

## Pakistan's IT workforce capable of competing in global market: PM

Islamabad(News Desk) Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said Pakistan's IT workforce had the capability to compete in the global market as information technology companies were being provided with necessary facilities to achieve their exports target of \$25 billion.His comments came during a meeting with a four-member delegation led by Jerome Kapelus, CEO of the US multinational IT company Afiniti that called on him, according to a press release by the PM's Office.

PM Shehbaz welcomed Afiniti's interest in further

investment in Pakistan's IT sector. He suggested that Afiniti Pakistan establish a world-class call centre in the country for national and international clients. He informed the meeting that he was personally overseeing programmes to equip the country's talented youth with IT, AI, and other advanced technical skills. Talking to the media on Monday, he added that to unlock its full potential, Pakistan needs international branding of its IT sector to ensure seamless profit repatriation, expand data protection laws, and foster innovation to help boost investor confidence

and global competitiveness.“However, the local as well as international IT companies and the freelancers were facing lack of cooperation from the authorities,” Mr Ahmad said, adding, “The international players always have the option to shift to Philippines or Africa, and the Pakistani government has to consider that inconsistent policies have long term serious consequences on the image of the country.”Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima Khawaja and senior officials from relevant institutions were present during the meeting.The

US delegation appreciated the expertise of Pakistani IT professionals and their dedication to the sector's development.Kapelus said that Pakistan's IT sector was highly suitable for investment and business. He added that currently more than 1,000 highly skilled Pakistani professionals were working at Afiniti Pakistan.He added that the Pakistani youth possessed immense potential to contribute to the growth of the IT sector, adding that Afiniti's success in the region was due to the country's professional and well-trained workforce.



A delegation of Afiniti Information System led by CEO Jerome Kapelus called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on March 17.

## IHC urged to merge cases about Imran's prison rights

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The superintendent of Adiala Jail, where former prime minister Imran Khan is incarcerated, has requested the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to club together all petitions regarding prison facilities provided to the ex-PM and his rights in the jail for hearing.Acting chief justice of the IHC Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar will hear the petition, which has been filed under Section 24 of the Civil Procedure Code by SSP Abdul Ghafoor Anjum.The court was also requested that all pending cases and appeals against decided cases in this regard be heard by a single or larger bench of the IHC.The PTI has filed several petitions in the IHC regarding the jail facilities provided to Mr Khan, who has been in custody since his arrest in August 2023. Most of these cases sought permission to allow family members and party leaders to meet Mr Khan.

## Bilawal asked to join opposition struggle against new canals project



KARACHI: (News Desk) The Grand Democratic Alliance on Sunday asked Pakistan Peoples Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari to join the struggle against the construction of new canals on the Indus River from the platform of the opposition alliance if he genuinely opposed the controversial scheme. The GDA and Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) announced a joint candidate for the upcoming by-election in National Assembly constituency NA-213, Umerkot, where Lal Malahi will represent the united front in the by-polls. The polling will be held on April 27. Both sides reached the decision following a meeting of allied parties at Functional House on Sunday. The alliance vowed to mount a joint struggle against the controversial six canals on the Indus River.GDA and PTI to field joint candidate in Umerkot by-poll on NA seat, announces Sadruddin RashdiSyed Sadruddin Shah Rashdi, chief coordinator of GDA, while talking to journalists after the meeting, extended a public invitation to the PPP chairman, urging him to join their ongoing movement against the canals on Indus.He criticised the PPP leadership for its role in “striking deals” on Sindh's water.“The PPP chairman will not get any benefit from his father's dealings, but could gain much by joining the forces of the GDA and PTI.”

## KP will decide whether to expel Afghans after March 31

PESHAWAR:(News Desk) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Sunday said his government would decide whether to follow the Centre's directives to expel Afghans residing in the province after March 31. The federal government has asked Afghan Citizen Card holders to leave Pakistan voluntarily by March end, after which they'd be deported from the country.Mr Gandapur slammed the federal government's repatriation policy as “inhumane and oppressive.” “I am not in favour of Afghans' repatriation as per

the policy of the federal government,” the chief minister said while talking to the media.“When the deadline [March 31] will arrive,” Mr Gandapur said he, as the chief executive of KP, would decide whether Afghans should be forcefully repatriated or not. “I will decide what suits me, suits the culture and traditions of KP,” he said on the decision to expel Afghans. He said it was “wrong and inhuman” to forcefully send back Afghans without any arrangement for them in their country.The forced repatriation of Afghans at a time when they

had no facility in their country was a “violation of basic human rights”.In reply to a question, CM Gandapur said the federal government had not contacted him on this issue, rather he was criticised when he suggested negotiations with Afghanistan though the federal government had earlier agreed with him on the issue of talks with Afghanistan. Rise in militancyEarlier, in a press conference, the chief minister said the state and its institutions were responsible for the surge in militancy.He alleged the state and its institution

have been “wasting their energies in dismantling and breaking the PTI and creating rifts in its leadership”.The KP CM said the state and its institutions were not focusing on their prime duty of maintaining law and order and curbing militancy.It has resulted in the emergence of terrorism, he claimed.“Today, I openly say that resurgence in militancy is the failure of the authorities at the helm of affairs and incompetency of the federal government and institutions,” he remarked.He said the state and its institutions needed to be careful .

## Attacks on police in KP's Peshawar, Lakki Marwat foiled

Peshawar: (News Desk) Terrorist attacks on police stations and checkpoints continued in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Lakki Marwat and Peshawar districts but the cops managed to repel both of them, authorities said on Monday.The development follows a spate of attacks in the Peshawar, Karak, Bannu, Lakki Marwat and Bajaur districts of KP over the past two days, in which two policemen were martyred and five other individuals were injured.Pakistan has witnessed an uptick in terror activities over the past year, especially in KP and Balochistan, after the proscribed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ended its ceasefire with the government in November 2022.Last night, the Gambila police station in Lakki Marwat was targeted, but the Quick Response Force (QRF) opened fire in retaliation.

## Man, two kin booked for wife's torture in Chishtian

BAHAWALNAGAR: (News Desk) A man, along with his brother and two relatives, was booked for allegedly subjecting his wife to torture for asking him to bring something for Iftar, in Chishtian. The FIR filed with the A Division police stated that a woman of Chak 7, Fordwah, married Ashraf of Mehboob Colony some four months ago.

It said that on March 11, the woman asked her husband to bring something to eat to break her fast, but he refused, saying he had no money. Later, Ashraf, along with his brother, and two of his relatives, allegedly tortured his wife.

The police booked the suspects under sections 354 and 506 of the PPC and started investigations.

However, police sources claimed that the woman had been demanding Rs500,000 from her husband and after his refusal implicated him and his two relatives in a torture case.

They said it transpired that it was fifth marriage of the 45-year-old woman and her previous marriages had also ended due to her monetary demands.

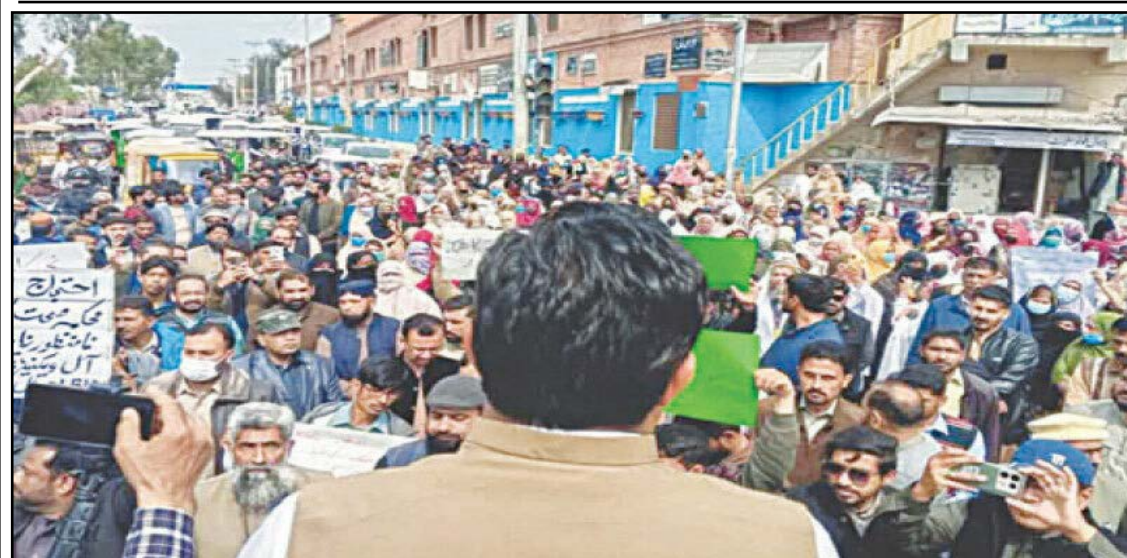
## Medics protest proposed privatisation of health centres

TAXILA: (News Desk) Health department employees, including doctors, paramedics, nurses, lady health workers and clerical staff, staged protests in Attock against the Punjab government's decision to outsource basic health units (BHUs) and rural health centres (RHCs).

Scores of male and female employees of the health department including District Health Authority, Punjab Health Facilities Management Company (PFHMC), Integrated Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (IRMCH), Prime Minister's Health Initiative Program (PMHI) took out a protest rally from Asfandiyar Bukhari District Headquarters Hospital to deputy commissioner office against the privatisation. The employees staged a protest outside Kachhari Chowk and raised slogans against privatisation.

Speaking on the occasion, the protesters' leaders said that the Punjab government looked determined to carry out a “financial massacre” of health workers as it had decided to sell out the health sector at throw-away prices to the private sector.

They added that the grand health alliance had decided to thwart the government's bid to privatise the health sector.They pointed out that earlier the government had sold out many hospitals, labs and blood banks while many departments like radiology, security and correspondence were also being run by third parties. They claimed that the sanitation and security systems worsened in the hospitals and caused a nuisance for the people.



An employees' leader addresses protesters in Attock on Sunday

## FIA arrests suspect from Banigala for Jaffar Express attack 'anti-state campaign' on social media

Islamabad(News Desk) The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Monday arrested a suspect from Bani Gala on the outskirts of Islamabad for his “anti-state campaign” on social media over the recent attack on the Jaffar Express train in Balochistan. The incident occurred on Tuesday afternoon when

the train, travelling from Quetta to Peshawar and carrying 440 passengers, was ambushed by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) terrorists. They opened fire on the train and held the passengers hostage, prompting the security forces to initiate an operation that lasted two days.

On Wednesday evening, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry confirmed that the operation had been concluded, with 33 terrorists present at the site of the attack neutralised. The ISPR chief also confirmed that 21 passengers and four Fron-

tier Corps personnel lost their lives in the hijacking, but no hostages were harmed during the final rescue phase. According to a statement by an FIA spokesperson, the suspect was arrested during a raid in Bani Gala for “spreading hate campaign against state institutions”.

## Fazl plans protests against 'puppet govt' after Eid

ISLAMABAD:(News Desk) Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has announced plans to launch a nationwide protest campaign, along with the PTI, against the government after Eidul Fitr, citing rising corruption and deteriorating law and order in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Speaking to media persons on Sunday, Maulana Fazl accused the federal government of neglecting security concerns in these provinces, claiming that

the ruling coalition was least bothered about the crisis. “We are planning to protest against the federal government's policies after Eidul Fitr, along with the PTI,” he said. A meeting of the JUI-F's general assembly had been called to devise a plan about the protest drive, he said, terming the current parliament and government “puppets”. While he acknowledged that PTI's real leadership remains in jail, he admitted that tensions between

the two parties had subsided, paving the way for a possible alliance. “Rhetoric by a few people will not cause a rift in the possible alliance with PTI. If certain individuals speak against me, PTI should take notice,” he said. A final decision on the matter, he added, would be made in JUI-F's policy-making meeting. ‘State's existence in danger’Fazlur Rehman lashed out at the government's handling of security and governance, arguing that

authorities treat Punjab as if it were the entire country while ignoring Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. “If there is no terrorism in Punjab, it does not mean that other provinces should be left to fend for themselves,” he said, referring to the situation in Balochistan and the KP. “The existence of the state is in danger and yet only the opposition parties are worried. Why is the government not thinking about it?” he questioned. “The prime minister is



inviting people for Iftar. Why can't they talk about the country's problems?” The JUI-F chief also questioned the government's legitimacy, stating that Prime Minister Shehbaz

Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi lacked electoral credibility and were not true representatives of people.