges. "Our 50 per cent female population can become a productive workforce if provided a level playing field," he said. To facilitate working women, he highlighted the establishment of daycare centres in public and private de-

partments across Islamabad, with plans to expand these facilities further. The premier regretted that a large number of highly qualified women in the country quit professional careers in their struggle to balance work and families, resulting in a huge loss of skilled human resources. PM Shehbaz paid tribute to Pakistani women who have played significant roles in female empowerment, mentioning Fatima Jinnah and Begum Raana Liaquat Ali Khan, former PM Benazir Bhutto, Bilquis Edhi, Dr Ruth Pfau, Asma Jahangir and other trailblazers.



PRIME Minister Shehbaz Sharif participates in the virtual launch of the ICT Gender Parity Report, on Saturday.

## Placement on no-fly list sans evidence illegal: IHC

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has directed the authorities concerned to strictly adhere to the procedure for placing any citizen on the no-fly list, emphasising that citizens' names should not be added to the list "arbitrarily". Justice Babar Sattar declared that placement of a citizen's name on the Passport Control List (PCL) without tangible evidence to be illegal and unconstitutional, ordering the immediate removal of the petitioner's name from the list and restoring his right to travel freely. While deciding the petition of Nadir Mukhtiar recently, Justice Sattar found that the Directorate of Immigration and Passports had violated due process and fundamental rights by restricting the petitioner's ability to travel abroad without proper legal justification. Advocate Nisar Ahmed Shah had filed the petition on behalf of Mr Mukhtiar, who had been deported from the UAE in mid-2024 following a local altercation. Upon his return to Pakistan, he obtained a valid Pakistani passport and a work visa for Oman.

## Punjab's Model handcart project faces corruption allegations



LAHORE: (News Desk) The Punjab government's Model Handcart project launched by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to organise street vending and ease traffic congestion faces allegations of corruption, favouritism and financial mismanagement. The welfare initiative was supposed to provide 1,000 hand carts to deserving street vendors free of cost at 19 designated locations in Lahore. Documents obtained by Dawn reveal significant flaws in the implementation strategy adopted by the Municipal Corporation Lahore (MCL). The first phase of the project involved the procurement of 1,000 handcarts at an estimated cost of Rs 150 million. Five firms participated in the bidding process, with M/S Weld Engineers submitting the lowest bid of Rs 98,000 per cart. Despite being the most competitive bidder, M/S Weld Engineers was allegedly disqualified after MCL officials removed a crucial document from their submission. This paved the way for the contract to be awarded to Rehman and Brothers at an inflated price of Rs 148,700 per cart, resulting in an additional burden of Rs 50 million on the public exchequer.

## PTI slams govt for not bringing Senator Ejaz to parliament

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) on Saturday denounced the government's persistent defiance of the Senate chairman's production order for incarcerated PTI Senator Ejaz Chaudhry. PTI Central Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram said the "contemptuous behaviour" exhibited by the government towards the production order issued by the Senate chairman for the PTI senator further undermined Pakistan's parliamentary system but also brought disrepute to the esteemed

office of the Senate chairman across the world. He expressed satisfaction that detained PTI Senator Aon Abbas Bappi was presented in parliament but criticised the PML-N government for its continued refusal to produce Senator Ejaz Chaudhry. He said that the continued defiance of legal and parliamentary authority was unacceptable and condemnable. He demanded that the Senate chairman issue a strong ruling against this blatant disregard for his clear orders and hold accountable the violators,

because it not only undermined parliamentary authority but also an insult to the office of the chairman. Sheikh Waqas says defiance of Senate chairman's order undermines parliamentary system. He warned that such actions would have far-reaching negative consequences on the supremacy of parliament and democratic system, setting a dangerous precedent where executive authorities feel emboldened to disregard legislative rulings at will. Perpetual use of oppression Regarding the deten-

tion of Senator Bappi from his home, Sheikh Waqas said the government must realise the gravity of the situation. He emphasised that the perpetual use of oppression and suppression would not yield any positive results for the government, rather further undermine the rule of law and exacerbate the real challenges faced by the nation. He suggested that the government revisit its approach and refrain from jeopardising the country's future for the sake of prolonging its rule.

## Call for unity against 'anti-Sindh' projects marks Women's Day in Karachi

KARACHI: (News Desk) There were several events held across Karachi and other cities of Sindh to mark International Women's Day on Saturday. At almost every event, the participants voiced their concerns over the federal government's controversial canals project and vowed to fight against any anti-Sindh move. The most notable of these was the Mehnatkash Aurat Rally organised by the Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) in Karachi under the slogan 'Class resistance against the looting of the Indus River, our land and environment'. The rally asked the people of Punjab and progressive forces across Pakistan to stand in solidarity with Sindh against what they called 'life-threatening projects'. The rally, which began from the Boy Scouts Auditorium, culminated at the Arts Council of Pakistan with women workers, labourers and human rights activists with bright red flags chanting slogans.

## Poliovirus detected in sewage samples from 14 districts

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Sewage samples collected from 14 districts have tested positive for the poliovirus, indicating the presence of the virus in these areas. According to an official of the Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health (NIH), samples were collected from 43 districts across Pakistan. The lab official confirmed the detection of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) in sewage samples of Gwadar, Kech, Khuzdar, Qila Saifullah, Nasirabad, Quetta, Usta Muhammad, Lahore, Sargodha, Karachi East, Karachi South, Abbottabad, Bannu and Tank. Meanwhile, samples from Muzaffarabad, Gilgit, Diamer, Islamabad, Duki, Mastung, Barkhan, Hub, Lahore, Gujrat, Bahawalpur, Rawalpindi, Sahiwal, Okara, Mianwali, Attock, Jhang, Bahawalnagar, Khanewal, D.I. Khan, Mansehra, Peshawar, Swat, Nowshera, Battagram, Dir Lower, Charsadda, Mardan and North Waziristan tested negative for poliovirus. The Pakistan Polio Eradication Programme held an event on International Women's Day 2025 to recognise the role of female health workers in polio eradication initiatives across the country. The event, held at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) in Islamabad, acknowledged the dedication of more than 58.4pc female polio workers who work in some of the most challenging environments.

## Mayo Hospital controversy deepens: Health minister, secretary knew about medicines issue before CM's visit

LAHORE: (News Desk) Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's recent scheduled visit to Mayo Hospital and her 'controversial' remarks to Medical Superintendent Prof Dr Faisal Masood over the complaints of the patients of medicines shortage generated a new controversy when it transpired that the MS had already tendered his resignation following Rs3.5bn pending liabilities of the institute while the health minister and secretary allegedly knew about the issue very well. The medical community also strongly reacted and called the CM's action a blow to the sanctity of the medical profession. Calling the incident unfortunate, the community said it blatantly exposed the incompetence of the Punjab health minister and secretary who misguided the government and the public about the financial crisis the Mayo Hospital was facing for the last two years. According to some reports, Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique had paid nearly five visits to the hospital during the last few months and in each visit, the institute's management had alerted him about the severe shortage of the funds and the patients' complaints.



International Women's Day rally participants arrive at the Arts Council Roundabout, on Saturday

## Armed men set fire to Levies, police stations in Khuzdar

QUETTA: (News Desk) Armed men attacked the Levies and police stations in Ornach area of Khuzdar and set fire to the record and buildings, while in another attack they burnt the machinery of a dam in the Zehri area on Saturday night. Officials said that a group of around 100 armed men cordoned off

the main bazaar in Ornach to take control of police and Levies stations. They made police officials hostage and snatched their weapons. "Armed men snatched all weapons and other equipment from the police and after ransacking the record, they set the police station on fire," Yasir Iqbal Dashti, Khuzdar

deputy commissioner, said. He said the assailants also tried to take over the Levies station. Their attempts to snatch weapons from the levies officials failed after the latter offered resistance. In another attack, assailants burn down dam machinery. However, the armed men set a levies patrol vehicle on fire before

taking away a police vehicle and 13 automatic guns and ammunition. Sources said that armed men remained in the area for an hour and later disappeared in the mountains. In another attack, a group of armed men attacked a dam site in Zehri. Official said that the attackers burnt all machinery at the Sohndah dam.

## Dispute between ex-SHC CJ Sajjad Ali Shah, judicial officer lands in Supreme Court

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The Supreme Court is seized with a dispute, wherein a former judicial officer from Sindh in his struggle to be reinstated back to his office is posing a challenge to a decision made by the highest adjudicator in his province — a former chief justice of the Sindh High Court. Former District and Sessions judge Aijaz Ali Khaskheli, who joined the judicial service in 1996 in Sindh, was removed from

office in 2016 by then SHC CJ Sajjad Ali Shah, who was later elevated to the Supreme Court before reaching superannuation in 2022. The controversy at hand is an appeal, which has been moved by former SHC chief justice through the SHC registrar, seeking clarity on a law point, whether a service tribunal can interfere into the lawful exercise of discretion by the competent authority (CJ-SHC) in awarding punishment.

Mr Khaskheli, who was removed as judge of the accountability court in Hyderabad in 2016, is the respondent in the appeal. He was appointed as a civil judge in 1996 in Sindh and later promoted to the position of district and sessions judge in 2014. In 2016, the respondent judge was suspended and subsequently dismissed from service following disciplinary proceedings initiated by the then SHC CJ on the allegations of

misconduct. Subsequently, the former judicial officer approached the Sindh Subordinate Judicial Service Tribunal, which on Sept 30, 2024, ruled in his favour. The tribunal found that the disciplinary proceedings were procedurally flawed and that the penalty of dismissal was disproportionate to the alleged misconduct. The tribunal also highlighted that the then chief justice, who was the complainant in the case, had



acted as both the initiating and punishing authority, violating the principle of 'nemo iudex in causa sua'. The appeal was taken up f

or hearing by a two-judge Supreme Court bench consisting of Justice Irfan Saadat Khan, Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi.