

Six shot dead in Jacobabad

JACOBABAD (INP): At least six people were killed and seven others injured when armed men of one group attacked other over property dispute here on Monday. Police said that Thaheem and Babar community residing in village Chantal Abad, Doda Pur police station in Jacobabad was in dispute over ownership of a plot. Equipped with heavy and automated weapons, the members of Thaheem community attacked the opponents.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX

No. 15

Regd. No. 241

RAJAB 08 1444 -- TUESDAY, JANUARY 31 2023

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

Price. 20

# 59 martyred in Police Lines mosque blast

Ishaq Khan

PESHAWAR: At least 59 worshippers mostly policemen were martyred, while 157 others were injured in a suicide blast inside the mosque of Malik Saad Shaheed Police Lines during the Zuhr (afternoon) prayer, on Monday.

According to security officials, the attacker was present in the front row during the prayer when he exploded himself. The explosion was so powerful that the front portion of the mosque, located in the Red Zone, was razed to the ground.

The Rescue 1122 personnel along with police continued the operation to retrieve the worshippers still trapped beneath the debris.

The KP Health Department imposed emergency in all three major hospitals of Peshawar. The governor and LRH spokesman appealed to the people, particularly those having O negative blood group, to donate blood.

While talking to journalists, Commissioner Peshawar Riaz Mehsud said that there was no shortage of medicines in hospitals and rescue operation for recovery of the trapped worshippers from the mosque's debris had almost been completed.

Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Peshawar Muhammad Ijaz Khan told the media that it was too early to comment about the nature of the blast. However, there was the smell of explosives inside the mosque, he added while not ruling out the possibility of a suicide attack.

CCPO said that usually 300 to 400 people, including officials of the headquarters of Peshawar Police, Counter Terrorism Department, Frontier Reserve Police, Elite Force and Telecommunication departments offered Zuhr prayer at the mosque.

According to reports, the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) had taken responsibility for the blast inside the mosque of Peshawar Police Lines.

The people in a large number thronged the hospitals to inquire about their injured loved ones and donate blood. The LRH spokesman,



however, urged the families of the victims to avoid rushing to the hospital so that hassle-free treatment could be provided to the injured admitted in emergency, trauma, and other wards. Police officials confirmed that Sahibzada Noor Ul Amin, Imam of the mosque, was also martyred in the blast.

The dead included Inspector Doran Shah; Zohaib Nawaz, resident of Dir Lower; Maqsood Ahmed; Rashida Bibi; Rafiq of Lakki Marwat; Constable Naseem Shah; Liaqat of Charsadda; Driver Amjad; Shehryar; Liaqat of Lakki Marwat; Mohammad Ali of Mian Gujar; Sahibzada; Zahir Shah; Tilawat Shah; Waseem Shah; Gul Ashraf; Hayatullah Khattak; Zubair; Abdul Hameed; Usman; Khalid Khan of Charsadda; Rafiq Khan; Inspector Irfan Khan; FC personnel Shahab of

Charsadda; Abdul Wadud; FC personnel Ahmad Khan; Liaquatullah Shah of Lakki Marwat; Atif Mujeeb; Rizwanullah of Charsadda; and Hazrat Umer while the identity of two bodies was not yet ascertained.

PM visits LRH, inquires after injured of mosque blast: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visited the Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) here Monday evening to inquire after the injured of the deadly blast that had taken place at the mosque of Malik Saad Shaheed Police Lines during Zuhr prayers.

The prime minister took rounds of different wards and met the injured. He directed the hospital administration to provide the best medical facilities to all the injured. He was accompanied by Minister for Defense



Khwaja Muhammad Asif, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan, and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb. Earlier on his arrival at the LRH, PM Shehbaz was received by caretaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Azam Khan, Adviser to the PM on Political Affairs Engr Amir Muqam, and Inspector General of Poice Muazzam Jah Ansari.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the attack that took place in a mosque at Peshawar Police Lines, reiterating the national resolve and unity to eliminate terrorism from the country. He, in a statement, said that the killing of Muslims while they worshipped, was in violation of Islamic teaching and that the attack on a mosque evidenced that the perpetrators had nothing to do

with Islam. He said the terrorists wanted to create panic by targeting those safeguarding the country and reiterated his resolve to eliminate such elements waging war against Pakistan. "The killers of innocent people will be made an example. The whole nation including the institutions was united against terrorism," he remarked.

He said the nation saluted the martyrs and that the government would formulate a strategy regarding the deteriorating law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. President Dr Arif Alvi strongly condemned the suicide bomb attack on the mosque at the Malik Saad Shaheed Police Lines in Peshawar.

(Continued on Back Page)

## Terrorism foremost security challenge: PM

— Cowardly attacks can't waver nation's resolve against terrorism

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday said terrorism was the foremost national security challenge and his message to the perpetrators of the mosque terror attack in Peshawar was that they could not underestimate the resolve of Pakistani people.

The prime minister, in posts on his Twitter handle, said, "While the pain of the grieving families cannot be described in words, I express my heartfelt condolences & most sincere sympathies. My message to the perpetrators of today's despicable incident is that you can't underestimate the resolve of our people."

"Just returned from Peshawar. The sheer scale of the human tragedy is unimaginable. This is no less than an attack on Pakistan. The nation is overwhelmed by a deep sense of grief. I have no doubt terrorism is our foremost national security challenge," he added.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday said the cowardly terror attacks could not weaken the resolve of the nation against terrorism, and the miscreants and their facilitators involved in attacks on innocent citizens would be punished for their heinous crimes.

He was speaking during his visit to Peshawar after the deadly blast at the mosque of Malik Saad Shaheed Police Lines during Zuhr prayers. Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir received the prime minister on his arrival. He was accompanied by Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan, and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb.

On the occasion, the Corps Commander Peshawar briefed the prime minister about the motives behind the terror attacks. Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muazzam Jah Ansari presented the initial investigation report about

the attack. The PM was also shown the CCTV footage of the suicide attack on the Police Lines mosque.

The participants of the meeting offered Fateha for the martyred, sympathized with the bereaved families, and prayed for the early recovery of the injured. On the occasion, the prime minister said the terrorists were attacking the security institutions, which were defending Pakistan. They were making a nefarious attempt to create an atmosphere of fear and terror, and their designs would be foiled by the institutions and the people unitedly, he added.

Pakistan had rendered great sacrifices against terrorism, and the sacrifices of the martyrs would not go waste, the prime minister said. Shehbaz Sharif said the capacity of the anti-terrorism institutions and police would be enhanced and the National Action Plan would be implemented comprehensively and with full force.

Meanwhile, the prime minister visited the Lady Reading Hospital to inquire after the persons injured in the blast. The prime minister took rounds of different wards and met the injured. He directed the hospital administration to provide the best medical facilities to the injured. Speaking during his visit, he said those who shed the blood of the worshippers could not be Muslims.

The criminals behind the terror attack would not be absolved by Allah Almighty, he remarked and vowed to root out the terrorists. He said the attacks on innocent citizens during prayers in mosques and in the name of Islam were the worst acts. The people of Pakistan had identified the real faces of the extremist elements who had a baseless ideology and were misinterpreting the religion, he added.

Earlier on his arrival at the hospital, the prime minister was received by caretaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Azam Khan, Adviser to the PM on Political Affairs Engr Amir Muqam, and IGP Muazzam Jah Ansari.

## UAE President's visit postponed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Monday that due to weather conditions, UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's visit to Pakistan scheduled for today had been postponed to a later date.

In a statement, she said, the UAE President was scheduled to pay an official visit today to Pakistan to discuss the friendship, cooperation and relations between the two brotherly countries and ways to enhance them in various fields.

## Funeral prayer of 11 children offered

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: A collective Nimaz e Janaza (funeral) of eleven children was offered in Kohat on Monday wherein thousands of people including army, police and district administration officers were present.

The funeral prayer was attended by Station Commander, Moeen ud Din, DIG Police, Ali Khattak, DPO Kohat Abdur Rauf Qaisarai, Commissioner Kohat, government officers and thousands of people from all walks of life. Participants of the funeral offered a collective Fateha and prayed for a high place in heaven for the departed souls of the children.

Meanwhile, an operation was underway at Tanda Dam to recover bodies of the remaining children, rescue workers said and added that all the ill-fated children belonged to the same village.

At least 11 children had died the other day when a boat they were onboard capsized in Tanda Dam Kohat. The FIR of the incident has been registered against the officers of Irrigation Department and boat operator at Riaz Shaheed police station, Kohat.

Meanwhile, the FIR of boat tragedy at Kohat's Tanda Dam has been registered in which the boat owner and three officials of the irrigation department have been nominated, police said on Monday. According to the FIR, the accident occurred due to overloading of the boat following which 10 children died on Sunday.

## Pakistan urges diplomatic resolution of Ukraine conflict

MOSCOW (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Monday called for the resolution of the Ukraine conflict through diplomatic means saying that developing countries like Pakistan were facing consequences in terms of its economic impact.

"We have a firm belief that all conflicts can be resolved peacefully and there are no obstacles which diplomacy cannot surmount. Ukraine conflict is no exception. Developing countries like Pakistan are facing negative consequences of the conflict in terms of economic impact," the foreign minister said addressing a joint press conference with Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov during his visit to Moscow. He expressed the hope that the strong tradition of diplomacy of Russia would help achieve the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The foreign minister said Pakistan considered the Russian Federation an important player in the West, South and Central Asia, and would keep up high-level contact with it. Apprising the media of their meeting, Foreign

Minister Bilawal said their "friendly" and "detailed" discussion encompassed all aspects of bilateral relations and regional matters. He said both countries were celebrating the 75th anniversary of their bilateral diplomatic relations and that Pakistan desired to strengthen its cooperation with Russia in the fields of trade, security, defence, counter-terrorism, education, and people-to-people contacts.

He mentioned the summit-level meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Samarkand as well as the 8th Inter-Government Commission held in Islamabad which focused on trade, economy, and energy cooperation. He said during their meeting, they also discussed bilateral cooperation at multilateral fora, including the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Foreign Minister Bilawal said Pakistan and Russia had "good cooperation" on Afghanistan, and wanted to achieve common goals of peace and stability in the war-torn country.

To a question on Pak-Russia en-

ergy cooperation, the foreign minister said the incumbent government was committed to coping with the country's energy needs. He said Pakistan valued its cooperation with Russia, the United States, and Europe, and it consistently called for dialogue and peaceful resolution of disputes. In his remarks, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Russia was satisfied over its military cooperation with Pakistan. Both countries were holding regular military contacts, including joint exercises and military training.

He said the elimination of terrorism from the region was directly linked with Afghanistan, and they had agreed to use the capacities of SCO, particularly its Contact Group on Afghanistan for the purpose. The Russian foreign minister condemned the terrorist attack in the Peshawar mosque earlier in the day, and called for global cooperation for the elimination of terrorism. He said during the meeting they discussed building humanitarian, cultural, and educational links.



PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Army Chief Asim Munir, inquiring after health of a injured victim at LRH, after a mosque blast in Police Lines.

## Evacuee Trust seals off Lal Haveli's seven units

RAWALPINDI (PPI): The Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) on Monday sealed seven units of Lal Haveli, the residence of Awami Muslim League (AML) chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid. According to initial reports, the ETPB staff along with Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and police personnel reached the residence of Sheikh Rashid to seal it in line with the court's orders.

ETPB Deputy Administrator Asif Khan led the operation. Khan said Sheikh Rashid and his brother Sheikh Siddique have 'illegally' occupied

seven acres land of Lal Haveli. According to the deputy administrator, Sheikh Rashid and his brother failed to provide any documents to establish ownership. The court has also quashed stay order of Sheikh Rasheed on action for evacuation Lal Haveli, he added.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Rasheed has condemned the action of the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) and vowed to move the court against sealing of his residence. Earlier on January 26, it was reported that the Evacuee Trust Properties Board (ETPB) had prepared a strategy to

vacate Lal Haveli, residence of Sheikh Rasheed, within 24 hours. Lal Haveli belonged to a Hindu woman prior to partition and was converted into Sheikh Rasheed's political office in 1980 after he entered parliamentary politics.

Meanwhile former interior minister Chief Sheikh Rasheed has stated that sealing Lal Haveli is an act of fascism and terrorism. "If it is not our personal property, we would be national criminals," Rashid said, claiming that the government took this step after it failed to find anything against him.

## Zardari sends legal notice to Khan

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Former president and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari has sent a notice to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan over his remarks of an assassination plot devised by Zardari to kill him. PPP member and former chairman senate Farooq Naek delivered the notice to Imran on behalf of Zardari.

The notice urged Imran "to issue unconditional apology for his baseless remarks within 14 days or legal proceedings will be initiated against him". Earlier, Imran claimed that Zardari was behind a "plan C" to assassinate him after the first two bids failed. In a televised address, the former PM claimed that the PPP co-chairman had hired a terrorist outfit to have him killed after the previous attempt [in Wazirabad] on his life failed.

The PTI chief claimed that Zardari used money made through corruption in Sindh to pay a terrorist organisation to plot an attack on his life. Imran claimed that "powerful people in agencies" were involved in the latest attempt, and Zardari was one of the people behind it. Without naming anyone, Imran also said another conspiracy had been hatched to have him killed by a religious extremist in the Wazirabad attack in November last year, where he sustained bullet injuries in his leg.

## Election date: LHC seeks reply from govt, governor

LAHORE (Agencies): The Lahore High Court (LHC) has sought a response from the federal government, Punjab governor and others on a PTI petition seeking immediate announcement of the election date for the provincial assembly.

The Punjab Assembly was dissolved constitutionally after Punjab Governor Baligh ur Rehman excused himself from signing the summary, saying he could not become a part of the process. According to details, Justice Jawad Hassan heard PTI leader Asad Umar's petition in which Governor Punjab Baligh ur Rehman has been made respondent in the plea via his secretary.

At the outset of the hearing, the court showed resentment over the non-

preparation of the government's lawyer in the case and asked how come he was unaware of the hearing of the case. Later, the court adjourned the hearing of the case until February 3 and sought a response from the federal government, Punjab governor Balighur Rehman and others on the accountability of the election date in Punjab.

PTI's Secretary General Asad Umar filed the petition through barrister Ali Zafar, seeking direction for the Punjab governor to immediately announce the election date for the provincial Assembly in order to ensure that polls are held within 90 days of its dissolution. The plea contended that the governor of Punjab had been impleaded as a respondent since Article 105(3) of the

Constitution requires him to appoint an election date to the provincial assembly not later than 90 days from the date of dissolution but he has failed to discharge that constitutional duty.

The petition claimed that it is mandatory for the respondent to announce the date to maintain the continuity of the system. Governor's inaction to do the needful is "unlawful and unconstitutional". Further, it said the failure of the respondent to appoint the election is creating hurdles for the ECP in discharging its duties, under Article 218(3) and the Elections Act, and in organising the election within the stated period of 90 days. The ECP in its letter highlighted these concerns but the respondent remained unmoved.





## Punitive action against student for conversing in Urdu

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Minister for Education Syed Sardar Shah, while taking notice of misbehaviour with a student of a private school in Nazimabad, on Monday has suspended the registration of the school and imposed a fine of Rs100,000. The minister earlier, following the social media outcry, had directed for inquiry into the matter, which was completed. According to details, the student was reportedly speaking Urdu language in the school's premises and was later subjected to bullying by the respective teacher and students.

## NH&MP holds passing-out ceremony

LAHORE (APP): The National Highways & Motorways Police (NH&MP) Training College, Sheikhupura, held a passing-out ceremony for 186 FIA probationary assistant sub-inspectors, on Monday. Director General FIA Mohsin Hassan Butt participated as the chief guest, inspected the parade, and addressed the passing-out officers.

### Court Notice

IN the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal No.77/13, Institution 15/8/2022 Date of hearing, 22/2/2023, Norulbasar etc VS Sher Umer Khan etc. Notice to no. 12/4.Naseb Kareem s/o Said Kareem, 16/4.Mohammad Amen s/o Per Bakht Hakem, 19.Bakht Nazer Shah, 21.Qadem Shah, 22.Islam Shah, 25.Faiz Mohammad Khan, 26.Shad Wali Khan sons of Husan Farosha resident of Agarai tehsil Mandanr district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 22/2/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

It is Published Through This Notice That I Nisar Ahmed S/O Abdul Samad R/o Nasrat Khel District Kohat isThe owner of Plot no 17-A Sector E-1 Size 10 Marla Phase II KDA Kohat Has Appointed Mr. Muhammad Hamad S/o Muhammad Zahid R/o Sector.4 KDA District Kohat Through (Special) Deed no. 203 Bahi no. 04 Volume no. 212 Page no. 110/114 Dated 20/06/2017 which is Registered in The office Kohat of Tehsildar/ Sub Registrar The Attorney Holder now wants to Transfer The Above Said Plot If Any Bank/ Institution/ Firm/ Person Has Any objection About The Transfer He Should Contact The Housing officer UADA Within 15 Days in Writing with Proofs otherwise Plot will be Transfer and no objection will Be Accepted (Director Urban Area KDA Kohat)

### PUBLIC NOTICE

It is Published Through This Notice That I Nisar Ahmed S/O Abdul Samad R/o Nasrat Khel District Kohat isThe owner of Plot no 17-B Sector E-1 Size 10 Marla Phase II KDA Kohat Has Appointed has Mr. Muhammad Hamad S/o Muhammad Zahid R/o Sector.4 KDA District Kohat Through (Special) Deed no. 202 Bahi no. 04 Volume no. 212 Page no. 104/109 Dated 20/06/2017 which is Registered in The office Kohat of Tehsildar/ Sub Registrar The Attorney Holder now wants to Transfer The Above Said Plot If Any Bank/ Institution/ Firm/ Person Has Any objection About The Transfer He Should Contact The Housing officer UADA Within 15 Days in Writing with Proofs otherwise Plot will be Transfer and no objection will Be Accepted (Director Urban Area KDA Kohat)

# Iqbal Zafar Jhagra, Hafeezur Rehman call on Punjab Governor

LAHORE (APP): Former governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Iqbal Zafar Jhagra, former chief minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman and a delegation of overseas Pakistanis led by Irfan Iqbal called on Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House here on Monday.

The Punjab Governor said that services of overseas Pakistanis were remarkable for the progress of national economy by sending foreign exchange. He said that overseas Pakistanis were ambassadors of Pakistan and 'we all would have to work together for the progress of country'.

The Overseas delegation said that honor

of green passport and dignity of overseas Pakistanis always increased, whenever, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz government came into power, adding that former prime minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif provided the country a strong economy, motorways and invincible defence of the country. Earlier, the Punjab Governor strongly condemned the bomb blast in Police Lines Masjid Peshawar and expressed grief and sorrow over loss of precious lives and also prayed for early recovery of injured people. He said the whole nation was united on war against terrorism, adding that sacrifices of security forces, army and the nation would not go waste.

## CCPO wants citizens, students sensitise about drug abuse

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore Additional Bilal Siddique Kamyana said on Monday that prevention from drug abuse and promotion of safe and healthy communities should be the top-most priority of all concerned in the present circumstances.

He stressed the need to sensitise citizens, particularly students and parents, about drug abuse through holding of awareness workshops and seminars with the help of media, civil society and educational institutions.

Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore Additional Bilal Siddique Kamyanasaid the Lahore

police had been doing tireless efforts to eliminate the menace of drugs from society with the help of all stakeholders.

He said during the current month, 940 drug-peddlers were arrested, and 936 cases were registered against them by the Lahore police. The police recovered more than 368-kg hashish, 7.6kg heroin, 462-gram ICE and 1,0931 litres of liquor.

Also, the City Division police arrested 221 narcotics sellers, Model Town division 208, Cantt 185, Sadar Division 146, Iqbal Town Division 97, whereas the Civil Lines Division police arrested 83 drug-peddlers during this period.

Bilal Kamyana said that Lahore police had been initiating crackdowns on drug-trafficking.

Police have enhanced mutual cooperation and intelligence-sharing with Anti Narcotics Force and other related departments to cut the entire drug supply chain and get access to the inter-provincial drug-smugglers, the CCPO added.

Families, educational institutions and communities could play an important role, especially in supporting youth who could be affected by drug abuse with terrible and long-lasting consequences, Bilal Kamyana added.

## Rain lashes city, likely to improve air quality

LAHORE (APP): Light-to-moderate rain lashing different parts of the province including its capital on Monday is likely to bring down air quality index (AQI) level in the city, which was recorded at 262 during the last 24 hours.

After the showers, clear and sunny weather conditions are expected in plains of Punjab, and temperature is likely to rise and cross 22° C during the day in the coming days. Minimum temperature in the city was recorded 9° C, and maximum 17° C on Monday.

According to Pakistan Meteorological Department, cold and dry weather is expected in most parts of Punjab including the city during the next 24 hours. Fog is likely to occur in plain areas of Punjab during morning hours.

The Provincial Disaster Management Authority Punjab has advised tourists to remain extra cautious during their journey

to northern areas. Director General PDMA Faisal Farid said that heavy snowfall had continued at Murree since Sunday night and the process of monitoring snowfall there was going on from the PDMA Provincial Control Room. All arrangements including facilitation centres had been completed, he added.

He said that before going to Murree and other northern areas, tourists should get weather update, and choose a mechanically fit vehicle.

They should use anti-cooling liquid in the vehicle and keep the fuel tank of their vehicles full.

The DG PDMA appealed to tourists to use chains on the car tyres during snowfall and they should not close the windows of the car completely in case of using heater.

He added that citizens could get help by calling PDMA's helpline 1129 in case of emergency.

## Sindh Ministers, Advisors, Special Assistants condemn Peshawar Blast

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Ministers, Advisors, and Special Assistants have strongly condemned Peshawar blast here on Monday.

Provincial Minister for Industries & Cooperative Department Jam Ikramullah Dharejo, Provincial Minister for Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Department & Parliamentary Affairs and Food Mukesh Kumar Chawla, Adviser to CM Sindh on Religious Affairs Fayyaz Ali Butt and Special Assistant to CM Sindh on Investments. Department and Public

Private Partnership Projects Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar have strongly condemned Police Lines Mosque Peshawar suicide blast and expressed their deep sorrow over the loss of innocent human lives.

They said that the suicide attack was a very heinous act.

In their condemnation statements, they said that those, who commit such heinous acts did not deserve to be called human beings and Muslims.

The entire nation was united against terrorists. They also prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured.



LAHORE: Federal Minister of Railways Khawaja Saad Rafiq addresses at the Railway Conference ceremony at the local hotel.



PESHAWAR: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali talking to media.

## Maximum relief to be provided to martyrs, Ghazis' families: IGP

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar on Monday said that major decisions had been taken for the welfare and immediate relief for families of police martyrs and Ghazis who were injured and disabled in combat with terrorists or other field operations. Dr Usman Anwar issued an order to clear the pending dues of all police martyrs within a week.

He said that widow's allowance (Rs 8500 per month) of the police employees who died in line of duty was insufficient in the current economic situation, so it was necessary to increase the widow's 'Guzara' allowance to make it equal to the minimum wage of laborer such as 25,000 approved by the government in order to reduce their financial troubles. The IG Punjab said that it had been decided to increase the 'Guzara' allowance of the widows of police employees who died before ten years of

service to make it equal to approved minimum wage of a laborer by the government. He said the rules for departmental recruitment of children of police martyrs were being simplified and all the children of police martyrs coming on open merit would get 10 additional marks during the departmental recruitment process, he added. Dr Usman Anwar said that if seat was not available in the concerned district for recruitment on Shaheed quota, then the child of martyr should be recruited immediately in any other district of the province where seat was available.

The provincial police chief said the children of martyrs should be given full support for admission in the best schools, colleges and universities, and in this regard, RPOs and DPOs had been directed to contact with the families of martyrs.

The IGP directed that all possible relief be provided to the families of

police martyrs, adding that medical claims of police 'Ghazis' should be cleared immediately while preference should be given to Ghazis with respect to transfers postings.

Dr Usman Anwar said that a special package was being worked on for all those Ghazis who had become completely disabled and unable to even get up from bed. He said the package of martyrs who had an on-duty accident was being revised and the families of such martyrs would be given full salary. He said that a decision would be taken to increase the financial package of brave Ghazis of the police who become disabled in the line of duty and fighting anti-social elements. In this regard, a three member committee of DIG Establishment, DIG Operations and DIG IT had been formed, which would prepare its recommendations in seven days and present them in the next meeting of executive board, he asserted.

## Initially selected railway stations, few trains to be used for branding: Saad

LAHORE (APP): Railways Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique said on Monday that initially selected railway stations and some trains would be used to implement branding initiative. Addressing a branding conference at a local hotel, he said that spaces would be offered for branding on few trains and at selected railway stations and gradually this initiative would be implemented in the whole system. He said, "Branding initiative should be implemented in such a way that it may not affect the esthetic sense."

In past, he said a lot of efforts had been made to start branding initiative in railways and to use its locations and trains for commercial and publicity purposes.

Khawaja Saad Rafique said that being a Pakistani all of us should make sincere efforts to steer the country out of existing challenges.

He said that honest officers had been appointed on main posts in railways and there was no political interference within the department, adding

that even railways minister could not interfere in the policies of railways.

Branding initiative would help private companies to enhance their business and he requested the private companies to take it as a national cause and play their role in strengthening the railway.

He said: "If we look at other countries, railway play a significant role in strengthening economy of any country." The Minister said that two decades were required to turn-around railways, adding that results could not be achieved through hollow slogans. He said: "Despite financial challenges in the railways we will keep our spirit high to uplift the department." Saad Rafique said that efforts were being made to start Main Line-1 project in a viable situation after cost cutting.

He said that railways wanted to move forward with the support of private sector and in light of professional opinion. The Railways Minister said that there was a lot of potential in the country and efforts had to be

made in right direction to achieve desired results.

Responding to a question, he said that all parameters regarding safety of installations would be decided, adding that company involved in branding and department both had to play their role in this regard. He said: "We have to educate travellers as well to protect installations in a better way." To another query, he said that railways wanted to implement branding initiative within sixty days.

He further said that railways had got permission regarding commercial exploitation of its property for certain time period and it was related to real estate exploitation. He said, as far as branding was concerned there was no ban on it. Responding to a question, he said that continuity of policies was highly important to streamline the working of public departments. RAIL-COP Chief Executive Officer Syed Najam Seed also gave presentation on branding. Railways Secretary Syed Mazhar Ali Shah, Railways CEO and others officers were also present.

## Shazia Marri inaugurates BISP 'Benazir Nashonuma Centre'

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Chairperson BISP Shazia Atta Marri on Monday said that the government was cognizant of challenges being encountered by people, particularly the lower and middle-income class due to the present economic situation as various measures were being taken for easing their difficulties.

She was speaking to the media, at the inauguration of Benazir Nashonuma Centre under Health and Nutrition Conditional Cash Transfer Program to prevent stunting growth, at Sindh Government Hospital, Shah Faisal Colony here.

The federal minister said that an enormous number of children were facing the issue of malnutrition and stunting around the country and BISP in collaboration with World Food Program had initiated the program.

Under the program 364 Nashonuma centres would be opened in 119 districts across the country, where pregnant women registered with BISP would be provided facilities of nutrition-rich food supplements, quarterly medical checkups, cash assistance and health guidance, the minister said. She further apprised that the outreach of the program would be further expanded in more districts as well.

She said that the project was initially piloted in the least developed districts of Thatta and Sujawal and later expanded to 15 underdeveloped districts of the country. She apprised that now it was being launched nationwide to deal with issue of mother and child malnutrition that leads to immune efficiency and diseases. Shazia Marri said that Sindh government was also contributing in the efforts, and it was not only sup-

porting BISP's Nashonuma program, but it had also initiated a program that would cover those women who were not registered with BISP.

The minister stressed other provinces to replicate the Sindh government's measures so that maximum number of deserving women could be covered and issues of malnutrition and stunting could be addressed effectively. Responding to a question on serious economic challenges, she said that PDM wore the thorny crown only in the best interest of the country and the nation and the coalition government was committed to resolving the issues but later on unprecedented floods aggravated the situation.

"Pakistan is facing grave repercussions of climate change that was a global issue and we are not only taking measures to deal with arising challenges but also raising the issue at the international level effectively," she added. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, immediately after the flood disaster, provided Rs.70 billion to flood affectees through BISP and also sanctioned Rs.1 billion for nutrition program of BISP to assist the affected families, the minister said.

The incumbent government is determined to address all the issues being faced by nation and decision of seeking IMF's assistance for economic stability was one of the difficult but inevitable step, she said adding that government would keep the interest of the nation supreme while dealing with IMF. Shazia Marri said that previous PTI government "devastated the economy, made extravagant expenditures on luxuries and committed corruption of billions of rupees".

"Imran Khan is a narcissist who could not see beyond himself and

used to malign others to cover up his own deficiencies and weakness," she alleged, while responding to another question adding that allegations on Asif Zardari were baseless as PPP, its leadership and workers themselves were affectees of terrorism.

On the other hand, "Imran Khan and PTI has always supported and promoted terrorism," she held and demanded that Imran must tender an apology for is fabricated and flawed accusations on Asif Zardari.

On a question about blasphemous acts in Sweden, the federal minister condemned the act and urged European Union to take appropriate measures to prevent such acts which not only hurt the sentiments of millions of Muslims but all the democratic and politically aware citizens all around the world.

"We need to understand that the world needs tolerance and hurting others' religious sentiments could not be termed as freedom of expression," she maintained, adding that freedom of expression was not a license for hurting the sentiments of billions of Muslims.

Meanwhile, the federal minister at the occasion expressed deep sorrow and grief over the demise and martyrdom of citizens in road accidents and in a blast in Peshawar. She condemned the act of terrorism in Peshawar and said that Pakistani nation had rendered matchless sacrifices in the war against terrorism as the country was determined to root out the menace. Speaking at the occasion, Sindh Minister for social welfare Sajid Jokhio said that malnutrition was the reason for the death of a number of children in the province, particularly in Tharparkar district and BISP's program would help in addressing the issue.



# Governor expresses grief over loss of lives in blast

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali on Monday expressed his heartfelt sorrow over the loss of dozens of innocent lives as a result of an explosion in the mosque of Police Line here.

In his message, he expressed heartfelt sympathy with the bereaved families and said that the entire nation, especially the people of KP are deeply saddened by this sad incident.

The Governor immediately reached the police lines after receiving the information about the incident and reviewed the relief and rescue operation.

On this occasion, Commissioner Peshawar Riaz Mehsud and CCPO Ijaz Khan informed the governor about the relief and rescue operation, on which the governor directed to speed up all the rescue operations including the immediate transfer of the injured to the hospital.

Talking to the media representatives outside the police lines, he said that no religion allows killing of innocent people especially at worship places, adding that the terrorists have no affiliation with any religion rather they were enemies of humanity.

He said that the enemy forces are engaged in conspiracies to weaken the country, but they would never succeed in their nefarious designs by carrying out such cowardly acts.

Ghulam Ali said that KP police have a long history of and they were not afraid of such attacks and enemy forces should have realized that such cowardly acts of terrorism could not shake the resolve of the police, security forces, government and nation to wipe out terrorism.

The governor prayed early recovery of those injured in the blast and eternal peace for martyrs and patience for bereaved families to bear the unbearable loss with fortitude.

## Ghulam Ali for payment of compensation to Tanda Dam victim families

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Ghulam Ali on Monday expressed grief and sorrow over the death of two dozen seminary children in Tanda dam and ordered strict action against those responsible for the tragedy. In a statement issued here, the Governor recommended the Chief Minister to announce compensation package for the bereaved families.

He sought an inquiry report from Commissioner Kohat division into the incident and directed the district administration to identify the persons for showing negligence and take strict legal action against them to avert such incident in future. The governor expressed grief and sorrow with the bereaved families and prayed to bear the loss with fortitude.

He directed district administration and RESCUE-1122 to expedite the rescue operation and recover all the missing dead bodies.

## Sajid Turi condemns blast

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistan and Human Resource, Sajid Turi has condemned terrorism incident in Police Lines Peshawar.

In a statement issued here on Monday, he expressed profound grief and sorrow over the loss of human lives in the incident. He also prayed for the eternal peace of the departed souls and fortitude for bereaved families.

Meanwhile, the federal minister has also offered fateha for the victims of boat capsizing incident in Tanda Dam, Kohat and bus accident at Lasbella.



PESHAWAR: Commissioner Riaz Khan Mehsud monitoring of assistance works after blast in Police Line.

# SCCI SOS call to end current economic instability

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has given a SOS call while keeping in view prevailing economic instability and uncertainty that were driven as result of anti-business and trade policies.

He urged the business community across the country to back the SCCI's SOS call and also follow the suit to jointly fix the national economy.

Talking to different delegations belonging to trading community here at the chamber's house on Monday, Ishaq criticized that owing to 'flawed' economic policies of the incumbent government, businesses, trade and exports/imports, coupled with non-opening of Letter of Credits (LCs) by commercial banks had brought negative impacts on economic growth.

On the other hand, the SCCI chief said the rising prices of electricity, gas and petroleum products, essentially hike in policy rate by State Bank of Pakistan with banks margin at 20 per cent has further aggravating the present feeble economic conditions.

Ishaq noted that the present government had made claims about putting the economy on the right track without consultation with the business community and relevant stakeholders but measures taken for improvement in the economy have yet not yielded any tangible and positive results, even though the economic situation is going from bad to worse with each passing day.

Furthermore, he observed industrialists, small traders and shopkeepers are being faced with enormous difficulties because of enforcement of 'anti-business' policies. He added doing business and trade has not only made it difficult but impossible in the prevailing circumstances.

The SCCI chief has foreseen that the government has planned to present a proposed 'mini-budget', worth billions of rupees with heavy taxes.

He predicted that prices of electricity, gas and petroleum would be further increased through the 'mini-budget', which was unaffordable for business, trade, industries and exports of the country.

Ishaq termed the mini-budget would be an unwise step in the present scenario and urged the government to review its decision in the best interest of the country's economy, businesses and trade. He attributed the rising dollar rate, petroleum, gas and electricity prices as the main reason behind the current inflation and economic woes.

The chamber president criticized the government for bringing the national economy on the brink of destruction.

Despite the depressing economic conditions, he added, the government didn't consult with the business community to fix the country's economy. He, furthermore, warned the complete closure of industries, businesses and ending of trade as a result of present anti-business policies.

The SCCI chief made it clear that if the government didn't review its policies and hold consultation with the business community for fixing the economy, then traders would have no other option but to take harsh and aggressive steps.

He urged the government to review its decision of the unprecedented hike in prices of petroleum products.

He also demanded to bring new people in the tax net instead of further burdening the existing taxpayers with fresh taxes.

## City Mayor condemns Police line blast

— order staff to donate blood for injured

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar Zubair Ali Monday strongly condemned the terrorist blast in a mosque in Police line and expressed grief and sorrow over loss of precious lives.

He said that it was a ruthless act in which innocent people were targeted at a mosque, adding that it was high time to form unity at all levels and defeat the conspiracy of anti state elements.

He prayed high ranks for the martyrs in Jannah and early recovery of the injured persons. The Mayor urged his staff to donate blood for the injured persons to save precious lives.

On the request of the Mayor Chief Demolishing Inspector Qaiser Bacha along other staff members of the capital metropolitan reached Lady Reading Hospital and donated blood.



PESHAWAR: District president Ulema Wing Qari Kamran, Maulana Abdul Waris and Maulana Syed Saiful Hanan presenting bouquet to Nothia Check Post Incharge Cadit Qamar.



PESHAWAR: Adviser to Prime Minister on Political Affairs Engr Amir Muqam talking to media at

## Muqam for national unity against terrorism

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs, Engr Amir Muqam here on Monday underscored the need for national unity against the menace of terrorism and should show the same spirit like that of Army Public School attack for complete eradication of this menace.

Talking to reporters in Lady Reading Hospital after inquiring after the health of injured victims of Police Lines blast, Muqam said it was highly condemnable and inhuman act. He said that the Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif despite the busy official engagements rushed to Peshawar where he inquired after the health of blast victims at LRH.

He said that we are fully aware of the grief and sorrow through which the victims' families are passing through and stand with them in this hour of grief. He said such cowardly acts could not shake the resolve and determination of the government and people of Pakistan in the fight against terrorism.

## PHC grants bail to alleged smuggler

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted bail to alleged smuggler involved in trafficking of hashish and Ice-drugs.

The counsel Nasru Minallah Advocate informed that Adnan was arrested on 11 September 2021 in alleged smuggling of two kilo hashish and 1200-grams Ice-drug in the premises of Chamkani police station.

The counsel argued that more than one year of time police didn't completed challan against petitioner and requested for release of Adnan on bail. PHC's judge Justice Ijaz Anwar ordered release of alleged smuggler on bail after conclusion of arguments.

## KPBC condemns suicide attack

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: KP Bar Council (KPBC) vice chairman Zar Badshah and chairman Executive Committee Syed Mubashir Shah condemned suicide attack in police lines, on Monday.

KPBC demanded action against competent authorities responsible for security lapses. They argued that how public should be safe 8f police line is under threat from terrorists.

KPBC also condemned price hike in petroleum products and claimed that people has been compelled for starvation in this time of inflation. KPBC committed to stand with people and constitution during the contemporary situation.

## Hoti condemns explosion

PESHAWAR (APP): Senior leader PPP Khawaja Mohammad Khan Hoti has condemned the explosion in the Police Lines Masjid and expressed his profound grief and sorrow over the loss of human lives in it.

He appealed to the leadership of all political parties to set aside their political differences and jointly work for peace, security and economic stability of the country.

# Riaz urges citizens of O- group to donate blood for blast victims

PESHAWAR (APP): Commissioner Riaz Khan Mehsud on Monday urged the citizens of O- group to donate blood for the treatment of blood victims.

Talking to reporters, here, he said O- blood was required for critically injured victims following the appeal made by the Lady Reading Hospital's spokesman.

He said at least 28 people, including policemen, were martyred and 150 wounded in the powerful explosion that ripped through inside the mosque of Malik Saad Shaheed police lines in red zone.

Meanwhile, Capital City Police Officer Peshawar Ejaz Khan, while talking to the media, said that it was too early to comment anything that how many policemen were still trapped under the mosque's rubble.

He said the focus was currently being made on the rescue operation.

"We cannot say with surety about the nature of the blast at the moment but there is a smell of explosives inside the mosque," he feared, also not dismissing the possibility of a suicide attack.

The CCPO said usually 300 to 400 people including officials of the headquarters of Peshawar Police, Counter Terrorism Department, Frontier Reserve Police, Elite Force and Telecommunication Departments offer Zuhr prayer in the mosque.

# QWP condemns Police Lines suicide attack

PESHAWAR (APP): Chairman, Qaumi Watan Party (QWP), Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao and provincial chairman Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao have condemned Peshawar Police Lines suicide explosion and said that targeting innocent people is gruesome act.

In a joint statement issued here on Monday, the leadership of QWP termed the incident highly sorrowful. They said that besides large scale casualties, dozens of people have also been injured in the explosion and called upon the government to take notice of it.

Expressing solidarity and sympathies with the bereaved families, they said that the whole nation has grieved by this barbaric attack inside a Masjid.

Aftab Sherpao and Sikandar Sherpao said that they are repeatedly diverting the attention of the government toward the crucial issue of law and order, which is essential for guaranteeing durable peace.

They said that the objective behind the occurrence of such incidents is to once again dilute the peaceful national environment. However, he said that national unity will foil all such nefarious designs.

They prayed for the eternal peace of the departed souls and early recovery of the injured persons.

They also called for provision of full financial assistance to affected families and ensuring of all possible medical facilities to the injured.



PESHAWAR: Capital Metropolitan staff donating blood for blast victims.

# Asfand Yar Wali condemns mosque blast

— grieved over loss of precious lives

PESHAWAR (APP): Awami National Party central leader Asfand Yar Wali Khan Monday strongly condemned the terrorist blast inside a mosque in police line here and expressed grief and sorrow over loss of precious lives.

In a statement issued here, he said that it was a cowardly act of terrorist by anti state elements, adding that such attacks couldn't shake the resolve of the government, security forces and nation to wipe out terrorist and extremism in all its forms and manifestations.

He said that due to wrong policies of the past rulers the terrorists managed to re-organise and when ANP pointed it out the rulers were blaming them for creating panic in the society.

He said that there should be no discrimination of good and bad when actions are taken against terrorists and extremist elements, adding that this menace should be wiped out once and for all.

Asfand said that the terrorist blast inside the mosque in police line was a big question mark on security. He demanded implementation of all 20 points of the national action plan to avert further terrorist attacks in the country.

He expressed grief and sorrow over loss of precious lives and prayed courage for the bereaved families to bear the loss with fortitude.

Asfand said that KP police was a brave and courageous force and rendered great sacrifices in war against terrorists. He prayed early recovery of the injured persons.

# Cold and dry weather to prevail in most KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Monday predicted that cold and dry weather is expected over most districts of the province, while partly cloudy and very cold in upper districts and hilly areas.

During the last 24 hours, weather remained cold and scattered rain with snowfall over the hills occurred in most districts of the province. Rain recorded (in mm): Kakul 15, Chitral & Balakot 11 (each), Dir, Timergara & Malamjaba 10 (each), Buner & Bajaur 05 (each), Kalam 04, Saidu Sharif, Pattan & Parachinar 03 (each), Takht Bhai 02, Cherat & Mamad Gut 01 (each) and Peshawar Airbase Trace. Snow recorded (in inches): Malamjaba 05, Chitral & Kalam 02, Dir & Drosh Trace.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 18/09, Chitral 03/00, Timergara 15/06, Dir 10/00, Mirkhani 03/-3, Kalam 03/-5, Drosh 04/-3, Saidu Sharif 17/04, Pattan 13/07, Malam Jabba 05/-4, Takht Bhai 16/06, Kakul 14/02, Balakot 13/03, Parachinar 09/-7, Bannu 18/06, Cherat 10/00, D.I. Khan 19/07.

The lowest temperatures recorded in the province were -07°C in Parachinar and -05°C in Kalam.





## In brief

### 3 die in pressure cooker blast F.P. Report

KHAR: At least three members of a family were killed when a pressure cooker exploded in a house at Ghaljo Kamangara in tehsil Momond of Bajaur district on Monday. Rescue 1122 said the incident occurred when the wife of Taj Muhammad was preparing lunch for the family. During cooking, the pressure cooker exploded and badly injured three family members. The Rescue 1122 immediately reached the place of the incident and shifted the injured to THQ Nawagai however all the three succumbed to injuries during treatment. The dead included the wife of Taj Muhammad, his son, Usman (5) and daughter Sana (4). Political and social figure from the area, Maulana Khan Zeb expressed profound grief over the tragic incident and appealed to the government and well-off people to provide financial assistance to the poor bereaved family.

### Three including two children hurt Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Three persons including two children and a school security guard were injured in a gas leakage explosion in a school near Badrashi Railway Crossing, district Nowshera, said Rescue 1122 sources on Monday. On receiving the report of the incident, the teams of Rescue 1122 rushed to place and shifted the injured to the nearby Qazi Hussain Ahmad Medical Complex for treatment.

### Four killed in bus-car collision

BHAKKAR (INP): At least four people were killed in collision between over speeding passenger bus and a car here on Monday. Rescue sources said that the accident took place on MM Road near Chandani Chowk Bhakkar where a Quetta bound reckless driven passenger bus coming from Rawalpindi while overtaking ran over a private car. As a result of accident, all four car riders were killed on the spot and bus driver fled the scene. The corpses were recovered after cutting the body of car and shifted to hospital while the police after registering a case against the driver at large started raids for his arrest.

### Transporters increase fares F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: The public transporters all over the Hazara division Monday immediately increased fares of local and inter-city transport due to the increase in petroleum products. According to the details, the fares were increased up to 30 rupees on local routes and up to 200 rupees on inter-city routes. Masses are shocked by the situation, although they were expecting an increase in petroleum prices and consequently a rise in the prices of other things including transport fares but not this much. The people demanded the concerned authority to fix transport fares according to rise in petroleum products.

### Residents hold protest F.P. Report

SAKHAKOT: The residents of Ghwando Bala & Payan, Gul Dheri, Lalma and adjacent villages arranged protest against incidents of robberies, thievery and snatching in the premises while demanded indiscriminate crackdown on crimes, on Monday.



HYDERABAD: Workers of Pakistan Markazi Muslim League holding a rally against desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden.

## Blind murder case traced, accused arrested

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Lower Dir police on Monday claimed to have traced a blind murder case and arrested three of the five accused involved in the killing of one Salman, a resident of Gorr Zaimdara who was shot dead at Odigram on Jan. 24. Briefing local journalists at the Timergara police lines, the district police officer Ikramullah Khan said that a police team led by SP investigation Mushtaq Khan worked day and night to trace the case. He said the police team not only traced it but also arrested three of the five accused involved in the killing of Salman.

He said the incident was related to a domestic issue and the accused had hired killers for it. He said the arrested accused were identified as Miraj, a resident of Misri Khanay Maidan and two Afghan nationals Javed and Ihsanullah. The DPO said that two accused had gone abroad and the police were behind them. He said that the motorcycle, two pistols along with the cash taken for murdering the youth were also recovered from their possession. The DPO also awarded appreci-

ation certificates and cash prizes to the police team on the occasion.

**Teachers' leader retired:** The All Primary Teachers' Association (APTA) district president Ali Rehman retired from government services after completing 36 years in the elementary and secondary education department. The APTA local chapter arranged a farewell party in his honour at Timergara here on Monday.

The party was attended by a large number of teachers and area elders. The APTA provincial president Azizullah Khan, general secretary Miraj Ali Shah, pattern-in-chief Badshah Mahmood, district education officer Upper Chitral Miftahudin, former provincial chairman of All Government Employees Grand Alliance Syed Muhammad Shah and others spoke on the occasion. The speakers lauded the services of the retiring teachers' leader for the community and said that he had never compromised on teachers' rights.

They said that it was the effort of Ali Rehman due to which the primary school teachers were now entitled to get basic pay scale 16. The speakers said that

teaching was a sacred profession and the government should recognize the role and status of teachers in society. The speakers also thanked the former education minister Shehram Khan Tarakai for approving the upgradation of teachers.

**Protest rally:** The Jamaat-i-Islami Lower Dir chapter on Monday organized a protest rally at Timergara against the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and Denmark. Carrying banners and placards the protesters marched on the road and gathered at the Gorgorai Chowk. The rally was addressed by the JI district chief Izazul Mulk Afkari, tehsil chief Malik Sher Bahadar and others. They condemned the incidents and said that under a planned conspiracy the Muslims across the globe were being triggered and emotionalized.

The speakers said the incidents had hurt the Muslims while the governments in Sweden and Denmark had kept criminal silence. They demanded the government sever bilateral ties with both the countries and expelled their ambassadors. The speakers also appealed to the Muslims to boycott the Swedish and Danish products.

## Increasing inflation in Pakistan

Areeba Sohail

THROUGH the column of your esteemed paper I would like to draw the kind attention of the concerned authorities towards the unprecedented inflation in Pakistan. One of the most important factors contributing to poverty in Pakistan is inflation.

Inflation is defined as a situation where the general price level in any country is persistently moving upwards. During past few years, it has been noticed that prices of essential goods have increased rapidly. It has been noticed that the inflation rate in Pakistan has reached to 10.46%. While Pakistan's inflation is skyrocketing in a way that necessitates action, inflation has global effects. The lower middle class has collapsed into starvation as a result of inflation. The majority of people who have minimum pay finds difficulty in fulfilling their needs. They are unable to fulfill their requirements. We are unable to predict where this price increase will end. It has destroyed the ordinary person. Everyday necessities and important commodities are getting more expensive. The average person is unable to meet his wants. He is unable to provide his kids with a suitable education. He cannot afford quality medical care. The increase in prices is a major source of concern for everyone. Although those with low incomes are most negatively impacted by this. It seems that there is no proper system to check the unusual increase in prices. It is time that our government should check the causes behind the ever-increasing prices without any delay. I would be very grateful for your assistance in this matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

*The writer is a student of NED University of Engineering and Technology.*

## Alleged smuggler held

F.P. Report

PARACINAR: Police has busted bid smuggling while recovered 24 kilograms hashish from concrete cavities of vehicle while arrested alleged smuggler, on Monday.

On the special orders of DIG Kohat Division Dar Ali Khattak and on the special instructions of DPO Kurram Abdul Samad Khan, the district police foiled an attempt to smuggle a huge consignment of drugs during the blockade. Under the leadership of Circle Mazhar Ali, Narcotics Eradication Team in-charge/Additional SHO Abid Hussain and ASI Niaz Main along with the police party set up a special blockade near Til Parachinar Main Road Kuga Wagah during the blockade vehicles continued.

During the snap checking, the driver of Ghwage Motor Car No. KM-840 tried to escape on seeing the police party, on which the police party started chasing the said vehicle and on its way to Mali Kale Bushehra Road, Kharlachi Main Road near Branch Check Post. During the search, the accused Noorullah son of Syedullah Khan from Kotri Tri Mangal recovered 24000 grams of hashish which had been skillfully hidden in the secret boxes made in the digi of Ghwage Motor and the accused was taken into custody along with the vehicle and taken to Upper Kurram police station.

## Tribesmen hold protest against load shedding

F.P. Report

WANA: The tribesmen along with children and women come roads against unscheduled 22 hours load shedding of electricity in Wana, Lower South Waziristan which has disrupted every sphere of livelihood in the district, on Monday.

In the first 24 hours, there was 4 hours of electricity supply, now there is no electricity. Protesters say that apart from irrigating the crops, clean water is not available for drinking in the houses, for this reason, a large crowd of people have come out on the streets against the illegal load shedding, and strongly condemned this illegal behavior of the government and demanded an immediate end to the load shedding of electricity.

The people in Lower Waziristan Wana say that the government is already failing to deliver electricity to the people of Waziristan



Wana. But unfortunately, now only wires and poles are standing, but not even the name of Jali. People from all walks of life participated in the protest, except for the Chief elders of Wazir, Dotani and Suleman Khel.

Regarding the power outage and load shedding, the protestors said that 18 megawatts of electricity is being generated by the Gomalzam Dam, but despite this, we are not being given our right.

Malik Syed Ullah Dari Khel, Malik Sardar Ali Kray Khel and Malik Aziz Ullah told the protesters that the government should stop treating the people of Lower Waziristan like a stepmother and ensure electricity supply. Otherwise, the scope of the protest will be widened because Lower Waziristan is an agricultural region, the government should think for a better future for the residents here and not for ruin.

## Police arrests alleged murderer in Swat

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Police has arrested murdered allegedly involved in firing against his sisters in which two were dead while one was critically injured over domestic dispute along with weapon used in the offense, on Monday.

This was disclosed by District Police Officer (DPO) Swat Shafiullah Gandapur while addressing a press conference in his office along with Superintendent of Police (SP) Investigation Shah Hassan, SP Special Branch Pir Zar Badshah and other police officers.

He further said that the accused Naseer Khan resident of Jamal Abad Sangota, on January 22, 2023, at around 05:15, shot and killed his three real sisters with weapon on the basis of a domestic dispute as a result of the firing two sisters Izat Bibi, Rabia Jan killed and Naz Bibi were



critically injured. The accused fired and fled from the spot.

The local police of Manglawar police station, SHO Usman Ali and other police immediately cordoned off the area as soon as they received the information. During the search operation, the accused fled towards the Swat river where police arrested the accused along with weapons. During the initial investigation, the accused confessed his crime.

DPO said that the police ready to deal with all kinds of challenges, the operation against the criminals is going on and to maintain the atmosphere of peace in Swat, the police are always conducting search and strike operations at different places. He said that the police are performing their duties day and night to protect the life and property of the people and will leave no stone unturned to provide cheap facilities to the people.

## Looters to face accountability: Hilal

F.P. Report

GHALANAI: Senator and Chairman Standing Committee of the Senate for Safran, Senator Hilal Rehman has said that all the thieves who robbed the funds of the tribal districts will be held accountable. 24 MNAs of Tehreek-e-Insaf, PWD organization and Chief Engineer Anwar Dogar are involved in fraud, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has robbed the funds of the province including the trib-

al districts. This he claimed while talking to the media and said that the action of the corruption investigation committee under his supervision should be stopped. In return, he was offered Rs 7 crore.

Senator also claimed that some time before the no-confidence motion against Imran Khan, 13 billion was released to 24 MNAs for development works in various constituencies, the federal government released

six billion in 2018 and five billion in 2019, billion and then six billion were released, he said that the development works of tribal districts of Khyber, Mohmand and Bajaur were more than the limit. Corruption was done, 50 crores were released to Mohmand in one day and the next day it was transferred to the contractor's account, the same happened in Bajaur and Khyber, they revealed that the call deposit checks were forged.

## Point Bus with WiFi facility provided to students

NAUNDERO (PPI): Raza Bhatti, Vice Chancellor, Shaikh Ayaz University, Shikarpur, has said that the university is the mother of institutions where learning is more common and practical work is done. The university carves the student like a jeweler carves a diamond out of it and sends it to the market. He was speaking to the students and teachers of Benazir Bhutto Government Girls Degree College, here on Monday during his visit to handover a point bus having WiFi facility which will take students to Shikarpur for studies. He said that you don't know the importance of your skills and it will only happen when you learn according to modern requirements. He said that coronavirus caused a lot of damage all over the world and it was education and modern technology that made it easy to control the virus.

Our effort is to make Sheikh Ayaz University one of the recognized universities in the world so that the students studying can recognize their abilities in the whole world. For this, we need to provide quality education to the stu-

dents and it is our duty to look after it so that there is no gap in this quality education. Raza Bhatti said that today we have come to provide a modern point bus to the students of Naundero so that their arrival and return to the university can be easy and to keep the students busy we have also provided a Wi-Fi system in it. It will be done so that the students do not face any difficulty in getting education according to the requirements of the modern age.

The university will provide better accountability, affordability and vocational education to students in college. He thanked Higher Education Commission, Islamabad, for the provision of a bus which will take the students of Madeji, Dakhn and Garhi Yasin from Naundero to Shikarpur University and take them back to their homes. He said that students can take advantage of this bus service and come forward for better education.

Raza Bhatti said that we are also constructing a hostel for 200 students, the work of which will be completed within a year. Additional Registrar Academic Bakhtiar

Kabar said that the University has seven degree programs which are being studied. The state of art IT facilities provided in the universities of Islamabad and Lahore will also be provided to the students here, he added. There is no political organization in Shaikh Ayaz University which is why it is running well. Initially, a batch of 100 students came out of which 65 passed and 45 failed.

Professor Nazir Soomro, Principal, Degree College said that the people who lead the institutions are the leaders who think about the future. We welcome this great initiative of Shaikh Ayaz University to provide students with daily outback facilities for university education. Earlier there were only Sindh University Jamshoro and Latif University Khairpur and now there is Sheikh Ayaz University and students should benefit from it. Fahem Akhtar Ansari, Principal, Benazir Government Girls Degree College, said that together we can make the name of the country and the nation bright.

## Commissioner directs delivery of public services at doorsteps

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Commissioner Hazara's Shaukat Ali Yousafzai directed competent authorities to ensure good governance by assuring delivery of public services at doorsteps as public servants, on Monday.

This he directed while talking to Hazara Commissioner Shaukat Ali Khan Yousafzai expressed this to Chief Editor Dr. Chan Mubarak Hazarvi along with representative delegation led by President of Haripur Chamber of Commerce and Industries Tayyab Khan Swati. He directed Deputy Commissioners of

all the districts of Hazara Division to ensure delivery of services at doorsteps. He added that I will try my best to fulfill the public aspirations and expectations so that the people's confidence in the Commissioner's office is restored.

During his special conversation, on this occasion the members of the executive body, Saeed Abbas, Chaudhry Zainul Abedin, Ahmad Jan. Kunder, Jawad Tariq drew the attention of Commissioner Hazara to the problems arising due to the lack of law and regulation for Jaha traders, Saeed Abbas, due to the illegal restrictions imposed on the sup-

ply of flour and flour from Punjab province, the public, especially biscuits.

Commissioner Hazara attention was drawn towards food industries' problems while he assured full cooperation from the administration, Dr. Chan Mubarak Hazarvi said that Haripur is not only the gateway of Hazara but also the biggest industrial zone of the province. By solving the problems of Haripur, the problems of Hazara Division will be solved. He appointed Shaukat Ali Khan Yousafzai as Commissioner Hazara. He was declared as auspicious for solving public problems.





## Low turnout expected as Tunisia holds parliamentary elections

TUNIS (Agencies): Tunisia is going to the polls in the second round of parliamentary elections amid political and economic woes in the North African country. Polls opened and voters are choosing among 262 candidates seeking to fill the 131 remaining seats.

In the seven constituencies with no candidate, special elections will be held later to fill the seats, likely in March. President Kais Saied sacked the government in July 2021 and froze parliament before dissolving it and changing the constitution - abolishing the hybrid parliamentary system that had been in place since 2014. Since Saied was elected president in 2019 with 72 percent of the vote, his support among Tunisians has dulled.

The first round of voting in December saw just 11.2 percent of registered voters take part and 23 candidates secured seats outright, 10 of them because they ran unopposed and 13 because they won more than 50 percent of the vote, according to election officials. Second round is seen as the final pillar of Saied's transformation of politics in the birthplace of the Arab Spring. The new legislature, however, will have almost no power to hold the president to account. "I don't plan to vote," said Ridha, a carpenter in the capital Tunis who declined to provide his surname, according to AFP news agency. "I can't trust anyone any more."

Analysts predict another low turnout among Tunisia's 7.8 million eligible voters as major parties, including Saied's arch-rivals Ennahdha, hold a boycott. Some Ennahdha officials have been jailed, and the party is refusing to take part in the parliamentary elections and has



held repeated protests. Youssef Cherif, director of Columbia Global Centers in Tunis, told AFP "this parliament will have very little legitimacy, and the president, who is all-powerful thanks to the 2022 constitution, will be able to control it as he sees fit".

Tunisians have a "lack of interest" in politics, Cherif added. With inflation at more than 10 percent and repeated shortages of basic goods from milk to cooking oil, Tunisia's 12 million people have been focused on more immediate issues. Global ratings agency Moody's downgraded Tunisia's credit rating to Caa2, citing "the absence of comprehensive financing to date to meet the government's large funding needs".

According to the latest figures

from the National Institute of Statistics, unemployment has reached more than 18 percent and exceeds 25 percent in the poor regions of the interior of the country, while the inflation rate is 10.1 percent. For several years, Tunisia has suffered from record budget deficits that affect its ability to pay suppliers of medicines, food and fuel, causing shortages of milk, sugar, vegetable oil and other staples. More than 32,000 Tunisians are estimated to have emigrated irregularly over the past year, amid sluggish growth and rising poverty and unemployment. The election takes place in the shadow of Tunisia's drawn-out negotiations with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout worth nearly \$2bn.

## North Korea lifted lockdown in capital

SEOUL (AP): Russia's embassy in North Korea says the country has eased stringent epidemic controls in capital Pyongyang that were placed during the past five days to slow the spread of respiratory illnesses. North Korea has not officially acknowledged a lockdown in Pyongyang or a re-emergence of COVID-19 after leader Kim Jong Un declared a widely disputed victory over the coronavirus in August, but the Russian embassy's Facebook posts have provided rare glimpses into the secretive country's infectious disease controls.

The embassy posted a notice Monday issued by North Korea's Foreign Ministry informing foreign diplomats that the "special anti-epidemic period" imposed in Pyongyang since Wednesday was lifted as of Monday. Last week, the embassy said that North Korean health authorities required diplomatic missions to keep their employees indoors and also measure their temperatures four times a day and report the results to a hospital in Pyongyang. It said the North Korean measures were in response to an increase in "flu and other respiratory diseases," but it didn't mention the spread of COVID-19 or restrictions imposed on regular citizens. Shortly before that post, NK News, a North Korea-focused news website, cited a North Korean government notice to report that health officials had imposed a five-day lockdown in Pyongyang in an effort to stem the spread of respiratory illnesses.

Getting a read of North Korea's virus situation is difficult as the country has been tightly shut since early 2020, with officials imposing strict border controls, banning tourists and aid workers and jettisoning diplomats while scrambling to shield their poor health care system. North Korea's admission of a COVID-19 outbreak in May last year came after it spent 2 1/2 years rejecting outside offers of vaccines and other help while steadfastly claiming that its superior socialist system was protecting its population from an "evil" virus that had killed millions elsewhere. South Korea's Unification Ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs, said the number of foreign missions that are currently active in North Korea would be 10 or less, a list that includes the missions of China, Vietnam and Cuba along with the Russian embassy.

North Korean state media in recent weeks have stressed vigilance against a possible re-emergence of COVID-19. The official Rodong Sinmun newspaper, which previously described the anti-virus campaign as the "No. 1 priority" in national affairs, called for North Koreans to maintain a "sense of high crisis" Monday as COVID-19 continues to spread in neighboring countries. Some analysts say North Korea could be taking preventive measures as it prepares to stage huge public events in Pyongyang - possibly as early as next week - to glorify Kim's authoritarian leadership and the expansion of his nuclear weapons and missiles program.

## Drones attack convoy in east Syria coming from Iraq

BEIRUT (AP): Drones attacked a convoy of trucks in eastern Syria shortly after it crossed into the country from Iraq, Syrian opposition activists and a pro-government radio station said. There was no immediate word on casualties. The strike comes amid heightening tension between Iran and its rivals in the region. It was not immediately clear who was behind the attack on the convoy in the Syrian border region of Boukamal, which is a stronghold of Iran-backed militias.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said the drones appear to have been from the US-led coalition, adding that they targeted six refrigerated trucks. The group said there were casualties and ambulances rushed to the area. Another activist said the strike hit a convoy of trucks of Iran-backed militiamen. Omar Abu Layla, a Europe-based activist from Deir el-Zour who runs a group that monitors developments, tweeted that there was no immediate word on casualties. The pro-government Sham FM radio station also reported that six refrigerated trucks were hit. In Baghdad, an official with an Iran-backed militia confirmed there was a strike saying it only targeted one truck. He gave no word on casualties.

The attack in eastern Syria came hours after bomb-carrying drones targeted an Iranian defense factory in the central city of Isfahan causing some damage at the plant. Last month, Israel's military chief of staff strongly suggested that Israel was behind a strike on a truck convoy in Syria

in November, giving a rare glimpse of Israel's shadow war against Iran and its proxies across the region. Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, who finished his military service earlier this month, said Israeli military and intelligence capabilities made it possible to strike specific targets that pose a threat. Israeli leaders have in the past acknowledged striking hundreds of targets in Syria and elsewhere in what it says is a campaign to thwart Iranian attempts to smuggle weapons to proxies like Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group or to destroy weapons caches.

The November strike hit tanker trucks carrying fuel and other trucks carrying weapons for the militias in Syria's eastern province of Deir el-Zour, the Observatory reported at the time. It said at least 14 people, most of them militiamen, were killed in the strike. The strike, along the border with Iraq, targeted Iran-backed militiamen, Syrian opposition activists said at the time. Some of those killed in the attack were Iranian nationals, according to two paramilitary officers in Iraq. At the time, Israel declined to comment on the strike. Iran is a main backer of Syrian President Bashar Assad and has sent thousands of Iran-backed fighters to help Syrian troops during the country's 11-year civil war. Both Iran and Assad's government are also allied with Hezbollah, which has fought alongside Assad's forces in the war. Israel consider Iran to be its chief enemy and has warned against what it views as its hostile activities in the region.

## UK leader fires party chief over tax bill allegations

LONDON (AP): British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak fired the chairman of the governing Conservative Party for a "serious breach" of ethics rules in failing to come clean about a tax dispute. Sunak had faced days of pressure to sack Nadhim Zahawi amid allegations he settled a multimillion-dollar unpaid tax bill while he was in charge of the country's Treasury.

The prime minister acted after a standards probe found Zahawi had breached the ministerial code of conduct. It said he had failed to disclose details of his dispute with tax authorities and the fact that he had paid a penalty. In a letter to Zahawi, Sunak said he had been forced to act to keep his promise that his government "would have integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level." Zahawi had acknowledged the tax dispute but argued his error was "careless and not deliberate."

In his response to Sunak, Zahawi pledged to support the prime minister as a backbench lawmaker and made no reference to the ethics inquiry. He attacked the media - which first revealed his whopping tax bill, reported at almost 5 million pounds (\$6.2 million) - and claimed some reporting did not reflect "legitimate scrutiny of public officials." Zahawi headed the U.K. Treasury from July to September 2022 in the final months of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's tenure, and was appointed Conservative Party chairman when Sunak took office in October. Sunak has vowed to restore order and integrity to government after three years of turmoil under predecessors Johnson - brought down by ethics scandals - and Liz

Truss, who quit within weeks after her policies rocked the U.K. economy.

Last week he asked the government's standards adviser, Laurie Magnus, to investigate Zahawi's tax affairs and said he would wait for the results before acting. In a report released, Magnus found Zahawi had shown "insufficient regard" for the requirement "to be honest, open and an exemplary leader through his own behavior" in public life. The investigation into Zahawi by HMRC, the U.K.'s tax office, centered around the sale of some 27 million pounds (\$33.4 million) in shares in YouGov, an opinion polling firm he co-founded. The probe began in April 2021, but Zahawi did not declare it when he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer more than a year later. The Magnus report found there should have been an understanding from the outset that the matter was serious. It said this was not reflected in public statements given by Zahawi, until he confirmed on Jan. 21 that a settlement had been reached.

Zahawi said it had been "the privilege of my life" to serve in government. The 55-year-old, who came to Britain as a child refugee from Iraq, was vaccines minister in the first year of the coronavirus pandemic, and later served a nine-month stint as education minister. The Zahawi episode was a test of the authority of Sunak, who is grappling with a staggering economy and a deeply divided Conservative Party. Standards inquiries are also underway into Johnson - over claims he secured a loan with the help of a Conservative donor who was later appointed chairman of the BBC - and

Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab, who faces allegations he bullied staff. The stories are fuel for opponents who accuse Sunak - a former investment banker who is married to the daughter of an Indian billionaire - of leading a government of the wealthy that is out of touch with the struggles of ordinary people.

## Gunmen kill eight in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG (Agencies): Armed men opened fire on a group of people celebrating a birthday in a township in South Africa, killing eight and wounding three others, police say. "The owner of the house was celebrating his birthday when two unknown gunmen entered the yard" in the southern port city of Gqeberha, formerly Port Elizabeth, "and started shooting at the guests", police said in a statement on Monday.

The incident occurred between 5:15pm and 5:30pm local time (15:15-15:30 GMT) at a house in Kwazakele, police. Two assailants were involved in the shooting, authorities said. The unknown attackers "randomly shot at guests", police said, adding "eight people died while three others are still fighting for their lives in hospital. The homeowner is among the deceased." An investigation has been launched into the attack, and police said a manhunt for the perpetrators was under way. Shootings are common in South Africa, which has one of the world's highest murder rates, fuelled by gang violence and alcohol.

## Maldives on edge after bitterly fought presidential primary

MALDIVIS (Agencies): The Maldives' President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has been declared the winner of a contentious presidential primary, but his rival has yet to concede the election amid allegations of voter fraud, heightening political uncertainty in the popular Indian Ocean tourist destination. The governing Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) said that Solih won 61 percent of the vote while his opponent Mohamed Nasheed garnered 38 percent. The election - held - was tense with at least five people arrested for disrupting voting and brawls breaking out between rival factions at several polling stations.

The outcome was a blow for Nasheed, who served as president from 2008 to 2012 and was the Maldives' first democratically elected leader. The 55-year-old had been hoping for a comeback after a "terrorism" conviction that was widely seen as politically motivated prevented him from running in the last presidential election. Solih, who had won the 2018 vote after contesting in Nasheed's stead, appealed for unity.

Speaking to a crowd of cheering supporters in the capital, Male', the 60-year-old said, "our rivalry is now over". "Now is the time to unite and work together to win the upcoming presidential election for the MDP," he said. But Nasheed's campaign said it was "still examining the results". In a short statement issued late, the campaign alleged fraud, saying: "We are noticing that Nasheed is ahead in most of the ballot boxes, and his opponent is leading because of a few boxes where an extraordinary amount of votes have been cast." Hours earlier, Nasheed's spokesperson, Hassan Latheef, had claimed their exit polls were showing that the former president would win 64 percent of the vote. "Nasheed has won this election," he wrote on Twitter.

The dispute has prompted worries about a split of the MDP, a party that Nasheed co-founded and that has led a decades-long campaign for democracy in the Maldives. It has also

raised concerns of new turmoil in the island nation of 500,000 people, four years after Maldivians voted out former President Abdulla Yameen, who had overseen a wide-ranging crackdown on dissent, including by jailing or forcing into exile nearly all of his political opponents. Nasheed and Solih, childhood friends who stood together against Yameen, fell out amid the campaign to topple the autocratic leader. Their rivalry began in 2018, when the MDP's top decision-making body voted to transfer the party's presidential ticket from Nasheed to Solih. At the time, Nasheed - whose first stint in power had been cut short by a military mutiny and who had been sentenced to 13 years in jail on a trumped-up charge of "terrorism" - was living in exile. He reluctantly acquiesced to Solih's candidacy, and the veteran legislator went on to defeat Yameen by a landslide.

Nasheed returned home to a hero's welcome and won election as parliament speaker. But he soon parted ways with the president, accusing him of inaction on corruption and violent groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and ISIL (ISIS). Solih refutes this and claims he has brought "peace and stability" and "unparalleled development" to the Maldives after decades of turmoil. Ahead of vote, Nasheed's campaign had warned supporters to be vigilant of attempts to rig the poll.

And on the day itself, the speaker's supporters disrupted voting at several polling stations, accusing Solih's representatives of stuffing ballot boxes. The allegations resulted in fistfights at four polling stations, with people on the island of Gadhdhoo in southern Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll damaging the ballot box and tearing up some ballots. The brawl prompted voting to be suspended briefly. A similar fight took place on the island of Thinadhoo in the same atoll.

Videos posted on Twitter show a group of men shouting and kicking as they wrestled for control of the ballot box. Voting was also suspended on that island for several hours. The MDP election committee, how-

ever, insists the vote was "very successful". Ibrahim Waheed, the chair of the committee, told reporters that disruptions occurred at only a handful of the 245 polling stations. The committee had received 50 complaints about the vote, he said, assuring that there had been no instances of "double voting". He added that 70 percent of some 57,225 eligible voters had turned out to cast their ballots. Nasheed's supporters have rejected the assurances. "This primary was stolen. The support for [Nasheed] is clear here," wrote Twitter user @Mujokeeynee, posting a picture of one of the former president's well-attended campaign rallies in Male'.

"Election was rigged... #Anni2023 is still on," wrote Twitter user @HKurusee, referring to Nasheed by his nickname. Solih's supporters meanwhile said the president had won fair and square, on the back of a record of delivering on infrastructure projects, including providing safe drinking water in the Maldives' dispersed islands. They also pointed to his policy of free university education and his successful steering of the tourism-dependent economy through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moosa Latheef, editor at the Dhauru news website, said it was unlikely that Nasheed could have won vote, given the wide margin. "Nasheed's refusal to concede does not bode well for our nascent democracy," Latheef said. "We are heading into a period of great uncertainty." The options open to Nasheed include setting up a new party altogether or deciding to contest the presidential election as an independent candidate. On the other hand, he could also try to leverage concessions from Solih in exchange for backing the president in the upcoming election. These could include promises to allocate certain cabinet portfolios to the speaker's faction or a pledge to hold a referendum on switching the system of governance from from a presidential to a parliamentary system. "It's very hard to predict what Nasheed might do," Latheef said.

## Nigeria cost-of-living crisis sparks exodus of doctors

ABUJA (BBC): Africa's largest economy, Nigeria, is in the process of introducing new banknotes for the first time in more than 20 years. The move is an attempt to reignite confidence in the currency, the naira, which is under severe pressure. With inflation at more than 20%, people are struggling to cope with the rising cost of living. It is leading to the largest exodus of young professionals in years.

"Imagine going to the grocery store one day, and everything has tripled in price? How do you even cope? You have a family at home. What do you cut out of the budget?" Oroma Cooky Gam tells me by Zoom, her face incredulous. The fashion designer left Nigeria's biggest city, Lagos, with her young family a year ago for the UK capital, London. Her husband and business partner Osione, an artist, was granted a Global Talent visa, which enables leaders in academia, arts and culture, as well as digital technology to work in the UK.

She says it had become too expensive to raise their young family in Lagos. "Our money was buying us less and less. We weren't able to pay our bills, we weren't able to do normal things that we were doing." Oroma studied law at the UK's University of Northumbria and moved back to

Nigeria almost 20 years ago, keen to use her degree to help develop her country. Along with Osione, she eventually set up This Is Us, a sustainable fashion and lifestyle brand that uses local materials and artisans, including cotton grown and dyed in northern Nigeria.

Initially, the cost of living crisis wasn't impacting them. "Because we are 100% sourced in Nigeria, things were not as terrible for us as it was for other people," Oroma says. "So when everyone was increasing their prices, we skipped a couple of increases because we could manage." But eventually their Nigerian customer base was finding it harder to afford non-essential items like clothing - particularly when food accounts for 63% of their spending. This means when the price of food goes up, people have less disposable income.

Oroma says it is particularly bad for young Nigerians. "Speaking to my mum, one thing that I realised is that when they were younger, things were a lot easier for them. They could afford to buy houses, cars. 'I always felt like: 'What is going on with me?' I'm failing because I can't do all the things my mum was doing, but I realised that the country is not working for me."

She is not the only one to feel this

way. Nigeria is experiencing its worst wave of emigration in years. Reliable statistics are hard to find, but the number of Nigerians granted UK work visas has quadrupled since 2019. And 700% more visas have been awarded to Nigerian students. There are long queues outside immigration processing centres and embassies every day, and everyone here seems to know someone who's leaving or trying to relocate abroad. The term "japa", which means "to run, flee or escape" in Yoruba, has become a popular topic of conversation online, as well as on radio and TV chat shows.

Most of those who can afford to leave the country legally are well educated. They include doctors, nurses, engineers and IT professionals. It's led some to call the exodus a "brain drain". The Nigeria Medical Association, says at least 50 doctors leave Nigeria every week to work abroad. Poor working conditions, coupled with bad pay and the rising cost of living are the main factors. Kunle Ibisola is a junior doctor who used to work at the University College Hospital (UCH), in the south-western city of Ibadan. He now works for NHS Scotland.

"My story is the story of most Nigerian doctors," he tells me over the phone. "I never wanted to leave

Nigeria. My intention was to start my residency there, become a consultant and practice in my country." The main reason I left is salary, and the cost of living. In the UK, if I work six to eight hours of locum work [overtime] and I convert that to naira, it will be the equivalent of my monthly salary in Nigeria. And that's not even including my main UK salary." He says a year ago his hospital in Nigeria started haemorrhaging doctors.

"Some doctors didn't get paid for six to nine months, because there was an issue with the federal payment system. Some senior colleagues couldn't afford to drive to work or send their children to school. That was an eye-opener for a lot of people." His wife and children are planning to join him in Scotland soon. When I ask him what he thinks the future holds for Nigeria, he grows pensive. "If I think about it too much, it's depressing because even people currently in medical school are all planning to leave. If you aren't planning to leave, people think you're unfortunate or you don't have money."

I have spoken to half a dozen doctors, all with similar stories. Overworked and underpaid, they all decided to relocate over the past two years. For those left behind, the pressure is immense. Cheta Nwanze, an

economic analyst at SBM Intelligence, says Nigeria's current high rate of inflation is mainly caused by food inflation. "SBM has this proxy for food inflation called the Jollof Index," he explains, referring to the tomato-based rice dish, popular across West Africa. "We calculate the average cost of making a pot of jollof rice for a family of five. It was just under 4,000 naira at the start of 2016, and now it's around 10,000 naira [\$22, £18] - so it's more than doubled in five years."

He explains that although Nigeria has been affected by some of the same drivers of inflation as elsewhere in the world, namely the war in Ukraine and the 2020 pandemic, there are additional factors unique to the country. He says that many farmers in the north, where much of the country's food comes from, have been unable to plant their crops in recent years because of attacks by Islamist militants and kidnappers. "When you couple that with the government's protectionist policies with respect to food imports, and Nigeria's growing population, it means there's less food for more mouths to feed, which drives up inflation."

The impact of this can be seen in the country's markets. In Ajah, a small food market in a residential suburb of Lagos, there are fewer people than usual. Omowunmi Ajekigbe, a market

trader, is grating okra under a huge parasol. "Things weren't too expensive last year," she tells me, "but this year, it's too much. You used to see lots of customers rushing about, but now... you barely see anybody. At a nearby stall, Cordelia Fidelis, a young woman with long braids and a big smile, is haggling with a vegetable seller. She owns a catering business and comes to the market every day.

"The cost of goods is alarming - in just two months the price of yams has more than doubled. It's crazy, I swear it's crazy, everything is so expensive. A box of egg is expensive, beef is expensive, palm oil is so expensive." Some have started taking drastic action to manage their expenses. Angela Chukwulozie is a retired teacher who now sells Italian shoes. "Since the price of everything has gone up, I've cut back on how many meals my family and I eat every day. Instead of eating three times in a day we now eat twice." The economy is one of the key concerns for voters in next month's elections. Despite being Africa's largest economy, four out of 10 Nigerians live below the poverty line, according to the World Bank. All of the main candidates have promised to improve the country's economy if elected, but there is scepticism as to whether they can deliver.



The Frontier Post

JALIL AFRIDI  
Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at  
Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,  
Peshawar.  
Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001  
Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573  
E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com  
Lahore Office: 0335-4026284  
Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com  
Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253  
Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com  
Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907  
Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com  
“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 415-3704551

## Pakistan’s dormant tourism industry

**PAKISTAN'S** Envoy to the US, Ambassador Masood Khan said that Pakistan has the most beautiful and undiscovered touristic sites with huge untapped tourism potential that needs to be realized and discovered. Ambassador Khan urged the global community and Pakistani diaspora abroad to help boost tourism in the scenic nation by investing in this potentially lucrative sector.

Pakistan is a blessed nation that enjoys a unique geography, diverse weather conditions, scenic beauty, vast untouched coastal line, and deserts, along with rich cultural heritage, and a mix of ancient and modern civilizations making the country one of the top travel destinations in the world. Unfortunately, these massive potentials could not be fully reaped by the developing nation due to a lack of investments, a partially developed tourism infrastructure, and the slackness of the ruling elite over the past decades. Realistically, there had been some unconcerned efforts at the state level by successive governments to promote tourism, however, neither an overall tourism-friendly environment could be developed nor our nation could attract global tourism, while Pakistan's tourism industry bearily hosted a few thousand Sikhs, Hindus and Buddhists religious devotees from India, Sri Lanka, and some western nations in recent years.

Recently, Pakistan Mission in the United States and Pakistan Tourism Development Authority (PTDC) jointly participated in a two-day global Travel and Adventure Show in New York, along with other 750 entities from 185 countries around the globe. Pakistan's pavilion showcased the culture of all provinces of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, along with attractions of the ancient Ghandara civilization. In fact, Pakistan has a treasure of tourist destinations and natural beauty but we lacked suitable arrangements at most visiting sites, transport, lodging, and boarding facilities, tourist security, and an effective global campaign to attract international travelers to the country. The menace of terrorism and the unsatisfactory law and order situation had badly tarnished the image of the country at the global level and hurt foreign tourism in Pakistan.

The government of Pakistan has worked out various initiatives to promote tourism including the issuance of online visas with multiple extensions, the establishment of Tourist facilitation centers, a dedicated Police Force, and publicity campaigns abroad. Today, there is a dire need for a public-private partnership in the tourism industry of Pakistan and foreign investors particularly overseas Pakistanis could play an important role in branding and promoting Pakistan tourism destinations abroad. At the same time, the government needs to pour more funds into the development of state-of-the-art tourism sites, tourist facilities, and related infrastructure, coupled with a secure and tourist-friendly environment, while an incentivized tourism policy could attract foreign tourists, students, and businessmen to the country.

Pakistan needs to transform itself from a security state into a welfare and business-oriented nation, thus fundamental changes need to be introduced in its legal, banking, economic, and security regimes, so tourists, businessmen, students, and foreign citizens unhinderedly come to Pakistan, do business and enjoy leisure in the country without any fear. Hence, a wholehearted approach should be adopted by government entities, private businesses, and the public to help revive tourism in the country.

## Catholics versus evangels

**ACCORDING** to the media, the number of evangelical Christians and preachers has mushroomed over the years in the traditionally Catholic Democratic Republic of Congo. According to the reports, opening a religious cemetery has no legal restriction or constitutional obligation and anyone could start a church, while it has become a lucrative business in Kinshasa. As said, Evangelicals are on the rise while numerous Congolese evangelical leaders style themselves as archbishops and prophets, or even apostles. Many of the Bishops own television channels, preach their sect online, dressed immaculately, and roam the streets of cities.

Religious belief and spiritual rituals had always played an important role in the moral and social grooming of mankind, however, religious clerics used those divine teaching and ideas for self-promotion, and grouping for the sole purpose of dividing and ruling the followers. Over time politicians and rulers also used religious sentiments to gain power and consolidate their rules in their nations. Interestingly, Catholicism has long been the dominant religion in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a 130-million-strong western African nation. However, former Congolese dictator Mobutu Seko encouraged evangelical pastors in a bid to weaken the power of the Catholic Church, which often rallied opposition against him. The reports suggest that most of the poor Congolese had been promised a better life, money, or love in reward for conversion to the Evangelical sect.

The current statistics revealed that the Congolese Catholic majority sharply thinned over the past decades and presently there is a 40/35 ratio between Catholics and Evangelicals respectively. The Catholic clerics are worried about a sharp decrease in their followers and using multiple recipes to regain the majority and recently arranged a visit by the Pope to reenergize Chothalism in the country. Interestingly, there are also reports that many Chothalic-turned Evangelicals are beginning to return to the mother church as the promised miracles fail to show up, did not end their financial miseries, and increased their depression.

In fact, hegemonism is the sole agenda of all competing nations, religions, and ideologies in the world, while every other influencer uses fictional stories to persuade the audience. Sooner or later, lies naked before the truth, whereas, reality rules the world forever.

# Judge Bitar is right: Lebanon’s entire leadership is guilty

**THE shocking thing about the latest legal maneuvers in Lebanon is how blatant they were in their illegality and partisanship; no one any longer even hides their attempts to subvert the rule of law.**

Following the post-2019 collapse of political and financial institutions, Lebanon’s judiciary remained as a pillar that appeared to be a glimmer of hope. This had already suffered a mortal blow with the Rafik Hariri tribunal, when it became obvious that a particular demographic considered itself to enjoy total legal immunity. Hezbollah demonstrated that it was willing to smash Lebanon over our heads at the mere threat of the arrest of one of its most lowly officials.

In recent days Lebanon’s judiciary has become an object of ridicule, as judges leveled retaliatory charges against each other and arbitrarily ordered the releases of detainees. The stuttering investigation into the 2020 Beirut port explosion had already demonstrated that the judiciary was a plaything in the hands of powerful figures, who could gleefully toss spanners into the legal works to hamstringing procedures indefinitely.

Many citizens perceive investigating judge Tarek Bitar’s actions against powerful officials as heroic. One widow who lost her husband in the blast said: “This is really bold and courageous ... you feel like he’s on a solo mission.”

Bitar is disconcerting for the corrupt ruling classes because he doesn’t follow their rules. He declines invitations to social occasions to avoid perceptions of influence, and doesn’t accept calls from those seeking favors. He now lives under armed guard. People speculate about when he’ll be assassinated.

The apocalyptic port blast on Aug. 4, 2020,

killed at least 218 people and injured about 7,000, destroyed 77,000 homes, caused \$15 billion of damage, displaced over 300,000, and left at least 80,000 children homeless. The known facts indicate criminal failings through the entire rotten system, up to the president and the prime minister’s office. President Michel Aoun was shown to have been aware that a quantity of volatile

try burns. Their obstructionism includes filing more than 25 requests to dismiss judges leading the investigation, and Hezbollah blocking Cabinet sessions for months seeking to quash the probe. The Interior Ministry failed to execute Bitar’s arrest warrants. Chief prosecutor Ghassan Oueidat reacted to finding

Baria Alamuddin

were talking about the law in a civilized way.”

Amid these exacerbated tensions, the soldiers and tanks massed around the Beirut districts of Ain El-Remmaneh and Chiyah are horribly reminiscent of the outbreak of the 1975 civil war.

Compelling evidence indicates that the shipload of chemicals was deliberately

thought to have been diverted to the Syrian arena for use in crude bombs to indiscriminately kill and maim civilians. This investigation has never been just about negligence, but mass murder. No wonder Lebanon’s entire senior echelon has unified ranks against it.

Tensions are escalating as conspiracy theories proliferate via media organs on various sides. “Tarek Bitar

with Hezbollah in seeking to kill the investigation. There is intense media speculation about the failure of Western states to provide satellite imagery showing the moment of the explosion.

I have always been tremendously proud to be part of the Lebanese success story of globe-straddling achievement. Everywhere I went, people would joyfully relate their experiences of visiting Lebanon and expound on what a gorgeous, vibrant country it was. In recent years, my reaction has turned to mortification as people expressed their condolences at the country’s “tragic death.” My response has always been to brush this aside and express my expectation that Lebanon would soon be back on its feet again — but it has become increasingly impossible to put a brave face on things. The collapsing education sector will have long-term consequences for restoring Lebanon’s reputation as a center of entrepreneurship, talent and innovation.

There was a Lebanon before, and a vastly diminished Lebanon after the 2020 explosion, which reduced one of Beirut’s most beautiful sightseeing and shopping districts to a bomb site. The blast symbolized everything that is wrong with Lebanon — the corruption, misgovernance, impunity and pre-eminence of terrorist groups.

It should therefore also be a symbol for our unfinished revolution against these evils. By filing charges against senior officials, Bitar is not an out-of-control judge; rather he is signaling that the entire complicit, corrupt leadership deserves to be brought to account. Instead of cynically waiting for him to fail, Lebanon’s citizens should take to the streets en masse and demand that this revolution is followed through to its logical conclusion.

**However, these politicians have gone to immense efforts to protect their own backs, shamefully bickering with each other while the country burns. Their obstructionism includes filing more than 25 requests to dismiss judges leading the investigation, and Hezbollah blocking Cabinet sessions for months seeking to quash the probe. The Interior Ministry failed to execute Bitar’s arrest warrants. Chief prosecutor Ghassan Oueidat reacted to finding himself on Bitar’s summons sheet by filing retaliatory charges against Bitar. Sizable demonstrations have called for Oueidat’s resignation. Reformist MPs visited the office of caretaker Justice Minister Henri Khoury to discuss the port probe, only for these public representatives to be beaten up by unidentified thugs in the minister’s presence. One MP said: “These aren’t guards, these are the dogs of the justice minister. We were talking about the law in a civilized way.” Amid these exacerbated tensions, the soldiers and tanks massed around the Beirut districts of Ain El-Remmaneh and Chiyah are horribly reminiscent of the outbreak of the 1975 civil war. Compelling evidence indicates that the shipload of chemicals was deliberately diverted to Lebanon and influence was exerted to impound it in port facilities under the control of Hezbollah. The explosion could have been several times worse, because about 80 percent of the 2,754 tons of ammonium nitrate had already been stolen by the time of the explosion.**

ammonium nitrate sufficient to destroy half the capital was mouldering away in a warehouse, but didn’t lift a finger to ensure that action was taken to monitor it and keep it safe.

Aoun and the political classes demonstrated scant sympathy for the blast victims, who were left to fend for themselves. However, these politicians have gone to immense efforts to protect their own backs, shamefully bickering with each other while the coun-

himself on Bitar’s summons sheet by filing retaliatory charges against Bitar. Sizable demonstrations have called for Oueidat’s resignation.

Reformist MPs visited the office of caretaker Justice Minister Henri Khoury to discuss the port probe, only for these public representatives to be beaten up by unidentified thugs in the minister’s presence.

One MP said: “These aren’t guards, these are the dogs of the justice minister. We

ately diverted to Lebanon and influence was exerted to impound it in port facilities under the control of Hezbollah. The explosion could have been several times worse, because about 80 percent of the 2,754 tons of ammonium nitrate had already been stolen by the time of the explosion.

There is little doubt about which Lebanese entity would want to control and use such vast quantities of explosive chemicals. Significant quantities are

has gone mad,” ran the headline of the pro-Hezbollah newspaper Al-Akhar, which accused him of acting on “American orders, with European judicial support.” MP Ghazi Zoaiter, after being summoned for interrogation, called Bitar “mentally ill.”

Many commentators take it for granted that the blast was a deliberate Israeli strike against Hezbollah assets, and thus conclude that Israel and the Americans are of one mind

## US, Russia’s struggle for Africa takes center stage

Dr. Theodor Karasik

**AFRICA** was a major focus for both the US and Russia last week, with US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov traveling to the continent in a bid to influence key states. The two are fighting over influence in Africa as European states leave the Sahel and China digs deeper into the continent. Africa can be seen within the context of the great power competition framework. For Washington, Africa remains vitally important. Yellen visited Senegal, South Africa and Zambia, while Lavrov visited South Africa, Eswatini, Angola and Eritrea. Lavrov’s visit to the continent was his second in six months.

The US strategy toward Africa is centered on the simple recognition that the continent will shape the future of the global economy. Yellen’s visit was the start of the Biden administration’s efforts to rebuild ties with Africa in the light of China’s rapidly increasing economic presence on

the world’s second-largest continent and Russia’s military and diplomatic foothold in parts of it.

Yellen’s time in Zambia focused on Chinese debt traps and mining interests. The US was working on a formula for rejecting such activity, especially as China digs deeper into key African mining states. The US is reaching out to other European and Arab partners to help “offset” Chinese, and Russian, mining practices by reaching new, transparent agreements. For example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed such an agreement with the UAE as part of Washington’s Africa policy program.

Yellen visited the South African coal-mining province of Mpumalanga and announced more stringent measures to cap the price of premium Russian oil products on the international market. She also asked South Africa to respond to serious violations of sanctions by local business or by governments. Yellen’s warning was meant to be heard in all African capitals. Her com-

ments were accompanied by Washington declaring Russia’s Wagner Group a foreign terrorist organization that is present in various hot spots throughout the continent. This was a firm warning of US and Western resolve. That Yellen made these comments from South Africa was also highly significant.

South Africa, Africa’s most developed economy and which is pivotal to the US plan, also has deep ties with both Russia and China. It raised concerns at the White House in February 2022, when Pretoria announced it would host Russian and Chinese warships and take part in joint naval drills with them off its east coast, near the sensitive area of the Mozambique Channel.

While Yellen focused on warning South Africa, Lavrov visited Eswatini. Eswatini is one of the few countries in the world that recognizes Taiwan, so Lavrov’s presence in the former Swaziland was significant. Eswatini has signed a deal with Taiwan

to put one of Africa’s largest data centers in the country. Lavrov’s visit may interrupt or influence those plans, to the benefit of Chinese tech firms. Eswatini is also near the southern areas of Mozambique, a major focus for many international players.

Lavrov’s visits to Angola and Eritrea ran counter to US interests as presented by Yellen during her Africa trip. Lavrov is searching for continued support for Russia from African states. In the UN General Assembly’s first resolution in March last year condemning Russia’s actions in Ukraine, African countries formed a significant proportion of those abstaining. Eritrea was one of only five countries to vote against the motion, along with Syria, North Korea, China and Belarus.

In both countries, Lavrov visited key Russian cultural monuments as part of Moscow’s soft power outreach. He also held discussions with top Angolan and Eritrean leaders about continuing African support for

Moscow in international forums such as the UN. In Angola, Lavrov discussed building nuclear power plants in the country but, given Western restrictions and possible penalties, the likelihood of actual construction is far off, maybe never.

Nevertheless, in both the Angolan and Eritrean capitals, Lavrov talked about Russian port access. The ports discussion is also highly significant for continuing access to Russian maritime assets that have military value. Moreover, Lavrov’s discussion with Eritrea about Russian access to the port of Massawa is certainly going to raise security concerns, given the proximity of the port to Yemen, but also its centrality to Sudanese logistic lines that are under-going development. This discussion on port access between Russia and key African states is part of an ongoing strategy by Moscow as Western sanctions start to seriously hit.

Meanwhile, Yellen’s visit was a key piece of US foreign policy that needs to be taken seriously by African states. With France

leaving the Sahel and the African continent facing a number of very serious threats, from social inequality to terrorism, there is a strong Western requirement to keep what it sees as negative influences away.

Overall, Yellen and Lavrov were focusing more on the southern part of the continent, excluding the key visit of the Russian foreign minister to Eritrea, which is also significant because of the strategic nature of how Africa is geographically divided. The root causes of Africa’s problems need to be addressed in a factual way, as opposed to through narratives that mask reality. Closer attention to atmospherics, instead of relying on probable information warfare outlets, is important. Violations of sanctions policy by African governments and stakeholders will be punished. Whether those Western sanctions will alter the so-called Eastern assertiveness on the African continent as part of the great power competition is another question.

## Palestine will always be central to Arabs’ beliefs

Ramzy Baroud

**THE** newly released Arab Opinion Index 2022 is yet more proof that Arab societies are diverse in every possible way, from their assessment of their economic situation and living conditions to their take on immigration, state institutions and democracy. There is just one exception: Palestine.

More than three-quarters of all respondents to the poll, which is carried out annually by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Doha, said that Palestine is a cause for all Arabs, not Palestinians alone.

Three important points must be kept in mind when trying to understand this number. First, Arabs are not merely expressing sympathy or solidarity with Palestinians. They are irrevocably stating that the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli occupation is a collective Arab struggle. Second, these views are the same across all sections of society throughout the entire geographic expanse of the Arab world, from the Gulf

to the Maghreb. Third, equally important is that the public opinions that have been examined in the poll come from countries whose governments have either full diplomatic ties with Israel or vehemently reject normalization.

The study is quite extensive, as it included 33,000 individual respondents and was carried out between June and December 2022.

Once again, the Arab people collectively reject normalization with Israel, with Algeria and Mauritania topping the list at 99 percent each. Though some might discount the detailed study by claiming that Arabs inherently hate Israel due to their supposed deep-seated aversion to the Jews, the study also breaks down the reasons why Arab masses have such a low opinion of Israel. When they were asked why they reject diplomatic ties between their countries and Israel, the respondents mostly cited “Israel’s colonial and expansionist policies, as well as its racism toward the Palestinians and its persistence in expropriat-

ing Palestinian land.” Only 5 percent cited religious reasons for their position, but that cannot be dismissed as mere religious zealotry, as many Arabs formulate their views based on the moral values enshrined in their religions; for example, the need to oppose and speak out against injustice.

It must be stated that this is hardly new. Arabs have exhibited these views with an unmistakable consistency since the start of the Arab Opinion Index in 2011 and, one would dare argue, since the establishment of Israel atop the ruins of Palestine in 1948. But if that is the case, why are the latest poll results deserving of a discussion?

While examining the American public view of Russia, the state of democracy in the US or the greatest threat to national security, opinion polls often fluctuate from one year to the next. For example, 70 percent of all Americans considered Russia an “enemy” to the

US last March, compared to only 41 percent in January. The massive jump in two months was not directly related to the Russian war in Ukraine, since Ukraine is not a US territory, but because of the anti-Russia media frenzy that has not ceased for a moment since the beginning of the war.

However, for Arabs, no matter the shifts in media priorities, internal politics, class orientation or any other factor, nothing seems to alter the status of Palestine as their leading priority. In 2017 and 2022, two American presidents visited the Arab region. Both Donald Trump and Joe Biden, respectively, labored to execute a major shift in the region’s political priorities. Biden summed up his agenda at a meeting with six Arab leaders in Jeddah last July by stating: “This trip is about once again positioning America in this region for the future. We are not going to leave a vacuum in the Middle East for

Russia or China to fill.”

None of these self-serving priorities seem to be paying any real dividends.

That said, the pressure to dismiss the centrality of Palestine as an Arab cause does not only come from the outside. It is also guided by the internal dynamics of the region. For example, some pan-Arab news networks, which had put much focus on Palestine in previous years, have been purposefully ignoring Palestine as an urgent daily reality, in favor of other topics that are consistent with the regional policies of host countries.

Yet, despite all of this, Palestine remains at the core of Arab values, struggles and aspirations. How is this possible?

Unlike most Americans, Arabs do not necessarily formulate their views of the world based on the media agenda of the day, nor do they alter their behavior based on presidential speeches or political debates. On the contrary, their collective experiences have made them particularly

cynical of propaganda and fiery speeches. They formulate their views based on numerous grassroots channels of communication, whether using social media tools or listening to the Friday sermon in their local mosque.

The struggle for Palestine has been internalized in the everyday acts of the average Arab woman or man; from the names they choose for their newborn to the quiet muttering of prayers. No amount of propaganda can possibly reverse this.

Though some Arab governments are listening to their people and thus condition normalization on Palestinian freedom and sovereignty, the US and Israel insist on ignoring the Arab masses, as they have done for many years. However, if Washington believes that it can simply compel the Arabs to hate Russia and China and love Israel, even though the latter continues to kill Palestinians and occupy their land, it will be sorely disappointed, not only today but for many years to come.



# We are ‘greening’ ourselves to extinction

**MORE than a decade ago, experts James Althucher and Douglas Sease wrote a book for the Wall Street Journal called Investing in the Apocalypse. They argued that the end of the world is a profitable opportunity for those who know how to “fade the fear”, as everyone else panics. They maintained that when disaster strikes, investors should approach it with the rationale that “no matter how bad things seem, they really aren’t that bad”.**

Well before the COVID-19 pandemic, they advised investing in big pharmaceutical companies as a strategy to reap dividends from global pandemics. They also encouraged putting money into renewable energy systems while ramping up oil production. Today, it seems many have followed Althucher and Sease’s advice. Under the guise of taking action on the pandemic, billions of dollars have been poured into big pharma, instead of public health and policies aimed at preventing another global outbreak. The supposed energy transition that has been undertaken has seen renewable energy production expanded, but there has been no indication that oil and gas are being substituted and ultimately phased out.

What is worse, governments and corporations have teamed up to turn the apocalypse into a money-making opportunity. They have rushed to put forward false solutions to the climate crisis: from the push to replace fuel-engine vehicles with electric ones, to so-called climate-smart agriculture, to protected areas for nature conservation and massive tree planting projects for carbon offsets.

All this trickery is called “greening” and it is designed to profit off of climate fears, not stop climate change. While guaranteeing high returns, this deception is tantamount to the genocide of the hundreds of millions of people who will perish from the effects of climate change within the next century because things are that bad. That is how climate writer Keton Joshi describes the world’s biggest polluters proposing climate solutions. Indeed, what governments and corporations have pushed for in terms of climate action in the past few years are policies that only make the situation worse.

Take carbon offsets – the epitome of “greening”. Acting as real-life “Pass GO and Collect \$200” tickets, they allow some of the biggest climate criminals to go on polluting by engaging in a charade of tree-planting schemes. The logic behind them is that we cannot stop our greenhouse gas emissions immediately because that would “hurt the economy”, so we can instead plant trees that will absorb them and grow the economy through carbon markets – a supposed win-win situation. But this fallacy has been repeatedly exposed. For one, the organisations that are supposed to certify that indeed enough tree-planting has taken place do not have the tools to verify that the declared emissions will definitely be absorbed. Another problem is that many offsetting activities do not actually offset anything.

A recent investigation into the world’s largest carbon standard found that 94 percent of its rainforest offset credits did not actually contribute to carbon reduction. Worse still, it exaggerated the threat to forests included in its projects, while its conservation activities – which yielded some of these credits – involved serious human rights violations, including forced evictions and home demolitions of local people. Even if some of these carbon offset schemes do make a difference in the short term through forest conservation or reforestation, given our current climate reality characterised by ever-worsening forest fires, they can easily just burn to dust and contribute to the greenhouse gas problem. One recent study, for example, found that since 2015, close to 7 million tonnes of carbon was released from wildfires in six forest projects that are part of California’s carbon trading system.

Then there is the fatal confusion between efficiency and ecology. We are being duped to believe that buying more “energy efficient” or “green” products can save the planet. Whether it is a new electric car, an “eco-friendly” condo, a paper straw instead of a plastic straw, or a solar-powered turtle-shaped mega yacht – all are branded as ecological solutions because they are supposedly more energy or materially efficient than the standard alternative. What often hides behind these “green” labels is the large carbon footprint their production generates. Furthermore, “greened” technological solutions often just shift the environmental damage they do to another sector or a distant location.

For example, the growing electric vehicle industry may help reduce carbon emissions but it will also cause a massive jump in the demand for lithium and other minerals. Scientists are already warning about the grave environmental impact the rush for mining lithium may have, including water pollution and loss, toxic waste spills, biodiversity loss and soil contamination. Apart from making climate change worse, these “solutions” also disproportionately harm marginalised groups and Indigenous peoples, as UN special rapporteur Tendayi Achiume has

**Vijay Kolinjivadi**

recently warned. Not only are the impacts of ecological collapse felt more severely by those who encounter racism on a daily basis, but the extraction of minerals needed for “smart” technologies and renewable energy exposes these same people to pollution, violence and displacement.

The argument that “green” solutions provide jobs also rests on weak foundations, especially if the quality of work is considered. As the ILO has pointed out, a large share of employment for the so-called “nature-based solutions” is informal, low-wage, temporary, and exposed to risks, such as unsafe working conditions, child labour and lack of social security. Nature conservation has also fallen prey to the “greening” deception. For years now, large conservation organisations and their corporate sponsors have been pushing the idea that large swaths of land and forests need to be fenced off so we can protect biodiversity and help mitigate the effects of climate change.

Like the carbon offset schemes, this policy is just another way to enable big polluters to continue to pollute by saying: “We are doing something for the planet.” It also enables some – particularly in the tourism and construction sectors – to benefit from the so-called “nature” tourism in which the wealthy pay big money to access fenced-off parks and “experience” pristine nature while staying at luxury real estate projects. And just like other “greening” strategies, this type of nature conservation results in major human injustices. Indigenous peoples from around the world have suffered evictions, dispossession and even killings as they have been forced from their lands to make way for nature conservation projects.

In the Republic of the Congo, the Indigenous Baka people have been brutally oppressed by the guards of a conservation project supported by the UNDP, WWF, the EU, the US and logging and palm oil companies. A UNDP investigation found that members of the community were routinely beaten, some imprisoned, tortured or raped. In the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo, the guards of a national park funded by the US and German governments have also engaged in violent attacks on the Indigenous Batwa people living in its territory. A 2022 report by Minority Rights has produced evidence that at least 20 members of the community have been killed and at least 15 women raped during forced eviction campaigns.

There are countless horror stories like these ones; according to estimates, some 14 million people

have been evicted in this manner in Africa alone. That is why the news that a new conservation scheme was approved at the UN conference on biodiversity (COP15) held in Montreal in December was met with much dismay by Indigenous people across the world. The new Global Biodiversity Framework – also called the 30x30 target – aims to turn 30 percent of the planet into protected areas by 2030. In a letter to COP15 participants, Indigenous peoples stated that the policy “may be the biggest land grab in history and further threaten the physical and cultural survival of Indigenous people worldwide”.

Given that Indigenous peoples reside on territories that hold 80 percent of the world’s biodiversity, it is certain that Indigenous-held land will fall within the 30x30 plan. Evicting them from land they have lived in since time immemorial is hardly an ecological solution. A much better solution would be addressing the biggest cause of biodiversity loss: industrial-scale farming. It destroys the soil, increases desertification, releases huge amounts of greenhouse gases and is linked to deforestation.

30x30 would not curb the damage industrial-scale farming does. If the economic model that enables it does not change, it may even worsen its impact. Restricting land use may raise food prices, artificially inflate the value of land, and encourage further overuse of chemicals and harmful crop and livestock breeding practices to increase production. This would have devastating consequences for small-holder farmers who produce more than 30 percent of the world’s food and tend to use more sustainable practices than industrial farms. Perhaps the biggest problem with apocalypse investing and its “greening” deception is that they dominate the global conversation on climate change and biodiversity at official forums (such as COP15) and are presented to the public as “making progress” on environmental issues.

We also have people like billionaire Bill Gates who say they are “very optimistic” about the future. Of course, they are! Since 2020, the top 1 percent has collected nearly two-thirds of all new wealth, as the world has faced a deadly pandemic and massive climate-change-related disasters. The optimism of the wealthy and the fake climate solutions pushed on us are quite effective in convincing people that climate change will be tackled. That is because they provide reassurance that we will not have to give up the comforts we enjoy and because they also give us, the consumers, “a choice” – to go “green” or not. Indeed, we can now

choose between a renewable or an oil-powered turtle-shaped mega yacht.

Making the “green” choice then leaves us satisfied that we are “doing something” about climate change. But driving an electric car, putting your organic produce in a tote bag and turning down your heating or air-conditioner by one degree is not going to save the planet. Let’s have the courage to face this fact. What would make a difference is developing mass transport and substantially reducing car ownership; closing coal mines and ending oil and gas exploration; promoting decentralised and community-managed renewable energy systems; doing away with industrial-scale monoculture farming; and supporting smallholder and Indigenous-led agroecological systems that have been shown to enhance nutrition, biodiversity and quality of life.

Of course, the system we have in place now favours apocalypse investors, who would do everything in their power to resist real climate action. That is why, as Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, has eloquently pointed out, “we can’t save the world by playing by the rules because the rules have to be changed”. We need to confront the manipulation of false solutions, discredit them, and move on to changing rules premised on profiting from apocalypse.

Reparative justice is one approach to changing the current system. Embracing reparative justice means giving power back to the people to invest in the needs of their communities by supporting autonomous organisation and mutual aid efforts for affordable housing, food production, energy, and transport systems. Reparative justice for reducing carbon emissions means demanding that those companies and governments historically responsible for climate change pay for the damage they have caused. Present and future victims of climate change should get to collectively decide how these reparations are to be spent.

Reparative justice also means supporting agroecological practice and restoring diverse food-growing cultures that have been erased or lost due to industrial monoculture farming. Reparative justice also means that biodiversity loss would be tackled by guaranteeing the status of Indigenous people as stewards of their land and empowering them to protect it based on their knowledge, spiritual wisdom and traditions. Achieving all this will not be easy and we will have to face the power of governments and corporations – the apocalypse investors. But through human solidarity and collective action, we can fight back and invest in our survival.



## Rohingya are drowning at sea. Asia’s leaders are to blame

**IN early January, a boat with 185 Rohingya refugees washed ashore on the coast of Indonesia’s Aceh province. They had spent weeks at sea in desperate conditions, fleeing cramped and overcrowded camps in Bangladesh in search of a better life. More than half were women and children.**

**Tun Khin**

Refugees from Bangladesh who have risked their lives on dangerous sea journeys. Close to one million Rohingya refugees live in camps in Bangladesh.

While the Bangladeshi government has generously offered a safe haven to those fleeing, the camps are cramped and overcrowded, and Rohingya have almost no opportunities to get an education or a decent job. A boat journey is often a last, desperate attempt to build a life of dignity elsewhere. In 2015, the Asian “boat crisis” gripped global headlines, as hundreds of refugees lost their lives at sea when governments

to maritime refugee operations that focus on search and rescue and share responsibility across borders. It is crucial that no one fleeing persecution is refused entry; instead, refugees should be given the shelter and medical care they need, while their right to seek asylum must be respected.

At the same time, member states of the Bali Process – an international mechanism set up in 2002 in part to coordinate action on maritime refugee and human trafficking – must ensure that they make use of the frameworks established to protect those fleeing violence and death. All 10 members of ASEAN as

***It is also immoral behaviour, and regional states must change course immediately to prevent even more lives from being lost at sea. Rohingya people have taken to boats from Myanmar for years to escape the genocide we are facing in our native Rakhine state. In recent years, it is increasingly refugees from Bangladesh who have risked their lives on dangerous sea journeys. Close to one million Rohingya refugees live in camps in Bangladesh. While the Bangladeshi government has generously offered a safe haven to those fleeing, the camps are cramped and overcrowded, and Rohingya have almost no opportunities to get an education or a decent job. A boat journey is often a last, desperate attempt to build a life of dignity elsewhere.***

sands of Rohingya, including women and children, resorted to perilous boat journeys in 2022.

In Aceh, it is often local fishermen, driven by compassion for desperate refugees, who have taken it upon themselves to rescue boats stranded in the Andaman Sea. As a Rohingya who has campaigned to end the genocide against our people for most of my life, I could not be more grateful to the Acehnese for their selflessness and bravery. At the same time, it is deplorable that common people have had to step in to do what governments in the region are supposed to do. From India to Indonesia, states in South and Southeast Asia have for years turned a blind eye to the plight of Rohingya “boat people”, refusing refugees a chance to land on their shores and even pushing their vessels back to sea.

This is illegal – a violation of the non-refoulement principle under international law bans nations from sending people back to where they are at risk of serious human rights violations. It is also immoral behaviour, and regional states must change course immediately to prevent even more lives from being lost at sea. Rohingya people have taken to boats from Myanmar for years to escape the genocide we are facing in our native Rakhine state. In recent years, it is increasingly

cracked down on human trafficking networks. After a relative lull in sea journeys, numbers have picked up again in recent years. In 2022, UNHCR estimates, at least 1,920 Rohingya took to boats – a sharp increase from 287 in 2021.

At least 119 people were reported dead or missing last year, not including a further 180 people who are presumed dead after their boat went missing in December. Conditions at sea are horrendous. Survivors have described being stranded on cramped boats for several months, with little or no access to food, water or medicine. They are often abused and extorted by human traffickers, who in many cases have charged refugees their life savings for deck space.

While members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other regional governments have promised not to abandon refugees at sea, many among them – including India, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia – have in reality sealed their borders to refugees. Sometimes, they have provided a minimum of food and medical care, only to push boats back to sea again. Many deaths in 2022, and the harrowing stories of those who survived, must serve as a wake-up call for regional states to once and for all take concrete and coordinated action. ASEAN must take a collective approach

well as South Asian nations like India are a part of the Bali Process. In 2016, after the “boat crisis”, its members adopted the Bali Declaration where they pledged to strengthen cooperation on search and rescue efforts and on finding legal pathways for refugees. So far, however, this has amounted to little more than a paper promise. At the moment, regional countries are also refusing to face up to the root cause of this crisis: the treatment of the Rohingya in their home country, Myanmar.

As long as the genocide against Rohingya continues, our people will feel compelled to risk their lives to find safety and dignity elsewhere. Even ASEAN members who have criticised the Myanmar military since the attempted coup in 2021 engage in business with Myanmar, which helps fund the military and the crimes they commit against us. They should instead support all international justice processes to hold Myanmar officials responsible for crimes against the Rohingya to account.

So far, Aceh’s fishermen have shown the humanitarian leadership that ASEAN has shunned. All Rohingya are grateful for their compassion. Yet as long as ASEAN members turn a blind eye to the causes and consequences of the Rohingya crisis, the boats will keep coming and the suffering will continue.

### Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.

## It’s not going well for Britain’s new prime minister

**RISHI Sunak, Britain’s prime minister, has a plan for the new year. In a speech in early January, he set out an agenda to resuscitate the country and save the Conservative Party, now in free fall. “We will halve inflation, grow the economy, reduce debt, cut waiting lists and stop the boats,” he intoned.**

You’d be forgiven for hearing a note of desperation. Mr. Sunak, after all, entered office with a mountain to climb. The cost-of-living crisis is just the start: Wherever you turn, strife seems to rise to meet you. To name but a few, there’s the health care crisis, the housing crisis (both ownership and rental), the education crisis, the child care crisis, the transport crisis, the climate crisis and, not least, the constitutional crisis threatening the end of the union with Scotland. In Britain, it’s far easier to document what isn’t teetering on the brink of collapse.

Even a great statesman would need more than three months to make headway on such deep-rooted social ills. But the early signs are not good. Far from fulfilling his promise

to bring “stability and unity” to both the country and his party, the prime minister has done the opposite. A new era may have begun, but it’s not going well.

For a start, Mr. Sunak has done little to alter his reputation as a cautious technocrat. Plans for the economy, unveiled in November, announced major spending cuts but delayed the bulk of them until 2025. Balancing between further immiserating the public and appeasing the markets whose ire brought Liz Truss’s premiership to such a dramatic end, it wasn’t a death blow to the nation’s economy. But it merely maintains a failing system.

And the situation is dire. British households are in the midst of the biggest fall in living standards since the 1950s, yet Mr. Sunak seems to have little idea of how to reverse it. Vague promises to bring down inflation do little to bring actual improvement to people’s lives. Add a dubious effort to coax recent retirees back into work and plans to deregulate the City of London, some of which have already been abandoned, and the overall impression is of a leader

**Moya Lothian-McLean**

both misfiring and weak.

It doesn’t help that Mr. Sunak began his tenure with unnecessary missteps, not least the reappointment of Suella Braverman as home secretary less than a week after she was sacked for a serious security breach. Ms. Braverman’s fixation on deepening an already inhumanely hostile environment for migrants clearly proved more persuasive than her track record of incompetence, gaffes and sheer ignorance. The subsequent bungled handling of a bullying scandal, where Mr. Sunak refused to dismiss a cabinet member accused of serial misconduct, further frayed the prime minister’s reputation almost before he’d begun.

Struggling to manage his party, Mr. Sunak has abandoned key policies in response to internal pressure. In December, for example, the government scrapped plans to introduce sorely needed mandatory home-construction targets for local councils, saving Mr. Sunak from a backbench rebellion. To head off another, the prime minister relaxed a ban on onshore wind farms that

he’d previously supported.

Yet when it comes to his biggest battles, Mr. Sunak has already shown a penchant for inflexibility rather than negotiation. In the face of the biggest wave of public sector strikes in a generation, the prime minister’s refusal to hammer out deals with union bosses has seen him scorned as “missing in action.” Instead, Mr. Sunak has unveiled an assault on the right to strike, introducing new laws that would require “minimum service levels” in key services and leave unions liable for legal action if they are not met.

It’s an approach that puts him further at odds with public opinion, where support for striking public sector workers is high. It also betrays a lack of political common sense. Even Margaret Thatcher handed public sector workers a 25 percent pay rise upon her arrival in office in 1979, to end rolling strike action. Discontent with Mr. Sunak’s approach has earned him a rare rebuke from the monarchy. The freshly minted King Charles III used his Christmas Day address to praise the “health and social care professionals

and teachers and indeed all those working in public service.”

Mr. Sunak’s heavy-handedness could even hasten the end of the United Kingdom. A fight over a new gender recognition bill passed by the Scottish government, which would make it easier for trans people to change their legal gender, snowballed into a constitutional catastrophe after Mr. Sunak used a veto to block the law. It was the first time the veto had been employed since it was established in 1998, a decision taken without robust justification. Scotland’s first minister vowed to “vigorously defend” the bill in court, potentially pouring gasoline on an already rising independence movement.

After the tumult of 2022, in which Britain became a byword for political and economic malfunction, many hoped Mr. Sunak would be a safe pair of hands. The first three months of his tenure, though, have been a disappointment. For Mr. Sunak, facing an unhappy country, a restive party and an opposition leading in the polls, it looks like a long year ahead.





## Financing through PMYB&AL Scheme: Bank of Punjab, Akhuwat Microfinance and NRSP sign agreements

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Bank of Punjab signed agreements with Akhuwat Islamic Microfinance and National Rural Support Program (NRSP) to extend interest-free financing under the Prime Minister Youth Business & Agriculture Loan Scheme (PMYB&ALS). Through this arrangement, BOP became the first bank to provide financing under PMYB&ALS for onward lending to small business owners and agriculture sector.

Dr. Kamran Shams (CEO - Akhuwat Microfinance), Dr. Rashid Bajwa (CEO - NRSP), and Mr. Farid Ahmed Khan (Group Chief Corporate & Investment Banking - BOP) signed the agreements. Zafar Masud (President & CEO - BOP), and senior management of the entities witnessed the signing ceremony.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Kamran Shams said, "The PMYB&ALS model of offering Shariah-compliant and interest-free financing is an ideal program for upliftment of marginalized

segments of the society. Akhuwat will use the program to continue its vision of empowerment and inclusion of marginalized segments of the society".

Dr. Rashid Bajwa said, "NRSP and BOP have successful track record of joint delivery on financial inclusion projects. We are proud to be the first partners of BOP for the PMYB&ALS scheme. We will use this scheme to reach out small businesses and farmers for their economic and social upliftment.

Zafar Masud said, "We

are proud to be the first bank signing financing agreements to start disbursements under the scheme. BOP has always taken the lead in Shariah-compliant and conventional financing products that are industry standards for financing to micro-lending and agriculture finance of the country. This program perfectly aligns with BOP vision of offering inclusive and socially responsible banking."

The meeting ended with prayers for success of the program.

## Fauji Fertilizer Company announces final results for year 2022



### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited (FFC) has announced its financial results for the year ended December 31, 2022 in its Board of Directors meeting held on Monday.

The year 2022 was full of challenges ranging from socioeconomic, geopolitical, governmental and environmental factors. The year witnessed galloping inflation, double digit inter-

est rates and sharp devaluation of Pak Rupee besides heavy floods during second half of the year, negatively impacting costs of the Company. The profitability was further impacted by the levy of super-tax resulting in an effective tax rate of over 40%, besides the exemption of output GST.

Efficient treasury management and increased dividend payout by associated companies resulted in highest-ever other income of Rs 14.4 billion

compared to Rs 7.9 billion last year. This enabled the Company to achieve a profitability of Rs 20 billion (despite a supertax levy of Rs 5 billion) with an EPS of Rs 15.76 compared to Rs 17.21 last year. The dollarized profitability of the Company however declined by 29% to USD 97 million compared to USD 137 million last year. As we step into 2023, the acute shortage of foreign currency reserves in the Country pose severe challenges towards import of essential materials, spares, chemicals and other inputs required for maintaining urea production levels.

In view of declining gas pressures, the Company along with other fertilizer manufacturers and the gas supplier has undertaken gas Pressure Enhancement Facility (PEF) project which involves significant capital outlay and is essential for sustained fertilizer production. Therefore, availability of foreign exchange is critical for timely implementation of the sustainability project and continued plant operations.

The company also declared the final dividend of Rs 3.15 per share, with an aggregate distribution of Rs 12.13 per share for the year 2022.

## So-called experts destroyed country's economy: PEW

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) Dr. Murtaza Mughal has said that the so-called economic experts impersonating as economic hitmen to fulfill their political agendas have destroyed the economy of the country.

In a statement issued here on Monday, he said that for couple of years, the country has been under the control of plunderers and one economic hitman after another ruining the country's economy and there is no one to stop them.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that our representatives are traveling around the world for a billion dollars to hear denials from everywhere which is embarrassing. Political and other elite have more money in their foreign accounts than in Pakistan's exchequer, he added.

He further stated that the rulers have committed political suicide by expelling former Finance Minister Miftah Ismail otherwise the economic situation would have been stable.

The stubbornness of one person has stalled the IMF program for four months since the expulsion of the former finance minister which has resulted in a loss of almost seven billion dollars, he maintained.

Miftah would have kept the IMF programme intact and the price of petrol and diesel would not have increased by 35 rupees per liter, which would bring another flood of inflation in the country, he observed.

The President PEW said that in a few days, the value of the rupee has been reduced by fifteen percent, which is a clear failure of the policy of the PML-N to

stabilize the rupee.

The country is facing gross mismanagement of the ruling coalition and the situation has come to an extent that now onions are considered a luxury.

The government has not been able to do anything except change the NAB law. Overseas Pakistanis are not ready and are sending money through legal channels and they are preferring Hundi which is causing huge losses to the country while it will take time to restore their confidence, he noted.

Dr. Mughal recalled that the reluctance of the former prime minister to strike the IMF deal and its decision to disregard the tenets of the agreement with the donor last year are said to be populist decisions that derailed the IMF programme that drove the country to the

brink of sovereign default.

Compelled by the twin deficits, the incumbent government revived the IMF Programme and former finance minister Miftah Ismail tried to follow through on the deal by hiking fuel and energy rates.

But, the incumbent Finance Minister avoided IMF's dictates that further deepen the crisis before surrendering to the IMF's wishes. The footdragging by the PDM government in complying with the IMF's conditions was also because of populism, he said.

Talks with IMF are about to begin and Pakistan should urgently complete the 9th review as the government has no choice but to bow to the fund's demands as it has refused to make any concessions due to its continuous breach of promises.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Seven ships namely, MSC Beijing, MSC Deigo, Sea Crystal, White Purl, Serinity Gas, Al-Thakira and Hafnia Excel carrying Containers, Palm oil, LPG, LNG and Mogas, berthed at Qasim International Containers Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal, Engro Yopak Terminal, SSGC LPG Terminal, Pakistan

Gasport Terminal and FOTCO Oil Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Maria Topic and Hafnia Excel carrying Coal and Gas oil also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the same day.

A total of 11 ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a containers ship

'MSC Deigo' left the Port on Monday morning, while 02 more ships, CL Dayang He and AAI Prelude are expected to sail on today in the afternoon.

A Cargo volume of 161,476 tonnes, comprising 143,133 tonnes imports cargo and 18,343 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 3,270 Containers (2,191

TEUs Imports and 1,079 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours. There are 15 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, 03 ships, Maria Topic, Hong Cheng and MSC Beijing & another ships 'Maersk Boston' carrying Coal, Wheat and Containers are expected to take berths at PIBT, FAP and QICT on Monday.

## Business community annoyed over unexpected rise in POL prices

LAHORE (INP): The Businessmen Panel (BMP) of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) while strongly rejecting the unexpected and huge raise in the rates of oil products in the country, has stated that the government has dropped a fuel bomb on the trade and industry by raising Rs35/liter oil rates in one go, followed by the electric hike shock of Rs4.46/unit under quarterly adjustment by NEPRA one week ago.

Former president FPCCI and Chairman BMP, Mian Anjum Nisar on Monday said that the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) had approved increase in tariff

up to Rs4.46 per unit on account of quarterly adjustment for the first quarter of financial year 2022-23. The tariff hike will place a burden of Rs4.938 billion on trade and industry on account of variation in capacity charges, variable operation and maintenance cost, and the impact of fuel cost adjustment on transmission and distribution losses for the first quarter (Jul-Sept) of FY23.

The FPCCI former president said that the decision would prove detrimental to the industries due to high cost of doing business and will also open the floodgates of inflation. In addition to making the electricity bills costlier and unaf-

fordable for the consumers, the unexpected hike in oil prices would escalate prices of all household goods being widely used across Pakistan, he added.

He said that the burden of the surge in oil price in the international market is immediately transferred to masses by the government but the process of reduction in the prices is always very slow.

He said that despite an inevitable increase in the prices that will unleash a strong wave of inflation, the government remains short of clinching a deal with the International Monetary Fund. On the other hand the NEPRA has increased the electricity

rates mainly on account of fuel prices, capacity cost payments and the impact of rupee devaluation against the US dollar.

Mian Anjum Nisar condemned the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority's decision to increase electricity tariffs, stating that the burden of power theft, mismanagement, and inefficiencies cannot be shifted to consumers on the pretext of fuel adjustment.

He said that Pakistan's industry had been harmed by the high cost of doing business, which discouraged investment in capacity and capability and called for easing the burden of heavy taxes on the power

sector.

The BMP's Chairman said that the economy of Pakistan, particularly the SMEs are striving to deal with the economic crunch and need to get support. Instead of providing subsidies or waivers, it is unjust to overburden the industries with a hike in the cost of production. An increase in petroleum products costs will further weaken the economic environment which is already under threat on various fronts.

He said that the oil rates have been on the declining trend in the international market now, but the government instead of passing on this benefit to the public, had increased their rates,

which is very unfortunate.

If fuel would be heavily taxed, the entire economy would suffer unprecedentedly, he said, adding that petrol and HSD are two major products that generate most of the revenue for the government because of their massive and yet growing consumption in the country.

The economy is already in a precarious situation, this constant back and forth will only increase volatility, when we ought to be heading for stability, he added.

He said that the cost of doing business and cost of production have shot up to the level of uncompetitive-ness. The cost of borrowing was huge and capital

financing has become more expensive.

The business leader said Pakistan exports cannot compete with China, Bangladesh and India where power tariffs were 7-9 cents, as the country's exports have been witnessing a major setback in present days due to the high cost of electricity, which has become a major stumbling block in industrial development and boosting exports.

He said that fuel and electricity are regarded as the lifeline of any economy and play a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of a country.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that industries need low-

cost energy to bring down their cost of production, keeping their goods competitive in the international market. He said that the government, in present circumstances, would have to reduce the price of electricity along with the cut in the prices of petroleum products to bring down the cost of doing business and to promote industrial activities.

He said that business activities were already in decline and in this situation the government should take serious steps to cut the cost of doing business, as hike in oil rates would further enhance the cost of production, making transport more expensive.



LAHORE: CEO Akhuwat Microfinance Dr. Kamran Shams, CEO NRSP Dr. Rashid Bajwa and Group Chief Corporate & Investment Banking BOP Farid Ahmed Khan signing agreements.

### PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 579 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Monday, losing 576 points, a negative change of 1.43%, closing at 39,871.27 against 40,450.53 points the last closing day day.

A total of 78,508,160 shares were traded during the day as compared to 191,327,163 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs.4.611 billion against Rs.7.119 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 336 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 87 of them recorded gains and 223 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 26 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Pak Refinery with 21,142,838 shares at Rs 13.66 per share, Cnergyco PK with 11,806,498 shares at Rs 3.89 per share, and EPCU with 6,695,317 shares at Rs 47.01 per share.

Data Textiles Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Re 1.00 per share price, closing at Rs 5.08, whereas the runner-up was PICIC Insurance Limited with a Rs 0.09 rise in its per share price to Rs. 0.68.

Pak Agro Packaging Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 0.99 per share closing at Rs 6.76, followed by Samba Bank Limited with Rs. 0.90 decline to close at Rs. 6.5.

### Rupee extends losses against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exchange rate of the Pakistani rupee depreciated by Rs 6.03 against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Monday and closed at Rs 269.63 against the previous day's closing of Rs 262.60.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan, the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 268 and Rs 270.5 respectively.

The price of the euro appreciated by Rs 7.11 and closed at Rs 292.71 against the previous day's closing of Rs 285.60, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen increased by 06 paisa to close at Rs. 2.07, whereas an increase of Rs. 8.87 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British pound, which was traded at Rs. 333.81 as compared to its last closing of Rs. 324.94.

The exchange rates of the Emirates dirham and Saudi riyal increased by Rs 1.87 and Rs 1.91 paisa to close at Rs 71.82 and Rs 73.40 respectively.

## Emirates operates its first milestone demonstration flight

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Emirates has operated its first milestone demonstration flight on a Boeing 777-300ER, powering one of its engines with 100% Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF). The flight took off from Dubai International Airport (DXB), and was commanded by Captain Fali Vajifdar and Captain Khalid Nasser Akram, flying for more than one hour over the Dubai coastline.

The demonstration flight powered by SAF holds particular significance as the UAE declares 2023 the 'Year of Sustainability'. The year will showcase the UAE's commitment to seek innovative solutions to challenges such as energy, climate change and other issues related to sustainability. The flight supports collective industry efforts to enable a future of 100% SAF flying and help advance the UAE's sustain-

ability objectives.

Emirates' demonstration flight, the first in the Middle East and North Africa to be powered by 100% SAF, supports broader efforts to reduce lifecycle CO2 emissions as the industry looks to scale up its use of SAF. The flights will also help to refine the playbook for future SAF demonstrations, and will also support future certification where 100% drop-in SAF fuel is approved for aircraft. Currently, SAF is approved for use in all aircraft, but only in blends of up to 50% with conventional jet fuel.

Emirates worked alongside partners GE Aerospace, Boeing, Honeywell, Neste and Virent to procure and develop a blend of SAF that closely replicates the properties of conventional jet fuel. At each blend ratio, a host of chemical and physical fuel property measurements were carried out. After multiple lab tests

and rigorous trials, they arrived at a blending ratio that mirrored the qualities of jet fuel. Eighteen tonnes of SAF were blended, comprised of HEFA-SPK provided by Neste (hydro processed esters and fatty acids and synthetic paraffinic kerosene) and HDO-SAK from Virent (hydro deoxygenated synthetic aromatic kerosene). The 100% SAF supplied one GE90 engine, with conventional jet fuel supplying the other engine.

The test flight further demonstrates the compatibility of the specially blended SAF as a safe and reliable fuel source. The promising outcome of this initiative also adds to the body of industry data and research around SAF blends in higher proportions, paving the way for standardization and future approval of 100% drop-in SAF as a replacement for jet fuel, well above the current 50% blend limit.

## EFU Life receives global recognition by GIZ



### F.P. Report

KARACHI: EFU Life Assurance Ltd, Pakistan's leading life insurance company, receives global recognition for Inclusive Insurance by German Government's Social Development Agency, GIZ. The award was presented in a ceremony in Manila, Philippines, attended virtually by EFU Life. The award is in recognition of the successful implementation of the program "Regulatory Framework Promotion of Pro-poor Insurance Markets in Asia" (RFIA - Asia) and the achievements on Inclusive Insurance leading to a social impact in Pakistan.

EFU Life's Digital &

Inclusive Insurance pillar currently provides insurance cover to the vulnerable socio-economic segments and has a partnership with multiple financial & non-financial institutions such as Telcos, Banks, MFIs, NGOs, Insurtech, Domestic Payment Schemes, Fintech, Aggregators, and several Startup ecosystems.

As part of the key performance indicators for the Digital & Inclusive Insurance Segment, EFU Life focuses on making the customer journey simplified, promoting digital financial literacy amongst the customers, digitalizing, and reducing the turnaround times for claim payments, offering simplified products with value-added services such as health tech and discounts, and using technology as an enabler. Through these continued efforts, the company was successfully able to protect 3 Mn lives in 2022 and create an impact by making claim payments to date to 10,000 families.

EFU Life is committed to its inclusive insurance business model which contributes towards inclusive growth by providing relevant and affordable insurance solutions to promote financial inclusion in Pakistan and will continue to play an active role in increasing insurance penetration in Pakistan.





In brief

30 km Cycle Race held

BAHAWALPUR (APP): The first cycle rally was held from the Kunde Bridge in the Cholistan area to Derawar Fort in connection with International Cholistan Desert Rally. More than 30 cyclists including females participated in the event. The main objective of organizing the cycle rally was to create awareness about the upcoming International Cholistan Desert Rally. The rally was meant to give the message to the youth to participate in healthy activities. The participants of the rally started from the Kunde Bridge and reached Derawar Fort after covering a distance of 30 km. The prize distribution ceremony was held at TDCP Cholistan Desert Resort.

Vijay retires from int'l cricket

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Indian opener Murali Vijay on Monday announced his retirement from international cricket. The 38-year-old Vijay played 61 Tests, 17 one-day and nine T20 internationals during a decade-long stop-start career for India. "Today with immense gratitude and humility, I announce my retirement from all forms of international cricket," Vijay wrote on Twitter. "My journey from 2002-2018 has been the most wonderful years of my life for it was an honour representing India at the highest level of sport." He made 3,982 Test runs including 12 centuries and a best of 167 against Australia at Hyderabad in 2013, but could never cement his place in the Indian XI. His last Test was in December 2018. A solid opening batsman with good technique, Vijay had successful outings in the Indian Premier League T20 tournament and won two titles with Chennai Super Kings in 2010 and 2011. The Chennai-born player also had short stints with Essex and Somerset in the English county championship. Vijay is set to start a new innings and said, "I am excited to announce that I will be exploring new opportunities in the world of cricket and the business side of it."

Copa del Rey semis

MADRID (Agencies): Real Madrid will take on Clasico rivals Barcelona in the Copa del Rey semi-finals while Athletic Bilbao will face Osasuna following Monday's draw. The reigning Spanish champions will host Barca before visiting the Camp Nou, in the only round of Spain's national knockout competition held over two legs. Carlo Ancelotti's side reached the last four after overcoming local rivals Atletico Madrid 3-1 in extra time in the quarter-finals, while Barcelona defeated Real Sociedad 1-0. "It's a huge game, not only for the Copa del Rey, it's a big game across the world," Barcelona's sporting director Jordi Cruyff said in reaction to the draw held near Madrid. Cruyff said his players had already moved on from their 3-1 win against Real Madrid in this month's Spanish Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia. "We start from zero and it will be a wonderful battle," he added. Athletic Bilbao - who have reached the Copa del Rey semi-finals for four seasons running -- gained their place in the final four with a 3-1 victory over Valencia in the last round. Their opponents Osasuna knocked out Sevilla in the quarter-finals with a 2-1 win after extra time. Real Madrid's trip to Morocco next week to compete in the FIFA Club World Cup will clash with the usual date for the semi-final first legs and forced a rescheduled calendar.

3rd Allama Iqbal Polo Tournament

Remington Pharma outplay SQ Seagold

LAHORE (APP): Remington Pharma defeated SQ Seagold Polo team by 8-6 on the seventh day of the 3rd Allama Iqbal Polo Tournament, sponsored by Lahore Smart City here at the Jinnah Polo Fields on Monday. From Remington Pharma, Hamza Mawaz Khan emerged as hero of the match as he played excellent polo and converted five superb goals out of eight while Ahmed Zubair Butt scored the remaining two goals for the winning team. Raja Jalal Arsalan hammered five goals and Qasim Khan struck one for SQ Seagold Polo team. SQ Seagold opened the match with a field goal to take 1-0 a lead but Remington Pharma then made a strong comeback and fired in four back-to-back goals to earn a healthy 4-1 lead by the end of the first chukker. The second chukker was evenly poised as both the sides banged in a brace each with Remington Pharma still enjoying a 6-3 lead. Both the sides continued to play well and succeeded in converting one goal each in the third chukker, making it 7-4 in the end of the third chukker. The fourth and last chukker saw SQ Seagold playing better polo by converting a brace against one goal by Remington Pharma, who won the crucial encounter by a close margin of 8-6. John Fisher and Amirreza Behboudi supervised the match as field umpires. Three important matches will be played tomorrow (Tuesday). In the points table, Remington Pharma team, in Pool A, has won both of the two games and has four points. SQ Seagold Polo team has played three matches, won two and lost one and also has four points. The 4 Corps team has lost one game while BN Polo team has played two matches and lost both. In Pool B, Diamond Paints won all three matches and earned nine points while Master Paints/Newage Cables won two out of three and got four points. FG Din Polo won one out of three and got two points, Platinum Homes/Master Paints team has also won one out of three games and has two points. Inara Polo/Black Horse Paints team has played two games and lost both.

Pakistan Hockey Federation delegation calls on DG SBP

LAHORE (APP): A high-profile delegation of Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) called on Director General sports Punjab Muhammad Tariq Qureshi here at his office at National Hockey Stadium on Monday. Hockey's talent hunt programme at various educational institutions of the province and promotion of hockey at grassroots level were discussed in detail during the meeting. PHF Chief Selector former Olympian Kaleemullah Khan, Member Executive board former Olympian Nasir Ali, PHF Secretary Haider Hussain, Associate Secretary Zahid Shah and Legal Adviser Ali Ashfaq were the part of the PHF delegation. Speaking on the occasion DG,SBP said that Sports Board Punjab will utilize all of its resources for tracing fresh talented hockey players from across the province under its Talent Hunt Programme. "We can find numerous potential youngsters from our schools and colleges through our Talent Hunt Programme," he added. Muhammad Tariq Qureshi further said that hockey is our national game and its revival is among top priorities for us. "Sports Board Punjab is fully cooperating with PHF for the revival of hockey which happened to be Pakistan's national game. We will continue to provide every possible assistance to our national game in future as well," he added. He further said that Olympian Kaleemullah Khan and Olympian Nasir Ali are world acclaimed stars of hockey. DG, SBP said Sports Board Punjab has organized several male and female hockey events in the recent past to provide maximum playing opportunities to young talented players of the province. "The revival of hockey is a joint mission for all of us. We will have to join hands for this great task and we are hopeful that Pakistan will regain its lost glory in hockey in near future," he added. Director General Sports Punjab further said that the foundation stone of Hockey High Performance Centre has been laid. "We are providing world class facilities in our state-of-the-art Hockey High Performance Centre". The PHF delegation acknowledged the valuable contributions of Director General Sports PunjabMuhammad Tariq Qureshi for the growth of hockey. They expressed their determination to put upcombined efforts for the revival of hockey in the country.

West Indies academy players recur selection in West Indies C'ship squads



ST JOHN'S (INP): Five members of the West Indies Academy have earned places in franchise teams for the first and second rounds of the upcoming West Indies Championship four-day first-class tournament, starting today 31 January. The West Indies Academy players that have been selected are Kirk McKenzie, left-handed batter for Jamaica Scorpions; Kevin Wickham, right-handed batter for Barbados Pride; Ashmead Nedd, left-arm spinner for Guyana Harpy Eagles; and Teddy Bishop, right-handed batter for Windward Islands Volcanoes. Kelvin Pitman

the right-arm fast bowler has been listed in the 13-member provisional squad named by the Leeward Islands Hurricanes. Graeme West, CWI's High-Performance Manager who has overseen the West Indies Academy programme since its inception in 2022, anticipates good performances from the players when the tournament bowls off next week in Grenada and Antigua. "It is really good to see players being selected to participate in the West Indies Championship. It shows the investment made by CWI in the development of these young players is bearing fruit. The West

Arthur set to be appointed Pakistan team director

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Mickey Arthur and the PCB are close to agreeing a deal that will result in Arthur's return to the Pakistan men's side - but as team director and not, as previously, head coach. Talks between the two had ended three weeks ago when the PCB announced it was moving on in its search for a replacement for Saqlain Mushtaq, the outgoing Pakistan coach. The two sides had failed to reach an agreement on how such a role could work, given Arthur has a long-term deal with Derbyshire, which he does not want to end. But last week, Najam Sethi, the interim head of the PCB, revealed that he was continuing the pursuit of Arthur. ESPNcricinfo understands that an arrangement is close to being finalised now, with Arthur potentially starting from April 1 as team director. That designation will make for an unusual management structure - at international level at least - in which Arthur will not be with the Pakistan team on every tour but will have a handpicked group of support staff running operations. Lead among the support staff is expected to be former Pakistan fielding coach - and one-time head of their High Performance Centre - Grant Bradburn, in the role of a high-powered assistant coach. There will also be three coaches for batting, bowling and fielding, but no traditional head coach. During the English county season, Arthur will not be hands on with the team; Pakistan tour Sri Lanka this July for instance and are



scheduled to host the Asia Cup in September. But once the county season is over, Arthur is expected to be with the side at high-profile commitments such as the ODI World Cup in India in October-November this year and the Test tour of Australia later in the winter. The duration of such a contract is one of the points still being worked out but both sides believe Pakistan's schedule is such that it allows for such an arrangement to work. One of the more interesting appointments under Arthur is likely to be that of Rehan-ul-Haq, the general manager at the PSL franchise Islamabad United and a prominent broadcast analyst. He is expected to be, on paper, the team manager but with a brief much broader than the more traditional administrative role of managers. The role might be more akin to a chief of staff for Arthur, driving the team environment -

Rehan is also one of the men credited with creating the data-driven approach at Islamabad United, two-time winners of the PSL. Arthur was head coach of the Pakistan side between 2016 and 2019, a generally successful white-ball period that included a Champions Trophy triumph in 2017 and the transformation of their limited-overs sides. Having languished behind other Full Members after a poor showing at the 2016 T20 World Cup, Arthur helped transform a T20 side under the leadership of Sarfaraz Ahmed and took them to the number one spot in the ICC rankings. There were notable Test results as well, though the red-ball side proved harder to transform. One big, early defeat at the 2019 World Cup meant Pakistan failed narrowly to reach the last four of the event, and Arthur was replaced by Misbah-ul-Haq soon after. More significantly, Arthur's return will reunite him with a number of players in whose development he played a key early role in that first stint, not least the captain Babar Azam. Arthur persisted with Babar during a tough initiation into Test cricket and oversaw his white-ball rise. Others such as Sarfaraz, Hasan Ali, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Fakhar Zaman and Shadab Khan have also spoken in the past of the impact Arthur has had on their careers. Arthur had a stint with Sri Lanka after the Pakistan job and has since been with Derbyshire.

Rory McIlroy beats Patrick Reed to win Dubai Desert Classic



DUBAI (Agencies): Rory McIlroy emerged victorious after a tense tussle with Patrick Reed in the last round of the Dubai Desert Classic. The world number one birdied the final two holes to shoot a four-under 68 and finish on 19 under to win by one shot. Northern Irishman McIlroy led the field by three shots overnight but Reed (65) picked up six shots in his first 11 holes to wipe out that advantage. McIlroy responded with three birdies and, after Reed birdied 18 to draw level, holed a 20-footer to win. Heavy rain caused sufficient delays to force play into a fifth day in Dubai. And the ending could not have been better scripted for the DP World Tour with McIlroy holding off LIV Golf's Reed on a first Monday finish in 35 years at the Emirates Golf Club's Majlis course. "Mentally it was very tough," McIlroy told BBC Sport, referring to his rivalry with Reed. "I felt like I could have let my emotions get in the way of what I was trying to do because of who was up there on the leaderboard. "I expended a lot of

and 13th to keep pace with Reed, who eagled the par-five 10th and picked up two more birdies on the 11th and 13th. They were level on 18 under after 14 holes, and McIlroy blinked first. He missed the green on the short 15th and failed to get up and down for par, dropping his first shot of the round. However, up ahead Reed had problems after a wayward drive on the par-four 16th. He chipped sideways out of trouble but took three more from there to drop his first shot of the day. Another errant drive on the par-four 17th cost Reed the chance of making a birdie and McIlroy moved one clear by almost driving the green and then two-putting from the front edge. Reed drew level with a birdie on the last, watched by McIlroy who was back down the fairway deliberating whether to take on the lake that protects the front of the green, after narrowly avoiding water with his drive. Mindful of the fact he had hit balls into the water both on Sunday and in the final round last year, McIlroy chose the safer option. He then hit a solid wedge shot in and let out a tremendous roar after holing the birdie putt. "I was in two minds but with what happened yesterday and last year, I wanted to go wedge and give myself an opportunity," he said, after claiming his third Dubai Desert Classic title. "It was nice to be able to play the percentages and for it pay off. It's a great start to the year." Australia's Lucas Herbert closed with a six-under 66 to finish third on 16 under.

‘No grouping witnessed in Pakistan cricket team’ claims Afridi

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Former Pakistan skipper Shahid Afridi said he had not witnessed any grouping within the current Pakistan team during his brief tenure as the interim chief selector.

Afridi, who served as the chair of the interim selection committee for the recently concluded New Zealand series, while rejecting any alleged grouping among the players of the national team, admitted the fact that the liking-and-disliking culture did exist. "There was no grouping found in the Pakistan team," he said in a private ceremony on Monday. "I admit that captain's liking and disliking do exist." "It had happened in the past and remained so during my tenure as well" he maintained. Meanwhile, Afridi also expressed his interest in coaching the player at the under-19 level, saying that is where one should work really hard. "I had expressed my wish for a coaching role in the under-19," he said. "It is welcoming to host an exhibition match of the Pakistan Super League in Quetta's Bugti Stadium. We have seen players from Balochistan emerging in the under-19 team" he added. Furthermore, the star cricketer also extended his condolences to the victims of the recent tragedies in Bella and Kohat and condemned the bomb blast in Peshawar today.

Amir equals Afridi's record in BPL

SYLHET (Agencies): Pakistan's veteran pacer Mohammad Amir has equalled Shahid Afridi's record in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) as he became the joint third-fastest to take 50 wickets in the league's history. Amir, who is representing Sylhet Superstars in the ongoing edition of the BPL, achieved the landmark in the home side's fixture against Khulna Tigers on Monday. The left-arm pacer struck on the first delivery of his second over as he deceived Mahmudul Hasan Joy with a slower delivery. With his first wicket of the ongoing 30th match of the BPL, Amir joined the elusive list of bowlers, who took fewer innings to take 50 wickets in Bangladesh's marquee league. Former West Indian bowler Kevon Cooper leads the list as he achieved the landmark in just 30 matches, followed by his compatriot Dwayne Bravo (34). Meanwhile, Pakistan's star all-rounder Afridi, who was at the third spot, has been joined by countrymate Amir after the latter took 50 wickets in 35 BPL matches. It is worth mentioning here that Amir has thus far, bowled two overs in the ongoing match and took one wicket at the cost of 17 runs.

Ronaldo will play again in Europe - Al Nassr boss

RIYADH (Agencies): Al Nassr coach Rudi Garcia has said Cristiano Ronaldo will return to Europe after his spell in Saudi Arabia. Ronaldo, 37, joined Al Nassr earlier this month on a contract through to the summer of 2025 -- a deal worth \$200 million per year, making him the highest-paid football player in history. Sources told ESPN last week that Al Nassr officials are hopeful of extending Ronaldo's deal with the hope he will one day retire at the club. However, Garcia said he expects the Portugal international to return to Europe before the end of his career. "Cristiano Ronaldo is a positive addition, as he helps to disperse defenders," Garcia said. "He is one of the best players in the world. He will not finish his career at Al Nassr, he will return to Europe." ESPN sources added that Al Nassr are determined to use Ronaldo's experience at the top of European football with Manchester United, Real Madrid and Juventus to become a powerhouse of Saudi and Asian football.

Djokovic back at top of ATP rankings; Sabalenka No. 2 in WTA

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Novak Djokovic's Australian Open championship returned him to a rather familiar spot on Monday: No. 1 in the ATP rankings. His four-place rise from No. 5 to replace Carlos Alcaraz at No. 1 is the largest jump to the top spot in the 50-year history of the computerized rankings for men's tennis.

"You never know how much more time you have left, so, of course, I nurture and celebrate these moments of becoming No. 1 again and Grand Slam champion," the 35-year-old Djokovic said after beating Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-3, 7-6 (4), 7-6 (5) in the final at Melbourne Park on Sunday night, "even more than I have, maybe ever in my career. I don't take it for granted." Aryna Sabalenka's first major title moved her up from No. 5 to a career-best-equaling No. 2 in the WTA rankings, behind only three-time major champion Iga Swiatek. Ons Jabeur, twice a finalist at Slams in 2022, went from No. 2 to No. 3, followed by No. 4



Jessica Pegula, No. 5 Caroline Garcia and No. 6 Coco Gauff. The player Sabalenka beat in Saturday's Australian Open final, Elena Rybakina, makes her top 10 debut at No. 10, up from No. 25. This marks Djokovic's 374th week leading the ATP, adding to his record. He earned a 10th title at the Australian Open and tied Rafael Nadal with 22 Grand Slam trophies. Alcaraz slid to No. 2. He had become the youngest man to be No. 1 when he took over at age 19 after winning the U.S. Open last September. Alcaraz missed the Australian Open because of a leg injury. Nadal, who hurt his left hip flexor during a second-round loss to Mackenzie McDonald of the United



States, dropped from No. 2 to No. 6. Tsitsipas went from No. 4 to No. 3 because of his run in Melbourne; he would have been No. 1 for the first time if he had managed to win the title. Casper Ruud, a two-time Grand Slam runner-up who lost in the second round to Jensen Brooksby of the United States, went from No. 3 to No. 4. Andrey Rublev is No. 5 after getting to the quarterfinals. Cracking the top 20 for the first time is Tommy Paul, a 25-year-old American who reached his first Grand Slam semifinal before exiting against Djokovic. Paul's showing in Melbourne lifted him 16 spots from No. 35 to No. 19. He is one of 10 U.S. men in the top 50, something that last happened in 1995.





## In brief

### ANF recovers over 16 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting four counter-narcotics operations seized over 16 kg narcotics, 180 intoxicated tablets and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed ANF and ASF in a joint operation at Bacha Khan International Airport Peshawar recovered three charras-filled capsules from the possession of a Dubai-bound passenger resident of Bannu going on flight no PA-610. In another operation near Burhan Interchange, ANF recovered 12 kg charras from the possession of a female drug smuggler resident of Mardan. The spokesman informed that in third operation near Faizabad Bus Terminal Rawalpindi, ANF seized 180 intoxicated tablets concealed in a laptop and netted an accused resident of Khyber. ANF and Ranger conducted a raid in Kharadar Karachi area and recovered two kg heroin and two kg charras from the possession of an accused resident of Peshawar. The spokesman said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

### IRSA releases 47,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 47,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 45,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1493.97 feet and was 95.97 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,000 cusecs while outflow as 25,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1129.05 feet, which was 79.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 9,700 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 35,000, 41,900, 30,500 and 10,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 10,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 4,800 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Residents of twin cities enjoy weather

ISLAMABAD (APP): The residents of federal capital have been enjoying weather, following a recent rain shower along with local public holiday on Monday. Talking to APP, a resident Shabana Hassan, said that the public holiday had provided residents with the opportunity to fully enjoy the weather and to make the most of their time with loved ones. She said that the rain had added to the charm of the already picturesque twin cities, providing a peaceful and rejuvenating atmosphere for residents. Another resident Touqeer Akram said that with the amusing weather conditions, residents were making the most of the opportunity to take the sights and sounds of the rain. "Whether it's a hot snack or simply taking in the beauty of the season, the twin cities are enjoying this winter" he added. He further said that the rain had also brought a sense of calm and peace to the city, providing a much-needed break from the hustle and bustle of daily life. On social media, residents were sharing their favorite aspects of the rain, including the beauty of the city.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting on the Telecom Sector at the Finance Division.

## Tariq Cheema blames mafias for wheat hoarding

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for National Food Security & Research Tariq Bashir Cheema on Monday said the government procured only 20 percent of total wheat produced in the country and blamed various mafias for hoarding and provinces for not checking the exorbitant prices of wheat in their respective jurisdictions.

Responding to a motion, on the floor of the Senate, moved to discuss the nonavailability of wheat and its exorbitant rates, he said that the unnecessary crisis of flour in the country was mainly because of less than required release of wheat by the provinces to the flour mills.

He said the private sector purchases 80 percent

of wheat and sells it at exorbitant rates.

He said the federal government was trying its utmost to meet the needs of provinces, but provinces were not fulfilling their responsibilities as they were duty-bound to provide wheat to the people. Province also has a price check mechanism in their respective jurisdiction.

He said there was a shortage of 17,000 bags in the federal capital, however, the federal government was trying to overcome the shortage by increasing supplies.

He said federal government has to provide wheat to the armed forces, Pakistan Air force (PAF), Pakistan Navy, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Gilgit-Baltistan

(GB), and others.

He blamed the long negligence of successive governments to agriculture sector as the reason for shortfall.

He said Kissan package was not being implemented in its true letter and spirit by the successive government.

Earlier, speaking on the motion, Jamat-e-Islami (JI) Senator Mushtaq Ahmed asked for the transportation of wheat to be allowed. Tahir Bizenjo of the National Party (NP) urged the government to take measures to overcome the shortage of wheat and rein in various mafias plundering the people. Molvi Faiz Muhammad of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) urged concrete measures to overcome the wheat shortage.

## Shazia, Shahzain condemns suicide blast in Peshawar Police Lines mosque

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program, Shazia Marri Monday strongly condemned suicide blast in the Peshawar Police Lines mosque.

In her message, she expressed deep grief and sorrow over the martyrdom in the Peshawar blast and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured.

Recognizing the efforts of police, she said that the police had made immense sacrifices in the war against terrorism. The minister also appealed to the citizens for blood donations to save

lives of the injured. She said that the terrorists had nothing to do with Islam.

The minister also expressed deep grief over the drowning of children in Kohat's Tanda Jam and expressed her condolences to the families. Shazia Marri also expressed condolences to the families of those who died in the Lasbela bus accident.

She prayed to Allah Almighty to elevate ranks of those who died in the accident and give fortitude and patience to the bereaved family.

Meanwhile, Federal Minister for Narcotics Control Nawabzada Shahzain Bugti Monday

strongly condemned the devastating bomb blast in a mosque at Peshawar Police Lines, terming it a cowardly act of terrorism. In a statement, he said the terrorists will never be succeeded in their nefarious designs to destabilize Pakistan. It was very unfortunate that innocent worshippers were targeted by the anti-state elements, he added. He said such barbaric terrorist attacks cannot shake the nation's resolve for a peaceful Pakistan. The Minister prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed souls in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved families to bear the irreparable loss with fortitude.

## Second Islamabad Marathon hosts runners from all cities of Pakistan, diplomatic community

ISLAMABAD (APP): Hundreds of participants from different cities along with the diplomatic community based in the country participated in the 2nd edition of Islamabad Marathon.

The second edition of the Marathon was organized by enthusiasts from the running community Islamabad Run With Us (IRU), a news release said.

The weather conditions were perfect for the marathon run which was 42.2 KM distance whereas a great increase in the number of participants from last year was witnessed. Moreover, to create awareness and encourage masses to vaccinate children aged under 5 years against polio, IRU collaborated with Pakistan Polio Eradication Programme and dedicated the event with the theme Race To End Polio in Pakistan.

The Islamabad Marathon 2023 was organized with full support of Islamabad Capital Territory Administration, District Health Office and Capital Traffic Police.

Qasim Naz, the founder of Islamabad Run With Us said that the main objective of the event was to promote healthy lifestyle, promote marathon tourism and project a positive image of Pakistan all over the world. With the beautiful Maragalla Hills in the backdrop, the runners also passed through the scenic jungle at Shakarparian as they completed their 21.1 and 42.2 km distances. Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan, Jakob Linulf also ran the Full Marathon (42.2 km) and was thrilled to be at the biggest running event in Islamabad. He said, "Me and my brother enjoyed the enthusiasm shown by Pakistanis of all age groups coming from different cities to participate in the marathon organized by 'Islamabad Run with Us'. Such initiatives

serve as a great way to raise awareness about the importance of physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices. I hope Pakistanis integrate such healthy activities into their everyday lives."

The event was very well organized that attracted huge attendance from families including elderly and children who gathered to support the runners. The running event included five different categories to cater to encourage vast participation of all ages and of different athletic abilities. Full marathon of 42km, half marathon of 21 km, 10 km and 5 km running were the categories that were primarily chosen for the adults and teenagers.

A special category of 'Kids Fun Run' for children under 14 years was also organized to encourage children, and they loved their participation with great enthusiasm. To encourage the runners Cash Prizes were given to top 3 winners from all categories. The Chief Guest Hamish Young, representing Pakistan Polio Eradication Programme in his address, lauded the efforts of Islamabad Run with Us for making the marathon such a big success. Mr. Young not only emphasized on the importance of choosing a healthy lifestyle but also stressed on creating awareness and take actions to inspire others to eradicate polio. District Health Officer, Dr. Zaeem Zia also fully participated in the running event by completing the half marathon and emphasized everyone to work together to end polio in Pakistan. Resident Representative of UNDP Pakistan, Knut Otsby, who is a regular member of the running community in Islamabad also ran the 10km race.

## Azam Tarar asks opposition to join hands against terrorism

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, while strongly condemning the blast at Peshawar's Police Lines Mosque on Monday, stressed the need to join hands against the menace of terrorism in the country.

Replying to various points raised by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate Dr Shahzad Waseem, the minister said the entire nation had to unite against the menace of terrorism which the country was facing for the last four decades.

"We have lost not only hundreds of thousands of innocent citizens, personnel of laws enforcement agencies, but also suffered loss of billions of dollars in the

war against terrorism," Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar said.

He said the government was committed to purge such unscrupulous elements (terrorists) from the country.

"In past, we fought valiantly and courageously," he said.

Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar regretted and asked the opposition leaders to give concrete suggestions rather mere criticizing the government.

He went on to say that the past government did not only "breach the constitution but also implicated their opponent in false cases" during its rule.

## Excise dept holds E-katchery to resolve masses' problems

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director Excise and Taxation Department (E&TD) Bilal Azam organized E-katchery for the redressal of public complaints and queries through social media platform here on Monday.

While responding to public complaints Bilal Azam said that the purpose for holding E-katchery was to resolve citizens' grievances at the earliest and ensure speedy justice at their door-step.

During the session Bilal Azam said that the deadline to submit token tax fees for vehicles is February 15, citizens are requested to pay vehicle taxes without any plenty charges before the deadline.

He further said that Excise office has reduced the registration fees for commercial vehicles to one percent which was four percent previously.

Azam said that another initiative by E&TD is RFID (Radio-

Frequency Identification) number plates for the registration or transfer of vehicles is in pipeline and would be launched soon. Responding to a query Bilal Azam said that Excise teams are conducting raids against agent mafia on regular basis, he urged the public not to approach agents, and directly visit his office if they have any issues regarding the transfer and registration process. He said visitors can easily pay taxes through mobile App and the transfer process could be completed in 10-15 minutes which does not require any agent or third party.

He added that one window operation, Qmatic system installed in Excise office for public facilitation. To another query, he suggested public to register vehicles in the same city where they live or drive in routine.

While answering a query Bilal

Azam said that a duplicate smart card has nothing to do with the value of a vehicle, he said that as per law previous card would be cancelled after issuance of duplicate copy, to avoid misuse in future.

Bilal urged people to transfer vehicles timely, the seller should bound purchaser to transfer before the expiry to Bio-matric receipt to avoid plenty or any other issue. He also addressed purchasers to get bio-matric receipt before buying any car.

To another query, he said that a new place has been identified for physical inspection of vehicles to ease public.

During the E-Katchery session all public queries were answered and issues were resolved timely. Bilal Azam directed E&TD staff to facilitate citizen at the maximum level.

## ADR tool to minimize burden on judicial system

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Legal Aid Society and Musaliha International Center for Arbitration and Dispute Resolution, in partnership with the Islamabad High Court and the Federal Judicial Academy, arranged an Internationally Accredited Civil and Commercial Mediation Training Program in Islamabad last year.

The purpose of the training was to create a cadre of professionally trained mediators who could be used to resolve disputes through Alternative Dispute Resolution under the Islamabad ADR Act 2017. A renowned global mediation training provider, Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (London) was engaged to deliver the training to 50 leading advocates from Islamabad nominated by the Islamabad High Court.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) refers to the different constitutionally-recognized methods through which parties (individuals and entities) can resolve disputes without a trial. Common ADR methods include mediation, arbitration, conciliation and neutral evaluation.

They are flexible, cost-efficient, time-effective, and give the parties more control over the process and the outcome of an ADR process. Pakistan faces a



grave threat to the effective dispensation of justice.

With 2.2 million pending cases across Pakistan and only 3,067 judges, the average life of a civil dispute is approximately 6-10 years. This overwhelming burden on the justice system not only delays justice but leads to insufficient time being given to overburdened judges to produce prudent judgements of a high quality.

Realizing the potential social impacts of this, the Government and the Judiciary of Pakistan have made the institutionalization of Alternative Dispute Resolution a national priority.

A Task Force created by the Supreme Court of Pakistan to institutionalize ADR across all territorial jurisdictions in the country (ADR is a provincial subject) and the expeditious measures of the Islamabad and Sindh High Courts in

this regard are a testament to this. Based on the results announced this week, Islamabad ADR Landscape has now 39 successfully Internationally Accredited CI Arb Civil and Commercial Mediators who have passed the assessment and will be doing commercial and civil mediation.

On the other hand, 15 trained mediation advocates will be providing services and support to the judicial system by disposing of appropriate civil, commercial and family matters.

These 50 trained mediators specialized in commercial, banking, telecommunications, oil and gas, Property, Corporate, and Employment Cases are now members of MICADR's accredited mediator team thus ultimately part of Islamabad ADR Landscape. Courts will now be able to refer

matters to these Mediators for quick and cost-effective dispensation of cases and parties in disputes will also be able to directly engage the services of these mediators.

It is one of the biggest cohorts of (ADR) practitioners made with efforts of LAS in Islamabad to whom the judiciary will refer cases through courts to play an operative and supportive role as envisioned in the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act, 2017 (ADR Act, 2017) and ensure that ADR is institutionalized in Islamabad.

Under ADR Project, LAS has successfully conducted similar training programs in the past for law faculty, paralegals, and judges in Islamabad and various districts of Sindh to promote ADR and ensure enough supply of ADR practitioners which ultimately reduces the backlog of cases in courts.



ISLAMABAD: Heavy machinery being used during expansion work of Islamabad Expressway.



Tumor operation carried out

KUNDUZ (Agencies): A brain tumor surgery has been completed for the first time in a private hospital in this province, said local officials of the province. The doctors of the hospital were able to successfully remove the brain tumor from the patient's head after 4 hours. The doctors removed 200 grams of brain tumor from the head of this 65-year-old patient. The officials of the said hospital call this operation a unique accomplishment in the history of medicine in Kunduz.

Five drug dealers arrested

KBAUL (Agencies): The police arrested 5 drug dealers from three provinces. The counter-narcotics police officers, during separate operations arrested two people from Sar-i-pul and two others from Laghman, and another person, was arrested in Jawzja on charges of dealing drugs, said the Interior Ministry in a statement. In the meantime the counter-narcotics police have collected 26 drug addicts from the provinces and took them to the treatment centers, the statement added.

ISIS-Khorasan increases its attacks on Chinese Projects in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Since August 2021, China has increased its diplomatic relations and economic investments with Afghanistan's de facto government. In the recent past, Islamic State-Khorasan and other terror outlets in Afghanistan have targeted these significant investments.

Sources reported that an attack on Chinese projects is considered a kind of retaliation for the cruel behaviour of the Chinese government against the Uyghur Muslim population in China.

Earlier in January, the Chinese company- China Petroleum Economics and Information Research Center (CPEIC) signed the

extraction agreement of the Amu oil field with the Taliban-ruled government.

The investment amount on the said project would be more than USD 700 million, with a 20% share of Afghanistan within three years. This deal is a significant investment in Afghanistan's since retook of power by the current regime in the country.

In December, the terror attack in a Chinese-run hotel resulted in the injury of several Chinese nationals, forcing them to leave the country immediately; it has been said that ISIS-K claimed the attack. Subsequently, the attack on Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry was thought to be

targeting a Chinese delegation was also claimed by the same group.

The Chinese officials immediately shared their concerns with the Taliban's government to ensure the complete security of Chinese nationals, institutions and projects in the country.

On the contrary, the security of Chinese projects, citizens, and companies remain a challenge in the country. However, Afghanistan's security institutions always ensure the security of Chinese citizens and investors. They strongly reiterated that they would not allow any groups or entities to use Afghan soil to launch operations against such targets.

People complain of high electricity bills

KABUL (TOLOnews): Some residents of Kabul criticized the increase in electricity bills in the last month. They said that in the last month, every 24 hours people have electricity for only two hours, but their electricity bills have increased in comparison with other months.

"We have electricity for one hour, we can't even charge our phones, we don't have power in this harsh winter, this problem covers the country, especially Kabul," said Roya, a Kabul resident.

"In the past month, we had electricity for two hours at night, we were just filling the water tank but now the electricity bill comes to 3500," said Mansoor, a Kabul resident. Meanwhile, the former head of Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat said that the reason for the increasing electricity bill is the people's high use of electric energy and the estimation of the bill by the employees of Breshna company.

"There was a violation by previous Breshna Sherkat employees; unfortunately, it's still happening now, in winter the highways are not good, and employees can't go everywhere and make bill estimates," said Amanullah Ghalib, former head of DABS.

Meanwhile, Breshna Sherkat rejects the extra charge from electricity consumers.

"We call on people if they have any doubt about their electricity bills to take a picture from their meter and compare it with their electricity bills, if there are any problems share them with us," said Hekmatullah Akhundzada, Head of DABS.

Afghanistan buys a large part of its electricity needs from Central Asian countries and Iran, and the recent electricity shortage in Kabul and some provinces of the country has aroused the criticism of the citizens of the country.

Over hundred of people dead in extreme cold thousands of livestock lost in country

KABUL (Agencies): The Acting Minister of Disaster Management in a meeting with the Turkish ambassador in Kabul, said that over hundred people have died in the country due to the cold weather and nearly 80,000 livestock have been lost so far.

Mullah Mohammad Abbas Akhund, the Acting Minister of Disaster Management met with Cihad Erginay, the Ambassador of Turkey in Kabul and Farid Ahmed Zia, the representative of the Red Crescent of the country in Afghanistan, according to the Ministry's statement.

Minister of Natural Disaster Management, besides talking about the problems of the people of Afghanistan in the cold winter and the death of a number of our compatriots, mentioned the problems of the residents of the Pamirs of Badakhshan, said: food and non-food aid needs to be



transferred for them.

He said that a team of medics has been sent to the location in cooperation with the Aga Khan Foundation through Tajikistan to investigate the situation.

For his part, the Turkish ambassador pledged to provide more assistance to the people of Afghanistan.

The representative of the Turkish Red Crescent said during the meeting that since the earthquake in Barmel and Gyan Paktika districts a month ago, regular food assistance has been provided to 1 thousand families every month and 30 thousand families Aid has already been provided in other parts of the country.

He said that they have plans to start the construction work of nearly a hundred houses in two villages of Paktika for the earthquake victims of this organization and eleven thousand other families in twenty-five provinces.

Protesters urges for imposition of global sanctions against Sweden



BAGHLAN (Agencies): The city of Pul-Khumri, the center of Baghlan, and several districts of that province witnessed massive protests in response to the burning of a copy of the Holy Qur'an by an extremist Swedish politician.

Hundreds of Baghlan residents, religious scholars, ethnic leaders, and youths in the center and several districts of this province staged a massive demonstration in response to the burning of a copy of the Holy Qur'an by a Swedish politician.

The protesters asked the Islamic countries not to remain silent in the face of

this great crime, because the result of such dangerous acts will end. they also demanded the imposition of global sanctions against Sweden.

Meanwhile, thousands of residents of the city of Maymana, the center of Faryab, in a protest against the desecration of the Holy Qur'an in Sweden, started protests on Sunday.

The residents of the city of Faryab, condemned this act of the enemies of Islam and demanded that the perpetrators of this unforgivable crime be punished.

Several scholars and students spoke in this gathering and invited people to unity and solidarity, condemned the burning of the Holy Qur'an, the life-giving book in Sweden, and asked Islamic countries to raise their voices against this extreme Swedish politician.

Aid distributed to needy families in Logar

LOGAR (Agencies): The local officials of Logar province said that the World Food Programme (WFP) has distributed food to over three thousand needy families in that province.

The district governor of Mohammad Agha said that in this assistance, a certain amount of flour, cooking oil, lentils, and salt was distributed to each family.

About \$1.7b collected in revenue in last 10 months: Deputy PM

KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Prime Minister's office for Economic affairs said that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan with substantial management in the economic sector has been able to make more significant achievements in some fields corresponding to last year.

In the last ten months of the current year, about 1.7

billion dollars have been collected and the export level has risen to 1.7 billion dollars. A report by the office of Deputy prime minister b for economic affairs said with the efforts of the Islamic Emirate, the collapse of the banking sector has been deterred and the trust of the citizens is increasing day by day.

Despite the continued

freezing of financial support and restrictions in the country's banking sector, the value of the "Afghani" against foreign currencies has been kept constant, and certain steps have been taken in the field of electronic governance, the report added.

About eight hundred thousand government employees receive their salaries

from the internal revenue budget every month, according to the report.

Meanwhile, the World Bank has said in its latest report that the price of food and fuel products has decreased in Afghanistan, the value of the Afghani has remained stable against foreign currencies, and the amount of exports has increased significantly.

Poverty stricken Khadeja seeks support for survival

TALOQAN (Pajhwok): An elderly Khadeja wanders his disabled husband on three wheeler in Taloqan City, the capital of northern Takhar province, begging for survival.

She asked the acting government and aid providing agencies to help her in addressing her problems.

It is a cold winter day in Takhar province, Khadija, whose husband had lost both legs as a result of the recent wars, was looking for a piece of bread to feed her children and her disabled husband during these cold nights, but getting a piece of bread is difficult for her.

Khadija hugged her smaller child, raids her disabled husband bicycle and wanders in the streets of Taloqan city from the early morning until evening to beg and avoid to starve in this cold weather.

"As a result of the recent wars, my husband, who was a common man got injured and disabled on both her legs.

I have to look after them, the weather is very cold and I have to endure all these difficulties to feed my five children, all of whom are girls, and a disabled husband," she said.

Khadeja said she lived in a rent house in Taloqan and so far no organization provided them with financial support of aid.

She said the outcome of daily wandering in the muddy streets of Taloqan was only receiving few breads, which sometimes fills her family's stomach and sometimes they sleep hungry.

She said she was tired of fighting and destruction in the country.



"I wish that I will never witness war and make any family miserable again. Because the war has not benefited the people except for the negative consequences," she said.

Khadija, who is tired from the continuation of the miserable life, said, "I have reached old age, and after this, how and for how long will I be able to carry my disabled husband on a wheelchair from dawn to the evening on streets, and in this way, I will be able to support the family?"

Referring to the illness and deafness of her husband she said: "Continued poverty and illness of my husband has made my life darker. Sometimes I ask people for help by washing clothes for people, and most of the time by carrying my disabled and sick husband on the roads, knowing that this will not cure any of my

pain. With the passing of each day the difficulties of living are bothering me that I am trying to get a piece of bread at this old age."

She asked the government to support vulnerable families and provide them with all kind of support.

Khadeja's husband Syed Ameerullah said: "War was the reason behind my disability. Now I have no option what to do in this harsh winter and unpleasant situation."

He also asked government and aid providing agencies for support.

Takhar Work and Social Affairs Director Mullah Saifullah Mubarez said efforts were on to address the problems faced by disabled and less fortunate people. He added aid providing agencies cooperation will also be sought to address these issues.

Economy Minister meets EU Chargée d’Affaires in Kabul

KABUL (BNA) Country's Acting Economy Minister Qari Din Mohammad Hanif met with European Union EU Chargée d’Affaires Raffaella Iodice in Kabul.

In a meeting, the EU Chargée d’Affaires in Kabul said that the EU is striving to stay with the

Afghan government and people in the long term, and provide support in various sectors where it is needed, according to the Ministry statement.

The issues that have arisen recently on women's education and work; We hope that these issues will

be solved and a real solution will be sought for the continuation of women's education and work. Mrs. Raffaella added saying this issue depends on economic stability in Afghanistan.

For his part, the Acting Minister of Economy hailed the humanitarian aid from the European Union and the world, saying that this aid cannot solve the problems of the Afghan people in the long run.

These aids should take a development form, and attention should be paid to infrastructure issues such as the construction of electricity dams, standardization of

the agricultural system, and the creation of standard cold storage facilities for the storage of Afghan products, Minister Hanif added.

Economy Minister said that the culture of pressure has not had good results in history and on the contrary, it increases tensions.

He expressed hope that the world will interact well with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and cooperate for the development of this country. Minister Hanif, said existing pressures and punishments increase the challenges and there is a need to solve problems through dialogue.

Polio vaccination bampaign started



KABUL (Agencies): Local Public Health Officials of Zabul informed saying a four-day polio vaccination campaign in the province has being. In the ceremony organized for this goal, Dr. Abdul Hakeem Hakeemi, the head of public health of Zabul province, said that in this four-day campaign, 200,000 children under 5 years of age will be vaccinated against polio.

He asked for help from

all government organs and the public in the implementation of the polio vaccine.

Meanwhile, a WHO official in Zabul Dr. Mohammad Omar said that WHO will fight against the polio disease and vowed to deliver the polio vaccine to all parts of Zabul.

Lately, the Ministry of Public Health announced the start of polio vaccination in 16 provinces of the country.

Afghan leather-made bags, shoes, sandals, wallets, belts and other things with their special elegant designs have special customers even in foreign countries.

But some makers of leather products in Kabul complain about their decreased sales.

Fareshta Hashimi, owner of Fereshta Hashimi leather products' company, told Pajhwok Afghan News recently their sales had decreased.

She established her company with \$1,000 capital three years ago and currently she is an instructor and four girls are working in Hashimi company.

Fareshta Hashimi said: "Prior to the political change in the country, our business was quite good, at that time we had 11 employees, but now because of low sales, their number has decreased to five".

In the past, she said, they would sell 50 bags every week, but now they could not even sell one bag in a week.

But she added the dwindling sales had not upset them and they still continued their work in the hope that their business would bounce back.

Haji Mohammad Tahir, owner of Sultan Leather

Products Company in Kabul city, said he has been in the business since 50 years and their company produced different leather belts, backpacks, wallets and bags.

"Our sales have decreased by 80 percent since the political change of August 2021."

He said they would sell products worth 100,000 af\$ daily in the past, but now the sales had declined to only 5,000 af\$ daily.

"Our leather products are expensive while people's economic situation has deteriorated, that is why our sales are down", he said.

The prices of their leather products had been normally high since the past, but the prices of similar imported products were much lower, he said:

"The Chinese bags and shoes are very cheap compared to Afghan products because of their low quality, the price of a pair of shoes and a bag we produce ranges from 3,000 af\$ to 5,000 af\$".

He said local products were expensive because raw hides were exported to other countries and then imported back as ready leather to Afghanistan because there were no factories to produce leather from animals' skins in the country.

Ahmad Fardin Ziaayee, head of Handicrafts Products Department, said some locally made leather products were exported to other countries, but the problem was that there were no enough leather processing facilities in the country.

"There are a few facilities for traditional leather production in some parts of our country," he said.

Ziaayee clarified leather produced in foreign countries and then imported to Afghanistan was very expensive.

He also confirmed the decline in sales of leather products and added the Islamic Emirate was supporting domestic products and the cabinet had decided that all governmental bodies must purchase and use domestic products.

Ziaayee urged other Afghan traders and businessmen to establish skins and leather processing factories as well.

Sherbaz Kaminzada, Director of Chamber of Industries and Mines (CI&M), told Pajhwok Afghan News: "We encourage the leather production sector, but unfortunately all leather is imported from other countries while the raw skins are exported to other countries for processing. When the skins are processed to leather, they are imported back from other countries like Pakistan and India".

"It would be a great work for our country if someone invests in leather production sector, our chamber is ready to talk with such entrepreneurs and to contact the officials of Islamic Emirate to encourage them to create facilities for such investors".

Kaminzada believed investing in skin and leather processing and production sector will generate many jobs opportunities as well.





ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi visiting different stalls at the ‘GB Dream Road Show’, organized by Gilgit Baltistan Government.

## Pakistan will continue to be a leading voice for oppressed: Hina

GENEVA (APP): Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar on Monday said that with the country’s human rights progress on an upward trajectory, Pakistan will continue to be a leading voice of the vulnerable and the oppressed. “From drafting the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Convention on Racial Discrimination to establishing the Human Rights Council, Pakistan has remained and will continue to be a leading voice of the vulnerable and the oppressed,” she stated here at the 4th Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Pakistan. The minister of state said that as an ardent supporter of multilateralism, Pakistan has consistently advocated dialogue, consensus, cooperation, and mutual respect as preferred vehicles to advance the global human rights agenda. “Today, I am pleased

to report that my country’s human rights progress is overall on an upward trajectory. We continue to aspire for a progressive and pluralistic society, which puts a high premium on respect for the human rights of everyone, in the words of our founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah and I quote “as equal citizens of one State”, she maintained.

The minister said that Pakistan’s 4th national UPR report was prepared through an inclusive, consultative process involving all national stakeholders. Critically, this report was an outcome of their extensive efforts during the last five years to implement the recommendations emanating from the country’s 2017 UPR, she added. To implement these recommendations, Ms. Khar said that the Federal Government closely consulted with all provincial stakeholders,

civil society, and academia.

“We also benefitted from international best practices in certain areas. I thank all those who contributed to this national endeavor,” she added. The minister of state said that in line with the country’s constitutional framework, Pakistan’s democratic governance structures, as protectors of human rights, have grown from strength to strength. “This is visible in the shape of an independent judiciary, robust parliamentary traditions and free media,” she added.

The minister of state further said that Pakistan was also proud of its vibrant civil society. “With our independent judiciary and legal community, civil society has played a vital role in public awareness- raising and advocacy about inclusivity, accountability, and transparency,” she mentioned.

### Alvi calls for investing in human resource for GB’s uplift

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has called for investing in human resource for development of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB).

Addressing the “GB Dream Road Show 2023” here in Islamabad on Monday, he stressed on implementing the ideas to uplift the people of the province. He underlined the importance of community participation for the development of the province.

Highlighting the tourism opportunities in the province, Dr Arif Alvi asked the authorities concerned to improve infrastructure for providing better services to the tourists. He said information technology sector can also play a pivotal role for progress the people of province. He stressed people of GB need to adopt modern techniques of agriculture to gain maximum cultivation from their land.

The President expressed hope that Gilgit-Baltistan will make progress with exception talent and hard work of its people. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khursheed reiterated his government’s resolve to bring the province at par with other areas of the country. He said our government is focusing on providing education to the people of the province. He said our provincial government will fulfill shortage of teachers in schools within four months.