

Eight injured in N Waziristan

NORTH WAZIRISTAN (PPI): At least eight people were injured when unidentified assailants attacked the residence of a police official in Ghulam Khan Tehsil near Pak-Afghan border. Police said gunmen attacked the ASI's residence at 4am, targeting the official and his family. After the firing when the injured were being taken to a hospital for treatment, a blast took place in the vehicle in which at least eight people were injured including ASI Aminullah.

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# Pakistan to continue assisting quake-affected people of Turkiye, Syria: PM

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that Pakistan would continue assisting the quake-affected brethren and sisters of Turkiye and Syria by sending the relief aid.

He said that the fund established for the earthquake-affected people of Turkiye would also be utilized to support the quake victims of Syria.

The prime minister chaired a meeting to review the ongoing relief efforts on part of Pakistan to provide succor to the quake-affected populace of Turkiye and Syria, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. During the meeting, the prime minister said that Pakistan would bear all the expenses on the supply of relief goods to these countries.

He also directed the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to purchase the required items keeping in view of the needs of the quake victims, adding that Pakistan was not only utilizing the air bridge but also ensuring supply of relief assistance through land and sea routes. The meeting was attended by Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar, Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum

## PM directs speedy completion of wind, solar energy projects

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday directed the speedy completion of solar and wind energy projects.

While chairing a meeting on renewable energy here, he said it was a priority of the government to encourage the production of electricity through solar and wind energy sources. The renewable sources would produce low-cost and environment-friendly electricity, he added.

The prime minister pointed out that the last government did not complete the solar and wind energy projects started by the previous government of Pakistan Muslim League(Nawaz).

Aurangzeb, PM's Special Assistant Syed Tariq Fatemi, secretaries of foreign affairs, aviation, chairman NDMA and other high officials.

The prime minister directed the minister for planning to contact the educational institutions for running an organized fund-raising campaign.

He also asked the min-

The 220 million people of Pakistan suffered due to the criminal negligence and incompetency of the last government, he added.

The PM said work on the solar power projects of 10,000 megawatts was continuing at a fast pace.

The solar power projects would help in saving precious foreign exchange being spent on the import of expensive fuel, he remarked. He said the relevant institutions should immediately present a strategy for fully benefiting from the available solar and wind resources in the country. He assured that all obstacles in the way of renewable energy projects would be removed.

istry of religious affairs to spread awareness in the religious institutions by taking the ulema on board.

The prime minister, on the occasion, praised the ministers, authorities, institutions and personnel who have been making efforts for the provision of relief to the quake victims.

He observed that the

Pakistani rescue workers had been playing a major role in rescuing the people.

During the meeting, the prime minister was apprised that relief items including winterized tents, blankets, quilts and warm clothes were being sent to Turkiye and a large part of this consignment had been sent through air bridge.

Yesterday, a convoy of 21 trucks containing these items had left for the two countries. In the next few days, 1600 tons of ration would be dispatched to Turkiye and Syria through land and sea routes.

The meeting was further briefed that the people had started donating relief goods at the NDMA collection points. Pakistan was immediately sending more than 11,000 winterized tents to the quake victims whereas 14,000 tents would be dispatched in the next week, and more than 42,000 blankets would be part of the relief assistance.

Ambassadors of Pakistan to Turkiye and Syria also apprised the prime minister of the situation in the quake-affected areas and the requirements of the affected people. The prime minister directed them to remain in close contact with the respective governments of Turkiye and Syria.



LAHORE: Minister for Federal Education and Professional Trainings Rana Tanveer Hussain calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

# Gen Bajwa was Super King who made all decisions in PTI tenure: Imran

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan Sunday said ex-army chief Gen retired Qamar Javed Bajwa confessed that he had toppled the PTI government.

Addressing the people through a video link, Imran Khan said Gen Bajwa in an interview with a senior journalist Javed Chaudhry also admitted that he used to control the National Accountability Bureau (NAB)'s affairs.

"Gen Bajwa was a super king who decided everything during his tenure," he said adding that he had to face criticism for the Bajwa's decisions. The ex-premier said that the former army chief is responsible for the current poor economic plight of the country. "These people were only concerned with saving their money and were afraid the PTI would come to power," the deposed premier said. The society suffers as a result of torture on those with less power, he added. He demanded that an independent inquiry should be held regarding the toppling of his government. He said that the people will feel soon the fallout of the Pakistan agreement with the IMF.

In response to the LHC's decision to hold elections in Punjab within 90 days, Mr Khan praised the judiciary, saying the PTI had high expectations of the judiciary. He feared the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) would mount pressure on the judiciary. "The masses were looking up to the judiciary to protect the constitution," Mr Khan said. He recalled his call for

snap elections to get the country out of its quagmire. Speaking about the agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Mr Khan said, "The country will face negative consequences due to the agreement with the IMF." Earlier, Imran Khan in an interview with Voice of America English said that it is inevitable for Pakistan to have a good relationship with Afghanistan regardless of any government in Kabul. In an interview with aired on Saturday, Imran Khan stressed that the country has to somehow get Kabul to "work with us again" and jointly deal with the issue of terrorism. Khan said whatever government is in Afghanistan, Pakistan must have a good relationship with them. Our foreign minister spent all his time on foreign trips but never visited Afghanistan.

"Our interest is that having a good relationship with the government in Kabul means that we have a 2,500-kilometer border with them. This means that if there are problems of terrorism, then they will help us."

"As the prime minister of Pakistan, he tried his best to keep up with Ashraf Ghani-led government on good terms in order to get Kabul's help in dealing with terrorism." We cannot afford another war against terrorism at this time."

In the interview, Imran also spoke on the recent criticism surrounding the PTI government's decision to negotiate with the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) before it was ousted. PTI chairman Imran Khan also blamed the "negligence"

of Pakistan's security forces and intelligence agencies for the rising incidents of terrorism in the country.

Over the past few months, the law and order situation in the country has worsened, with terrorist groups executing attacks with near impunity across the country.

Talking about his relationship with former army chief retired General Qamar Javed Bajwa, the ex-premier said that his government and the military were on the "same page".

"We worked together, and you know, Pakistan was considered one of the success stories of Covid-19."

Imran Khan said that problems arose between General Bajwa and us when he supported some of the biggest criminals of the country.

General Bajwa wanted us to forgive the corruption of these thieves and work together with them. "General Bajwa had a close relationship with Shahbaz Sharif which paved the way for the regime change operation," he added.

On relations with the US, he said it is proven that the 'conspiracy' to topple my government was hatched in Pakistan and sent to the US. Imran Khan said that the US is a superpower and that Pakistan should have friendly relations with it.

To another question, he said that the economy of Pakistan has been badly destroyed. "Currently Pakistan is going through the worst economic and political crisis in history. A government elected by the people should have a responsibility as well as authority."

# Maryam says Nawaz Sharif will return to Pakistan soon

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior vice president Maryam Nawaz has said that Nawaz Sharif practices principled politics and suffers the punishment for it.

Speaking informally to the media on Sunday, she also admitted there was no chance of immediate relief to the masses from the price hike. "The people knew who brought inflation and took the country's economy to the brink of disaster."

Maryam Nawaz said that although the country was facing difficult times, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is making all-out efforts to take the country out of the quagmire.

Talking about her new role in the PML-N, Maryam Nawaz said, "PML-N supremo and PM Shehbaz Sharif has handed over the responsibility to me. She also clarified that she is not interested in becoming the prime minister or the chief minister after the upcoming general elections in the country. PML-N vice president said she was not aware of the overwhelming response from the masses on her arrival at the airport. "I told Nawaz Sharif that people gave me responses

beyond my expectations."

She admitted that party matters were impacted by the absence of the PML-N supremo in the country. "Mian Nawaz Sharif will be among us very soon and the cases against him will also be disappeared soon."

To a question, she said Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) is not an electoral alliance.

The daughter of Nawaz Sharif said this is her mission to strengthen the organization of the party in every province. "I want to strengthen the Muslim League (N) everywhere, including Sindh and Karachi, wherever there are weaknesses, they have to be removed."

PML-N Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz said party organizational movement can be considered pre-election campaigns.

One of the objectives of these visits is to find the best representatives for fielding in the elections, she added. To another question, she said Shahid Khaqan is my elder brother and he intended to bring the youth forward. My father has 30-year-old cordial relations with him and I will go to Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, she

added.

The PML-N stalwart also said for now, Junaid — her son — had also no intention of joining politics. "Junaid has to take the responsibility for his home first," she said on a lighter note.

Maryam said that the foundation, identity, and power of her party was "performance".

Responding to a question, she said that PML-N would hold public rallies near the upcoming elections. "The entire program of organizing the party was arranged by Nawaz Sharif himself." Speaking on the occasion, Maryam said that the PML-N's social media wing was working on a voluntary basis. "We find it difficult to repeat even true accusation," she added. The PTI, she said, recruited keyboard warriors on the government's expenditure. She added that their competition was with very rude people. Maryam also announced that her 'party is setting up its own IT wing' to counter the propaganda of their opponents. She further said that she is working under the guidance and supervision of seniors like Ahsan Iqbal and Khawaja Saad Rafiq.

# Govt permits FIA to arrest ex-finance minister Shaukat Tarin: Rana Sanaullah

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan on Sunday said that the government had allowed the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to arrest the former finance minister Shaukat Tarin for his involvement in derauling the agreement with International Monetary Fund (IMF).

He said that an inquiry was completed against Shaukat Tarin and the permission of arrest was granted, on the request of FIA, as no one could dare to repeat the act in the future. He said that PTI chief Imran Khan instigated a person like Shaukat Tarin.

He stated this while addressing a press conference after chairing a meeting on 'Security of Foreigners', attended among others by the Sindh Chief Secretary Dr. Mohammed Sohail Rajput and Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh Dr. Ghulam Nabi Memon at Sindh Chief Secretary's office. The Interior Minister said that the Prime Minister Mian Mohammed Shabbaz Sharif had chaired

a meeting two days ago on the security and those who were working on the projects for the development of the country.

He said that the country would be on the path to development and prosperity after the completion of the projects. While condemning a recent statement of PTI chief, he said that the country would be stronger and stable. He said that Imran Khan had reached Islamabad on May 25 with armed men to control capital but the people rejected him and did not travel with him to Islamabad.

The Interior Minister said this man (Imran Khan) was a political terrorist. He further said that Pakistan would be saved from terrorists and political terrorist. Condemning the Peshawar police line blast, he said that no doubt a new spate of terrorism had emerged.

Replying to a question on talks with proscribed terrorist outfits, he said that there was no sign of talks with them in view of the unsuccessful talks in the past. Answering a question on elections, he said that the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) was

ready for the elections whether they were held in April or October, but it's the responsibility of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to hold them in 90 days as per the orders of High Court.

He elaborated that the challenges of re-emerging terrorism and economy should be reviewed before any decision. The Interior Minister, replying to a question regarding allegations of thief against each other by PML-N and PPP in the past, he said that now they had come to know that the real thief was Imran Khan. He said that Farha Gogi looted Punjab and transferred Rs12 billion to a foreign country.

Replying to question on the arrest of former interior minister Shaikh Rasheed, he said that he was apprehended as he (Shaikh Rasheed) could not prove his allegations against a big political party leader. Replying to another question on increasing street crime in Karachi, he said that the IGP Sindh and Additional IGP Karachi had chalked out a plan to control it.

## 1 soldier martyred, 14 others injured in North Waziristan terror attack

NORTH WAZIRISTAN (Monitoring Desk): One security forces personnel embraced martyrdom and 14 others, including civilians, sustained wounds when a convoy of security forces came under attack in Mir Ali sub-division of the North Waziristan district on Saturday.

The banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has claimed responsibility for the attack. Local officials said a convoy of security forces and employees of the Marri Petroleum Comp-any was on its way from North Waziristan to Bannu when a rickshaw struck the forces' vehicle in the Khajori area of the sub-division. "This rickshaw was par-ked on the roadside in the middle of parked vehicles when it suddenly appeared and struck a vehicle of the security forces," a local off-i-cial said.

Initially, no official statement was issued by the military's media wing. However, on Sunday, the Inter-Services Public Relations said that one soldier was martyred and 14 other people were injured in the attack. The local official said the area was cordoned off immediately after the explosion and the injured persons were airlifted to Bannu's Combined Mili-tary Hospital.

KAHRAMANMARAS (AFP/APP): Rescuers pulled a seven-month-old baby and a teenage girl from the rubble on Sunday, nearly a week after an earthquake devastated Turkey and Syria and killed more than 28,000.

UN relief chief Martin Griffiths said he expected the death toll to at least double after he arrived in southern Turkey on Saturday to assess the quake's damage.

Tens of thousands of rescue workers are scouring flattened neighbourhoods despite freezing weather that has deepened the misery of millions now in desperate need of aid.

Security concerns led some aid operations to be suspended, and dozens of people have been arrested for looting or trying to defraud victims in the aftermath of the quake in Turkey, according to state media.

But miraculous tales of survival still emerged from the destruction and despair. "Is the world there?" asked 70-year-old Menekse Tabak as she was pulled out from the concrete in the southern city of Kahramanmaraş - the epicentre of Monday's 7.8-magnitude tremor -- to applause and cries praising God, according to a video on state broadcaster TRT Haber.

A seven-month-old baby named Hamza was also rescued in southern Hatay more than 140 hours after the quake, while Esma Sultan, 13, was also saved in Gaziantep, state media reported.

Families were racing against time to find their missing relatives' bodies in southern Turkey.

"We hear (the authorities) will no longer keep the bodies waiting after a certain period of time, they say they will take them and bury them," Tuba Yolcu said in Kahramanmaraş.

Another family clutched each other in grief at a cotton field transformed into a cemetery, with a seemingly endless stream of bodies arriv-

ing for swift burial.

Griffiths toured quake-hit areas of Kahramanmaraş on Saturday, telling Sky News he expected the death toll to "double or more".

"Soon, the search and rescue people will make way for the humanitarian agencies whose job it is to look after the extraordinary numbers of those affected for the next months," he said in a video posted to Twitter.

The United Nations has warned that at least 870,000 people urgently need hot meals across Turkey and Syria. In Syria alone, up to 5.3 million people may have been made homeless. Almost 26 million people have been affected by the earthquake, the World Health Organization (WHO) said as it launched a flash appeal on Saturday for \$42.8 million to cope with immediate, towering health needs. It warned that dozens of hospitals had been damaged.

Turkey's disaster agency said more than 32,000 people from Turkish organisations are working on search-and-rescue efforts. There are also 8,294 international rescuers.

Restaurants are working hard in Gaziantep city, Turkey's gourmet capital, among tens of thousands of volunteers to help and feed families.

"Our co-workers are in a bad situation. Their families are victims and their houses are destroyed," said Burhan Cagdas, the owner of a local diner that has served up to 4,000 free meals a day outdoors since the tragedy struck.

His own family has been sleeping in cars since Monday in the city where at least 2,000 have died and tens of thousands have been forced out of unsafe homes.

Clashes have also been reported and the UN rights office on Friday urged all sides in the affected area -- where Kurdish militants and Syrian rebels operate -- to allow humanitari-

an access.

Austrian soldiers and German rescue workers called off their searches for several hours on Saturday in Hatay, citing difficult security amid firing between local groups.

The outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, considered a terrorist group by Ankara and its Western allies, has announced a temporary halt in fighting to ease recovery work.

A border crossing between Armenia and Turkey also opened for the first time in 35 years on Saturday to allow five trucks carrying food and water into the quake-hit region.

Aid has been slow to arrive in Syria, where years of conflict have ravaged the healthcare system and parts of the country remain under the control of rebels.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus took a flight full of emergency medical equipment into the quake-stricken city of Aleppo on Saturday.

Tedros toured damaged areas of the city and met two children who lost their parents in the earthquake.

"There are no words to express the pain they are going through," he tweeted. Damascus said it had approved the delivery of humanitarian assistance to quake-hit areas outside its control in Idlib province and a convoy was expected to leave on Sunday. The delivery was later postponed without explanation.

The transport ministry said 57 aid planes had landed in Syria this week.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has urged the Security Council to authorise the opening of new cross-border aid points between Turkey and Syria. The council will meet to discuss Syria, possibly early next week.

Turkey said it was working on opening two new routes into rebel-held parts of Syria.

Pak-US defence dialogue

ISLAMABAD (APP): The second round of 'Pakistan-US Mid-Level Defence Dialogue' is scheduled from February 13-16 in Washington DC. "Pakistan's inter-agency delegation, led by the Chief of General Staff, will comprise of senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Joint Staff Headquarters and three Services Headquarters. The US multi-agency team will be represented by the Office of Undersecretary of Defence,".





## ‘No room for extremism and terrorism in our culture’

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that Pakistan is a land of great civilization and culture, which is based on love, peace and brotherhood. There is no room for extremism, terrorism and immorality in our culture.

But unfortunately some insane people have tried to distort the real face of Pakistan at home and abroad. The minister expressed these views while addressing the closing ceremony of the 3-day art workshop season-II organized by Crescent Art Gallery at Ferrer Hall on Sunday afternoon. As many as 30000 artists across the country attended the 3-day art workshop.

Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the real face of Pakistan can be seen today in the lawn of this historical Ferrer Hall, where thousands of young children, girls and older artists are enlightening us with different dimensions of their art and highlighting their wonderful culture of our country. He said that we are peace



loving people. Courtesy, politeness and especially respect for women has been an important part of our culture. He said, "Unfortunately, what is being taught in Pakistan today is that how to troll and abuse someone and target his family if he/she opposes you and does not agree with your stand. He said that all these things that are being promoted not part of our culture in any way.

He added that some insane people have started this propaganda specially on social media. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that we do not want a new Pakistan, but the real Pakistan, the Pakistan which is depicted in this art exhibition today. He urged the media to highlight the

real culture of Pakistan and spread the message of love, brotherhood and peace and give wide coverage to this event and artists participating in the art workshop. The provincial minister appreciated the organizers of the three-day art exhibition who have gathered artists from every region of Pakistan. He said that the world's largest painting is being created in this exhibition, which is a great honor for Pakistan.

He said that the Sindh government has always encouraged this type of events and provided all possible support and will continue to support such endeavors in the future. Addressing the ceremony, Provincial Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah

said that today is an important day that the artists of Pakistan have set a world record together and created the world's largest painting.

He said that our artists are not less in abilities to anyone in the world. He said that the efforts of the organizers of this colorful exhibition are commendable. Various programs were organized in this event, in which not only artists from all over Pakistan participated, but attracted foreigners who also shown keen interest in the exhibition. On this occasion, the provincial ministers presented a cheque of Rs.1500000 to Sajid Ali of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and his team for making world's largest 240 feet long painting.

While Qamar, Abdullah Siddiqui, Talib Naqvi, Fateh Haleputo, Sahar Shah Rizvi and other artists got awards for their outstanding performance in the event. Earlier, the provincial ministers visited the artist gallery and inspected the art work made by the artists. On this occasion, Crescent Art Gallery CEO Nasir Javed, Curator Sidra Javed and Coordinator Miss Farah gave them a detailed briefing.

## Pervaiz Elahi urges ECP to immediately unveil Punjab polls' schedule

LAHORE (NNI): Former Punjab chief minister Pervaiz Elahi on Sunday urged the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to immediately unveil by-polls schedule following the court order.

While talking to journalists in Lahore today, Pervaiz Elahi said that the Lahore High Court (LHC) gave its verdict regarding the Punjab by-polls in accordance with the law and Constitution.

He slammed the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) for skyrocketing inflation in the country. He said that the nation is ready to take revenge on the cur-

rent rulers in the upcoming elections. He said that the popularity of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan is increasing day by day. He asked the ruling Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) to refrain from committing constitutional violations.

Pervaiz Elahi said that all institutions are bound to assist the ECP for by-polls in light of the LHC verdict. He claimed that PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif will not return to Pakistan now and the top leadership is just deceiving the workers.

He said that PDM gave nothing to the nation but

economic disasters. He added that the ruling PML-N should announce the election schedule if it is not afraid of the polls.

On February 10, the Lahore High Court (LHC) ordered the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to organise by-polls in Punjab within three months. The LHC's Justice Jawad Hassan announced the reserved verdict on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) petition seeking the court orders for Punjab by-polls. In a 16-page short verdict, the high court ordered the election commission for organising by-polls in

Punjab within 90 days. The LHC directed the electoral watchdog to issue the election schedule in accordance with the Constitution.

It further stated that the elections should be conducted within 90 days after the dissolution of the assembly in accordance with the Constitution. However, it is not clear in the law who will announce the date of elections in case of dissolution of assemblies, it added. In light of the court's decisions, the ECP is possessing the mandate to conduct elections as an independent and impartial institution.

### CTP licensing offices open on Sunday also

LAHORE (APP): On the instructions of caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi and Inspector General of Police Dr Usman Anwar, the driving licensing offices of the City Traffic Police (CTP) remained open on Sunday also.

Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Mustansar Feroze said that citizens could visit any licensing testing centre even on Sunday for the driving licensing services, adding that driving licensing offices including Manawan Centre, Greater Iqbal Park Centre, DHA Center, Liberty Center, Arfa Karim Center and Bahria Center remained functional on Sunday.

He said that from February 20, Liberty licensing centre would remain open for 24/7, maintaining that response time of the traffic personnel in the licensing centers would be specially monitored to evaluate the performance.

## Foolproof security to be ensured for anti-polio campaign workers

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore, Additional IG Bilal Siddique Kamyana on Sunday said that anti polio campaign supervisors, health workers and teams would be provided complete security during administration of anti polio vaccine drops to the children under five years of age.

The second seven-day special polio eradication campaign of the year will start in the provincial capital from Monday (February 13).

More than 1200 police officers and officials had been deployed for the security of 6,360 polio workers, Bilal Siddique Kamyana informed.

The CCPO said that anti-polio teams in 169 union councils of the city had been provided comprehensive security.

The security cover would be provided to the polio workers in 169 Union Councils of the city including 37 UCs of City Division, 17 of Civil Lines, 33 of Model Town, 23 of Sadar, 19 of Iqbal Town whereas 40 Union Councils of the Cantt Division, he added.

The CCPO said that 498 motorcycles, 83 vehicles of the police stations had been doing effective patrolling in the polio campaign areas. The CCPO warned that no compromise would be

made on the security of the anti-polio teams and any negligence in this regard would not be tolerated, he added.

He directed the related SPs, SDPOs and SHO's would personally inspect the security arrangements provided to the anti-polio teams. Bilal Siddique Kamyana directed the teams of Dolphin Squad, Police Response Units and police stations to ensure effective patrolling in all the union councils where polio vaccination campaign was continued.

The CCPO said that 'Polio Emergency Desks' had also been set up in all police divisional offices for quick response and awareness in any emergency situation.

Bilal Siddique Kamyana directed that immediate legal action should be taken in case of any untoward incident of abuse, harassment or violence against the anti-polio teams and related supervisory staff.

It is pertinent to mention that the seven days anti-polio campaign will start from 13th February to 19th February in the provincial capital during which more than two million 85 thousand children will be administered anti-polio drops.

## PFA Food Expo concluded in Lahore

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: A three-day PFA Food Expo Plus 2023 has concluded by attracting more than one million visitors including families, students, children, food technologists and people from different walks of life.

Food Expo was arranged by Punjab Food Authority (PFA) in collaboration with food industry that kicked off on Friday at Lahore International Expo Centre.

On the last day, Governor Punjab Baligh Ur Rehman visited the food expo and appreciated the PFA for taking a commendable initiative for the public and food industry. He stated that happy to know that over 1,000,000 people had come to the event in three days.

He said that PFA has made itself a role model for other provinces in a short



time. PFA Director General Muddassir Riaz Malik said that this festival is one of the biggest promotional platforms for food industry. He said PFA is delighted to food industry for a one-of-a-kind partnership to provide a good food experience to fans.

DG has thanked all stakeholders for becoming a partner of this event. He added that the purpose of the "PFAFE+2023" was

giving awareness to the general public about food hygiene, quality and safety standards. Festival consisted of several segments including live cooking, concert and food conferences. PFA has also arranged a fun zone and puppet show for children and families entertainment.

Renewed singers and musical ensembles including Ali Zafar, Farhan Saeed, Aima Baig, Nadeem Abbas,

Shaista Gul, Natasha Baig, Sahara UK, Soch Band and Young Stunners have enthralled the audiences. Further, famous poets Anwar Masood, Iftikhar Arif, Ahmed Ikhtlaq, Salman Gilani and others presented their poetry in Mehfil-i-Mushaira. In the festival, more than 200 well renowned national and international food companies along with food-chains have setup their stalls. In two-days, a thousand number of citizens have visited the food court where they have enjoyed the taste of traditional cuisine by getting upto 40% discount on food items.

Special free medical camps were established by PFA for visitors. A team of doctors and nutritionists examined the people and give free consultancy to them about their diet plan and health issues.



KARACHI: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan chairing a meeting on Security of Foreigners at the office of Chief Secretary.

## Faryal Talpur pays tribute to the passion and struggle of Pakistani women

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party's Women Wing Central President and MPA Faryal Talpur in her message on National Women's Day pays tribute to the passion and struggle of Pakistani women for their exemplary role in every sphere of life.

She said that today also reminds us of the historic struggle of Pakistani women for the democracy, adding that Mother of Democracy Begum Nusrat Bhutto and the Daughter of the East, Shaheed

Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto led the movement to restoration of democracy against the dictatorship.

She said that Pakistan People's Party has always taken revolutionary steps for women's rights and development, adding that from representation in policy-making bodies to economic independence, the PPP has given countless gifts to Pakistani women.

Pakistan Peoples Party's Women Wing Central President and MPA Faryal Talpur further said that the national programs like First Women

Bank, Police Station for Women and Lady Health Volunteers are hallmarks of PPP, adding that Benazir Income Support Programme, Land Ownership Rights to Women Farmers and Interest Free Loan Scheme for Business are the latest gift of PPP governments in country. The economic independence of Pakistani women was the dream of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, which Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and President Asif Ali Zardari are actively working to fulfill her dream in Pakistan she added.

## Bilawal salutes women fighting against injustice on National Women's Day

KARACHI (PPI): Foreign Minister of Pakistan and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has congratulated the entire nation, including mothers, sisters and daughters, on National Women's Day that is observed annually on February 12 to mark the first women's march held in the country on that date in 1983. In his congratulatory message on Sunday, he said that today is a day to mark the struggle of Pakistani women for democracy and resistance to dictatorship.

FM Bilawal lauded the bravery of

Pakistani women, saying they are symbols of unparalleled bravery, great talent and indomitable courage. Women like Fatima Jinnah, Begum Nusrat Bhutto and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto are role models for the rest of the world. He stated that PPP is the only party in the country to be led by two women who braved torture and solitary confinements while leading the nation's movements for restoration of democracy.

He remarked that it is impossible to respect human rights without granting women equal rights, and that

the 1973 Constitution offers women equal opportunity for equality, representation, protection, and growth.

Bilawal reaffirmed that PPP firmly backs every effort made by Pakistani women to put an end to discrimination and exploitation in all of its forms. He saluted both women and men who are fighting for the elimination of gender discrimination.

In a tweet on the occasion, he shared the unseen pictures of his late mother Benazir Bhutto and paid a tribute to her endless efforts to restore democracy in the country.

### CM grieves over death of ZAB's close associate

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday expressed his grief and sorrow over the death of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's close associate Ghulam Mustafa Bhutto.

He said, "I am saddened to learn about the death of Ghulam Mustafa Bhutto".

The Chief Minister said that his heart went out to the bereaved family. He also prayed for the blessing of the departed soul.

### ‘PPP to decide about participation in by-polls in 48 hours’

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party Lahore chapter President Ch Aslam Gill has said the party leadership will decide about participation in the by-polls within the next 48 hours.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said that the party would follow the directions of the PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in its letter and spirit. He said that the recommendations of candidates for the 64 seats in the by-elections, to be held on March 16 and 19, had been sent to central parliamentary board of the party for final approval. He said the party and its sister organisations would struggle their best for the candidates.

He said that the current financial situation of the country did not favour in the elections in the provinces. He demanded the prime minister to immediately announce the new date for the All Parties Conference (APC) and the national leadership should unanimously decide a strategy about the terrorism, by-elections and general elections as well as other serious issues of the country, so that the nation could be pulled out of the desperate situation.

## Commissioner reviews auction process, prices at Badami Bagh fruit market

LAHORE (APP): Commissioner Lahore Division Muhammad Ali Randhawa visited the vegetable and fruit market Badami Bagh to review prices and auction process of commodities, here on Sunday.

The commissioner, along with the authorities concerned, took round of various shops and checked rates of vegetables and fruits, being auctioned there. He directed the officers of market committee of the fruit and vegetable market to prepare rate lists for the retailers keeping in view the wholesale rates of vegetable and fruits on daily basis.

The move was aimed at discouraging undue profiteering by evolving a mechanism of determining the prices keeping in view wholesale rates, transportation charges of the shopkeepers and then fixing of retail prices with a just profit.

Randhawa directed the officers of market committee to monitor each auction of the market so that proper and up-to-date record could be developed, saying that price control magistrates should deputised on the monitoring of vegetables and fruits in the market.

The profiteers could not be allowed to charge for the daily use commodities as per their sweet will, he warned and noted that every shopkeeper had the right to earn due profit and those involved in overcharging and undue profiteering would be dealt under the law. He also directed the administrative officers concerned to ensure display of rate lists at a prominent place at the shops.

He directed the Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) to make extra arrangements to ensure zero waste around the premises of the fruit and vegetable markets, saying that shift in charges should supervise the cleanliness process of the market.

Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) Chief Officer Syed Ali Abbas Bukhari, Lahore Waste Management Company Chief Executive Officer, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Adnan Rasheed, Assistant Commissioner City and Cant Wasiq Ahmed and Muhammad Murtaza, Secretary Market Committee Shehzad Cheema and others were present.

## CM Punjab reviews e-employment programme

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi chaired a meeting at his office on Sunday and reviewed matters pertaining to e-employment scheme. It was decided during the meeting to activate e-employment scheme in all government and private colleges as well as educational institutions. It was mulled to incorporate private sector into this project during the meeting.

The caretaker CM was apprised that 60,000 youths had successfully completed e-employment programme and income of few youths had exceeded \$200,000 after successfully completing e-employment programme. Ismail

Qureshi, Chairman Akhuwat Dr Muhammad Amjad Saqib, secretaries of Sports, Industries, P&D departments and officials concerned attended the meeting.

CM pays tribute to Charing Cross blast martyrs on 6th anniversary: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi said on Sunday that martyrs of Charing Cross blast, which occurred six years ago, live in our hearts to date and would live forever as the nation would always remember their great sacrifices.

In his message, he said that today was the day to remember great sacrifices of the brave sons of the homeland.

He remarked that the "Punjab government stands with the heirs of martyrs and we express complete solidarity with them" adding that "the police martyrs are our pride".

The CM paid tribute to the sacrifices of martyred DIG Traffic Lahore Captain (ret'd) Syed Ahmad Mobeen, martyred SSP Operations Lahore Zahid Gondal, other police personnel and acknowledged that they offered immortal sacrifices for a great cause.

Mohsin Raza Naqvi remarked that the nation saluted the great sacrifices of the martyred officers and personnel of the Punjab police.





## Manzoor for ensuring transparent elections

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Labour, Excise and Anti-Narcotics Manzoor Khan Afridi on Sunday said that he has joined the caretaker government with the mission of establishing a conducive environment for peaceful, clean, transparent and fair elections in the province.

Manzoor Afridi said that as the Minister of Excise and Anti-Narcotics Department, he has made it his mission to eliminate the scourge of drugs, especially ice, from the society, so the tribal elite should also support him in this mission, said a hand out.

He said that this is also the real Jihad upon which the tribal elite raised their hands and reiterated their commitment to support him in this jihad.

## Consultation to improve traffic system

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Transport, Science and Information Technology Shahid Khan Khattak on Sunday said that government was striving to establish peace, hold transparent general elections and give due rights to the people.

He expressed these views while talking to journalists in Nowshera district.

Shahid Khan said that all ongoing work on uplift schemes would timely be completed and consultation with concerned quarters was in progress to improve the traffic system by removing encroachments alongside the roads.

He urged people to cooperate with the caretaker government in achieving its goal of holding peaceful general elections.

# IGP visits Rashkai Economic Zone

— discusses security measures

PESHAWAR (APP): The Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Akhtar Hayat Khan, visited the Rashkai Economic Zone on Sunday to meet with army officers, Chinese engineers, and senior police officials to discuss the security and other crucial issues of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

During the meeting, the army officers provided a comprehensive briefing to the IGP on the security of the Chinese experts work-

ing in the zone. The IGP stressed the importance of the Rashkai Economic Zone in the economic development of Pakistan and emphasized the primary responsibility of the police in ensuring its security.

The IGP inspected various parts of the zone and directed the top police officials to reinforce the security measures for the Chinese workers, including increasing the height of fences, installing more CCTV cameras, and utilizing modern technology.

Accompanied by Regional Police Officer Mardan Muhammad Ali Khan Gandapur and DPO Nowshera Muhammad Umar Khan, the IGP expressed his commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of the foreign workers in the zone.

The visit of the IGP and the discussions with the relevant authorities demonstrate the government's commitment to the successful completion of the CPEC project and the security of its foreign partners.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan giving away shields to Ophthalmologists at their meritorious services.

## Trade union president calls for end to economic killing of businessmen

PESHAWAR (APP): President of the Trade Union of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mujibur Rehman on Sunday held a meeting with the presidents of various markets to address the issue of continuous loadshedding in the name of maintenance and repair.

The meeting was attended by a large number of business leaders, who expressed their concern over the impact of the ongoing power outages on their businesses.

In his address, Mujibur Rehman pointed out that inflation coupled with the skyrocketing price of electricity, is taking a toll on the livelihoods of laborers and daily wage earners. He stated that the practice of load shedding in the name of maintenance and repair work is unacceptable and warned that if loadshedding is not stopped, the business community and the people will be forced to protest until their demands are met.

He emphasized that the entire situation will be the responsibility of the concerned authorities.

# UAP retired employees demand for pension commutation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The retired employees of the University of Agriculture Peshawar (UAP) have urged the university administration, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government and the authorities concerned to resolve the issue of their long-awaited unpaid pension commutation and said that due to current inflation they had been going through serious problems and unable to meet their expenses.

According to the retired employees, the number of such employees is in hundreds who are deprived of their pension commutation for a long time,

and arrears for the last many months, while there are also many former employees who are not getting these payments even for the last 3 to 4 years.

“There are 3 categories of the retired employees of the UAP; teaching staff - who are around 50, administrative staff - who are around 60, and supporting staff - who are around 100,” the ex-employees stated.

They told that due to heavy devaluation of Pakistani currency they along with their families were suffering from multiple problems as they did not receive pension commutation for a long time,

adding that they asked the university administration and other high-ups to release their outstanding dues on priority basis so that they could be able to breathe peacefully.

“We served our best the university for years to impart quality education to the youth of the nation but today we are empty handed, having no means to survive soundly and make secure our children's future,” they added, saying that it was the right time for the government to address the issue of unpaid pension commutation and arrears, otherwise it would lead to worsening the situation more and more.

# Rashakai Special Economic Zone to become operational next month

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development & Management Company (KP-EZDMC), Javed Iqbal Khattak has said that 98% work on infrastructure development in Rashakai prioritized Special Economic Zone (RpSEZ) has been completed and will become operational during next month (March).

Talking to APP here on Sunday, he said that spread over an area of 1000 acres, Rashakai prioritized Special Economic Zone (PSEZ) is a flagship project of the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the industrial cooperation of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework that serves as CPEC Special Economic Zone.

It is one out of the four prioritized special economic zones, it would become the first special economic zone that would become operational next month.

He said that power transmission and transformation were crucial parts of the project, which are near completion.

He said that special focus in this project is made to set up export-oriented industrial units in it.

He said that besides investment of US \$ 400 million they are also expecting generation of 250,000 to 300,000 direct and indirect employment.

He said that 80% of the labour force in the zone would be local, particularly for the natives of the area.

Regarding investment in the project, the CEO KP-EZDMC said that so far 18 Pakistani and Chinese companies have agreed on making joint ventures in it.

He said that the project will not only play a crucial role in the economic growth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but also in the national economy. He said that a large number of investors have started construction work on their industrial units.

He said that the company is giving priority to the establishment of export-oriented manufacturing units in the zone to create alternates to imports.

He said that the foreign investment in the zone will not only pave way for the transfer of modern technology to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, rather will also bring in expertise and other good practices to Pakistan.

He added that trainers and master trainers arrive along with these modern machineries will also prove beneficial for our coming generations.

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# Tech education ensures bright future of a nation

PESHAWAR (APP): The KP Caretaker Minister for Revenue, Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Adnan Jalil Sunday expressed his sorrow over the stoppage of funds and salaries of the employees of TEVTA (Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority) for the past several months.

He assured that he would make sincere efforts for the earliest release of funds and the salaries of the staff. However, he clarified that instead of becoming a burden on the public exchequer, TEVTA has to become a profitable and self-sustaining entity which depended on the hard work

of its own staff, he added.

He was addressing a briefing on TEVTA's performance at Civil Secretariat Peshawar. On this occasion, the TEVTA managing director, Prof. Abdul Ghaffar, told that 106 technical education and vocational training centers are working across the province under TEVTA, wherein thousands of male and female students are equipped with technical education and training every year.

Appreciating TEVTA's overall performance and role, the caretaker minister said that the bright future of a nation is also linked with technical education, and

many nations have reached the climax of prosperity and development by paying attention to it.

However, he said, organizations like TEVTA could only emerge triumphant when its outcomes and benefits outweigh the cost incurred on it.

But unfortunately, he reminded, the wheel of development is turning upside down here too like so many other sectors.

He deplored that TEVTA was rightly expected to guarantee jobs to its outgoing youth as per market demand, but the situation will be quite different if it starts collecting the employment data of its stu-

dents in the relevant fields, as many of its youth and their parents are suffering from their unemployment.

Adnan Jalil said that an institution could only move forward whose teaching and administrative staff is proved cost effective but here expenditures of TEVTA staff surged from two to three billion rupees but the results and benefits are meagre or almost non-existent.

He directed that the staff of TEVTA should work on a realistic basis, bringing back the personnel working in officers' homes to the offices and field while the existing staff and surplus pool employees should be

engaged instead of recruiting new or additional staff.

The caretaker minister further said that better results are expected if public institutions, including that of technical education, are run on the basis of public-private partnership.

In the same way, he said, instead of running the technical education and vocational training institutions in a unilateral traditional manner, the outgoing students can get guaranteed jobs if courses are evolved with the consultation and demand of the business, industrialist community and the concerned chambers of commerce are taken onboard too.

# Promotion of IT, vocational educ to empower youth

PESHAWAR (APP): The promotion of information technology, technical and vocational education was imperative to financially empower youth and take full advantage of the government as well as CPEC projects.

Ikhtair Wali Khan, PMN KP spokesman and former member provincial assembly told APP on Sunday that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has launched scores of

programmes and initiatives for the promotion of technical and IT education for financial empowerment of youth.

He said the present government has launched various uplift projects for financial empowerment of youth including provision of 2,000 Internships for young engineers, youth transformation programs for 20 underdeveloped districts in Pakistan including KP, innovation fund and

75 National Top Talent Scholarships Programme besides free laptop schemes, adding 600 students were sent to China for technical education to take full advantage of CPEC's projects.

He said the demands for technical workforce has jacked up due to CPEC's projects and establishment of special economic zones (SEZ) including the one Rashakai SEZ in Nowshera being a gateway to

Central Asian Republics through Afghanistan that would turned KP a hub of business and industrialization.

He said that CPEC has the potential to generate 1.2 million direct jobs for youth, especially in agriculture, food, tourism, mineral processing, oil and gas and socioeconomic services in Pakistan.

Professor Dr Zilakat Malik, former Chairman Economics Department,

University of Peshawar said that demand of skilled labour has increased manifolds in Pakistan in the wake of CPEC's projects, mushroom growth of housing societies and GULF's companies' high demand for skilled workforce and that whopping investment in technical education was required to promote industrialization, SMEs and capture local and international markets.



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Minister for Industries Commerce and Technical Education Adnan Jalil chairing briefing on performance of TEVTA.

# Cappli Kabab, other traditional cuisines of KP attract foodies

PESHAWAR (APP): With an advent of spring season in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the demands of traditional food including chapli kabab, mutton karahi and kabuli rice has increased manifolds in Peshawar where visitors enjoyed the mouthwatering cuisines on Sunday.

Known as land of hospitality, Peshawar's historic Qissa Khwani and Namak Mandi having plenty of food restaurants, shops and hotels of traditional cuisines attracted visitors in substantial numbers and families amid pleasant change in weather.

Peshawar has been internationally acclaimed for its mouth-watering cuisines mostly brought by the invaders, kings and developed by the people after marching on historic Khyber Pass and later settled here.

Peshawar being an ancient city of south asia with about 3000 years old history, is a home to chapli

kabab of buffalo meat, lamb Karahi cooked in pure lard and Kabuli rice.

The penda shops of southern districts including DI Khan, Bannu and Lakki Marwat and slowly cooked beef roush and Kabuli pulao (rice) are being preferred by many foreigners.

Renowned food Vbloggers of world fame, Mark Weins of food channel Migrationology and Trevor James of Food Ranger having millions of subscribers has also visited Peshawar where they enjoyed the traditional cuisines including Chapli Kabab, Matton Karahi and juicy lamb meat at Namak Mandi, Peshawar.

The famous dish is fried in a specially designed pan prepared in pure animal fat that gives special aroma, salty taste and flavor to cuisine savored by food lovers.

Almost every city of the province and bazaars of

Pakistan have abounded cuisines shops where Chapli Kabab is prepared with minced buffalo meat of buffalo, special ingredients and spices on firewood in a cozy environment.

The origin of Chapli Kabab is unknown, however, Qari Javed Iqbal writes in his book 'Saqaft Sarhad Tarikh Ke Ayeene Me' (Frontier culture in the mirror of history) that Mughals, Turkish, Ghaznis and Afghans, who invaded subcontinent through historic Khyber Pass, had preferred meat in their dishes that led to the introduction of Chapli Kabab in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Qari Javed writes that Chapli Kabab's shops was found at Karimo Kababi in Nothia, Jalil Kababi, Mohmand Tore Kababi in Firdous Bazaar, Tarojaba Kebabi on Grand Trunk Road and Bakhshi Pul at Peshawar where travelers enjoyed its delicious bites

before marching to Indo-Pak subcontinent for trade and business.

Haji Hazrat Ullah, the owner of Mohmand Toray Kabab at Firdos bazaar Peshawar told APP that people from across the country come here to eat chapli kabab especially during winter due to purity of meat and delectable taste besides freshness of components being used in its preparation.

Despite the introduction of many western foods and snacks' varieties, he said the popularity of chapli kababs has not decreased in the province where its demand was increasing with each passing day especially winter and spring.

“Mutton Karahi” also known as Karhi Ghost, Dumba Karahi, Balti Ghost and Dumpukhat Karahi in different provinces also attract foodies owing to its palatable taste of lamb fat and minimum use of spices

except salt and green chilies.

Food lovers are seen chomping on and hogging on lamb meat immersed in finger-licking lamb fat in the Namak Mandi's restaurants where food street was established.

“What would be more enjoyable other than to eat lamb meat cooked in its own fat on coal at Namak Mandai” said Imtiaz Ahmad Siddiqui (58), who was standing for its turn for a parcel at a local hotel at Namak Mandi here.

“In adolescence, I frequented to Landikotal with family members to eat lamb Karahi that was slow-cooked on medium flame of firewood”, he said and maintained that “my taste buds still remember that flavor but restaurants of Namak Mandi also offer lamb karahi with the same taste that reminisced me of my teenage.”

Kachalo Paira is another

traditional dish that is eaten widely in provincial metropolises and the province's bazaars. The dish is sold in almost every bazaar of the province and eaten by people due to its own specific savory taste and affordable price.

Kachalo is a kind of calocasia bulbous root that is boiled, peeled and mixed with vinegar, red pepper, lemon juice and served with sauce prepared with tamarind, mint and yogurt. The ancestry of the dish, which is simple, is unknown but it is among favorite among food items of Peshawarites and local Pashtun population.

“My father started selling Katchalo Paira in Karimpura bazar on a pushcart from 1981 and after him I started serving people in the same locality to earn two times bread for his family,” said Muhammad Sulaiman alias Jani while talking to APP.

“Although this traditional food is known to only old dwellers of the province, the younger generation also relish it due to its tangy and spicy taste.” He said the species has also made deep inroads in Attock Punjab due to its unique taste and health benefits.

“The dish is best to rejuvenate taste buds of a patient after recuperation from a disease,” he said, adding a patient often lost sense of taste after eating medicines during illness and Kachaloo Paira can return his lost sense of taste besides increasing production of digestive juices due to tanginess of flavor induced by spices including tamarind, tinge of vinegar and homemade spices.

Muhammad Muzammil (14), who was eating Kachaloo at the push cart at Karimpura said that he has been eating the dish since childhood and still loves it due to its unique spicy taste.

Chicken penda and traditional sohan halwa (sweet) food of DI Khan also attract foodies and guests in droves, adding “our hospitality program can't complete without chicken penda and later offering sohan halwa to them,” said Tariq Marwat, a resident of DI Khan.

Shah Rukh Ali Khan, Director General KP Food Safety and Halal Authority said quality of foods was being monitored in bazaars including Namak Mandi through specialist staff and food testing laboratories to ensure quality food services to consumers.

“Our mobile food testing laboratories are equipped with high-tech testing equipment with an ability to test quality of over 20 food items on the spot,” he said, adding no compromise was being made on hygienic conditions of the kitchens of food restaurants.





## In brief

### Cyclist hit to death by tractor

FAISALABAD (APP): A cycle-rider boy was hit to death by a tractor-trolley in the area of Khurarianwala police station. Rescue-1122 spokesman said here on Sunday that 12-year-old boy Ali Husnain of Umar Garden was going his bicycle when HE WAS hit BY a tractor-trolley on Mai Mastani Road near Makkoana. As a result, the boy died on-the-spot before getting any medical assistance. The police took the body into custody while further investigation was under progress, he added.

### Man held for selling petrol

NAROWAL (APP): A man was booked for selling petrol illegally in Ganj Mandi Hassa-inabad and seized the machine. On the special direction of Deputy Commissioner Narowal Muhammed Ashraf, a team of Civil Defence headed by district Officer Asim Riaz Wahla raided and got registered a case against the owner of illegal mini petrol outlet.

### Donation camp established

NAWABSHAH (APP): On the directives of Sindh Government, Deputy Commissioner Shauheed Benazirabad, Shehryar Gul Memon, has established donation camps in different parts of the district for the help of earthquake victims of Turkiye and Syria. DC has appealed to citizens to donate generously at the donation camps in order to extend support to earthquake victims at this difficult time.

### Nine gamblers arrested

SARGODHA (APP): Shah Nikdur Police on Sunday arrested nine people for gambling from a nearby village. On a tip-off, the police team headed by SHO Muhammad Tauqeer Khan Bloach conducted a raid in Chak No 174-NB and arrested Khalid Mehmood, Danish Ali, Irshad Ahmed, Zeeshan Nadeem, Safdar Hayat, Muhammad Shehbaz, Abdul Shakoor, Asghar Ali and Mansoor Hassan red-handed while betting on cock fighting. The police recovered stake money of Rs 165,000, 9 mobile phones, 2 cocks and impounded two vehicles. A case has been registered against the accused under gambling act.

### Man electrocuted

SARGODHA (APP): A man died of electrocution in Sahiwal area, in the limits of Sahiwal police station on Sunday. According to Rescue 1122, Muhammad Luqman was working on an electric wire for rectifying fault in Chak No. 104 when he received severe electric shock and died on the spot.

### 45 dumper drivers held

SARGODHA (APP): Police arrested 45 dumper drivers for not possessing driving licenses and recklessly driving during the last fortnight. On the direction of DPO Muhammad Faisal Kamran, the traffic police took action against those dumper drivers who were not possessing driving licence and rash driving on roads. The DPO Sargodha said that strict action would be taken against drivers for violation of traffic rules on daily basis.

### 18 held with contraband

SARGODHA (APP): Police on Sunday claimed to have arrested 18 criminals and recovered narcotics and illegal weapons from their possession. Raiding teams of various police stations arrested seven drug pushers and recovered 2.5 kg hashish and 115 litres liquor.

# ‘Imran destroyed peace, economy’

SWAT (APP): Adviser to the Prime Minister Engr Amir Muqam here Sunday said that Imran Imran Niazi has destroyed peace and economy of the country due to his flawed policies and rampage of corruption during his four years rule in centre and 10 years in KP.

He said that Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz believed in practical work and would reestablish peace in the country including KP and will take Pakistan out of difficult economic situation.

Addressing a big party workers convention here, Amir Muqam said the Nawaz Sharif government had eliminated terrorism and established peace in the country including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa besides resettled millions of IDPs of Malakand division including Swat in their native areas with dignity.

Amir Muqam who is KP PMLN President said Imran Khan has failed to provide 10 million jobs and 5 million houses to people despite his tall pledges and people of KP would make him accountable for his lies based politics.

He said all mega development projects including electricity, gas and infrastructure launched by the Nawaz Sharif Govt for people Swat were closed by the former PTI Government to deprive people of development, and said that Imran Khan and PTI former lawmakers including ex CM Mahmood Khan would face people wrath in election.

Amir Muqam said these pending projects would be completed by Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Government for benefits of

people of Swat.

He said that people of Swat knew that Kalam-Bahrain, Swat Expressway and other mega projects for Swat were approved during Government of Nawaz Sharif and PTI can't deceive masses by merely fixing its sign boards.

He said former PTI Government has failed to start any mega development project in KP in last five years and deplored for changing the name of Nawaz Sharif Kidney Hospital, Swat.

Muqam said the hospital would be renamed as Nawaz Sharif Kidney Hospital Swat. "Nawaz Sharif lived in people hearts and through such negative tactics, PTI could not remove his name from hearts and minds of masses."

He said that Imran Khan would be held accountable for his corrupt practices referring to Tosha Khana and PTI foreign funding cases.

The PM aide claimed that Imran Khan has tarnished the country's image after stealing a watch from Tosha Khana.

Amir Muqam said that majority of PTI former lawmakers, advisers and ministers have accumulated billions of rupees beyond known sources of income while billion trees project was taken over by the NAB that exposed Imran Khan's anti corruption slogans.

On the other hand, he said the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has visited all flood hit areas of Pakistan including Swat where he personally reviewed rescue and relief operations while Imran Khan concentrated on agi-

tation politics and left millions of floods victims under an open sky in harsh weather despite PTI Government in Punjab and KP during that time.

He said the government was left with no option but to renegotiate the suspended IMF agreement signed by the Imran Govt.

He said that all actors that ousted Nawaz Sharif and brought Imran into power were exposed before masses. Even, our political opponents have admitted that great injustice were made with Nawaz Sharif and his ouster had pushed the country's back for many years.

He said after elevation of Chief Organizer and PMLN Vice President Maryam Nawaz Sharif, a new spirit in party workers were infused and that PMLN would achieve overwhelming success in election.

He said decisions would be taken in line of laws and constitution and not on the wishes of Imran Khan.

He said most of PTI leaders and workers were not happy over decision of Imran Khan after dissolution of KP and Punjab assemblies, adding hue and cry of the former lawmakers of PTI were now unjustified.

Engr Amir Muqam said that he worked very hard to achieve the present status at PMLN and would continue to work with more dedication and commitment to make his party more stronger in the province.

On this occasion, people raised fullthroated slogans in favour of PMLN Supremo Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz and Amir Muqam.

## Public arranges sit-in for accountability of politicians

### Shafiqullah

MINGORA: Large number of civil society activists, working class citizens and political parties staged a sit in at Nishat Chowk and raised the slogan of first accountability, then election. The Election Commission was also demanded to postpone the by-elections till accountability.

The anti-corruption movement started by Facebook ID "Toor Gul" on social media has now taken unprecedented shape and thousands of civil society members held protest at Nishat Chowk Mingora on

Saturday in which workers of various political parties and civil society and working class citizens participated. The entrants held placards with slogans against corruption and accountability of all corrupt people including former rulers.

Leaders of political parties, Khalid mehmood PMAF Irshad Ali Khan of PML-N, Nisar Khan of ANP, Ijaz Khan of JUI, Izharullah of Jamaat-e-Islami and Civil society members addressed this demonstration at Nishat Chowk, Mingora.

The speakers made serious allegations of corrup-

tion against the former ministers and of all political members including PTI and demanded that they be held accountable and announcing a complete boycott of the by-elections, they demanded that the Election Commission must postpone the by-elections until the process of accountability is completed across the board.

They said that until the institutions fulfill their responsibilities and accountable in practice, there will be no elections and the country will not be able to progress on the path of development.

## DPO reviews performance of officials

BAHAWALPUR (APP): District Police Officer, Bahawalpur, Syed Muhammad Abbas has reviewed performance of officials and issued directives in a meeting held at DPO Office here.

According to a spokesman for Bahawalpur police, over 300 police officials and personnel were summoned to be presented before DPO in the meeting held at DPO Office.

"The DPO Bahawalpur reviewed performance reports of the officials and issued directives on the occasion," he said.

He said that the DPO ter-

minated service of nine police personnel after allegations of corruption against them proved true in inquiry reports conducted into the matter.

The DPO warned that stern action would be taken against those found involved in negligence.

**DPO attends marriage of daughter of martyr official**

BAHAWALPUR (APP): District Police Officer, Bahawalpur, Syed Muhammad Abbas attended the marriage ceremony of the daughter of a martyr police official, ASI Shab-e-Qadar.

According to a

spokesman for Bahawalpur police, Assistant Sub-Inspector, Shabb-e-Qadar lost his life during action against criminals. He was declared martyr by the government.

Ms. Adila Qadir, the daughter of martyr police official, Shab-e-Qadar joined Police Department and ranked and presently performing her duty as Sub-Inspector in the department.

The DPO attended the marriage ceremony of Ms. Adila Qadir. Speaking on the occasion, he said that martyr police officials were the proud of the Police Department.



FAISALABAD: A donkey driven cart on way loaded with long iron rod at Jinnah Colony Chowk may cause any mishap and needs attention of concerned authorities.

## Man kills transgender sibling, injures three more

KOHAT (INP): A man opened fire on transgenders in Kohat, killing one and injuring three of them in Kohat late on Saturday night. The transgenders were returning from a wedding when they were attacked near Jarma bridge, in the limits of Saddar Police Station.

A heavy contingent of police reached the place of the attack as soon as they received a report and arrested a man along with the weapon allegedly used in the attack.

The man has been identified as Arif, and is allegedly the brother of one of the transgenders. He has been booked in a case containing clauses of murder and attempted murder. The three injured transgenders were shifted to KDA hospital where they are receiving medical attention.

## Anti-Polio drive in Dera from today

D.I.KHAN (APP): The anti-polio campaign is going to start from Monday in the district under which about 364422 children of under five year of age would be administered anti-polio drops.

According to a press release issued here, the health department had set a target of 364422 children to be administered anti-polio drops during this campaign which would be continued till February 19, 2023.

In this regard, 2403 experienced teams have been formed to achieve this target. Moreover, adequate arrangements have been made for the security of the polio teams.

District Health Officer (DHO) Mahmood Jan urged upon the parents to cooperate with the health department to ensure administering anti-polio drops to all children of under five year of age.

He asked the parents to get their children administered anti-polio drops in order to save them from life-long disability.

Meanwhile, Additional SP Dera Muhammad Javed Khan along with officers of Pak-Army inspected the security arrangements made for the anti-polio campaign in Khoi Bhara and Kirri Shamozai areas.

During their visit, the on-duty personnel were directed to remain alert to deal with any situation.

## DC reviews sewerage water disposal

NAWABSHAH (APP): Deputy Commissioner Shehryar Gul Memon on Sunday visited different areas of the city and inspected the sewerage water disposal and sanitation situation and also checked the attendance of sanitary staff.

He expressed annoyance to sanitary inspectors and staff over the deteriorating sanitary situation.

DC strongly directed to bring improvement in sanitation and water disposal situations with immediate effect or legal action would be initiated against sanitation staff with suspension.

He warned that no negligence would be tolerated in this regard.

## ATH gives healthcare services to people of Hazara, AJK and GB

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Ayub Teaching Hospital (ATH) Sunday provided healthcare services to 9,54,947 patients during the year 2022 while more than 350000 patients were brought to the emergency department including Afghan residents, patients from Gilgit, Azad Kashmir and all across Hazara division.

According to the ATH administration, more than 600000 people have availed treatment facilities through Outpatient Department.

Nearly 55976 patients were admitted for the provision of various medical facilities in ATH Abbottabad while more than 23000 operations were performed and along with this more than 6000 emergency operations were also carried out.

It is pertinent to mention that during the year 2022, many patients were referred to Ayub Teaching Hospital

for better medical facilities from other hospitals in Gilgit, Azad Kashmir and across Hazara.

For the facilities of the patients, the ATH administration established a satellite pharmacy on each floor so that the medicines used during the operation and in the wards can be provided to the patient from the same place.

During 2022 diagnostic services continued uninterrupted in Radiology and Pathology Department and 5916 MRIs, 16695 CT scan, 142883 different x-rays, and 63363 ultrasounds were done.

ATH is the only government hospital in the region to provide free diagnostic facilities not only to the people of Hazara division but also from Azad Kashmir and Gilgit through state-of-the-art MRI and CT scan machines and to further improve diagnosis

in 2022. Modern X-Ray machines were also added to the radiology department. In 2022, more than 1034 angiographies and more than 600 angioplasties were performed.

In order to provide better facilities to the patients, Health Facilitation Center was established in the hospital which is a one-window service for the patients admitted to the hospital.

In the year 2022, ATH continued its journey of rapid success and the hospital received permits from CPSP to start post-graduate training by adding Plastic Surgery and Physiology as sub-departments.

Apart from this, a number of new departments have also been started in ATH, including the Department of Nephrology, Oncology), Pediatric Surgery, Pediatric Nephrology, Pediatric Cardiology and Endocrinology.

## CPO: Foolproof security arrangements being ensured at churches

MULTAN (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Mansoor-ul-Haq Rana said that foolproof security arrangements were being ensured at churches to avoid any untoward incident.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said that the best security arrangements have been made at churches to provide a peaceful environment to Christian community to perform their religious activities. He said that walk-through gates have been installed at entry points of the churches while lady police officials have also been deployed.

The city police officer added that all SDPOs and SHOs were monitoring the arrangements at churches in

their respective areas, however, he himself was monitoring the security arrangements.

He directed police officials to remain alert while performing security duty at churches. He urged them to keep a vigil on suspicious persons and activities in surroundings of the churches.

**Three criminal gangs busted, looted valuables recovered**

Police have busted three criminal gangs and arrested twelve members of the gangs besides recovering looted valuables from their possession during a crackdown launched here on Sunday.

Taking action on the rising incidents of dacoity, robbery and motorcycle

theft, the City Police Officer (CPO) Mansoor-ul-Haq Rana directed officers concerned to launch a comprehensive crackdown against the criminal gangs.

The police busted three notorious gangs including Daniyal alias Pheeta, Waseem alias Naak Kata and another gang.

The police have also apprehended twelve criminals of the gangs and recovered looted valuables of worth Rs 13.8 million from their possession including eleven motorcycles, cash and other valuables.

Further investigations were underway from the arrested criminals and more recoveries were expected from them, police sources added.

## Petrol pumps monitoring process tightened

SIKALOT (APP): District Officer Industries Rashida Batool has said the monitoring process of petrol pumps has been tightened to ensure supply of petroleum products according to demand in the district.

She said here on Sunday that during the last few days, 33 petrol pumps were checked and 32 of them were found supplying the commodity at the fixed rates.

The district officer said that Deputy Commissioner Adnan Mehmood Awan,

Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Muhammad Iqbal, and the assistant commissioners conducted checking of petrol pumps to protect citizens from artificial shortage of petroleum products.

He said that during the checking, the stock of only one petrol pump was found to be dry, on which the concerned oil marketing company had been informed in writing and directed to supply as per future demand.

**Nine held, contraband**

**recovered:** Police on Sunday arrested nine people and seized narcotics and illegal weapons from them.

In a crackdown against drug peddlers and criminals, the police arrested Zubair, Khurram, Muhammad Majid, Ali Imran, Arif, Mubarak Ali, Muhammad Imran, Munawar and Rasheed and recovered 3.77 kg hashish, 30 liters of liquor and illegal weapons from their possession.

Cases have been registered.

## Two bodies found

FAISALABAD (APP): Two female corpses were found in a deserted place near Jarawal Motorway Interchange in the area of Rodala police station.

Police said on Sunday that some passersby spotted two human bodies lying near Chak No.275-GB Jarawal Motorway Interchange and informed the police.

The police reached the spot and shifted the bodies to mortuary for post-mortem.

One corpse was of a young woman while the other one was of an eight-year-old girl.

There were deep marks of injuries on the bodies. The police have started investigation for their identification.

**Five gangsters held**

CIA Iqbal Town police claimed on Sunday to have arrested five gangsters and recovered four motorcycles, cash and weapons from their possession.

A CIA team headed by its In-charge Inspector Rana Asghar conducted a

raid near Kaleem Shaheed Park and succeeded in arresting five dacoits including ring leader Danish Khan aka Dani, Nasir Ali, Mathar Akash, Ejaz Ahmad and Masood Javid and recovered four motorcycles, Rs 50,000 in cash, mobile phones, illegal weapons and other valuables from them.

The outlaws were wanted by police in a number of dacoity, robbery, theft and other cases.

Further investigation was underway.





# Suspected terrorists kill 10 Niger soldiers

NIAMEY (AFP/APP): At least ten soldiers died in an ambush by a group of "armed terrorists" in southwestern Niger, close to the Mali border, the defence ministry said Saturday.

The toll from Friday's attack could rise as 16 people are still missing and 13 soldiers were wounded, a ministry statement said.

The troops were on patrol in the north of Banibangu department when they "came under a complex ambush by a group of "armed terrorists". The statement also said several attackers were killed during the fighting, but did not specify how many.

The attack took place in Niger's vast western region of Tillaberi, which straddles Burkina Faso and has faced repeated attack since 2017 by armed groups linked to Al-Qaeda and Islamic State.

The region neighbours the Tahoua area, where heavily armed attackers stormed a camp housing refugees from neighbouring Mali last week.

Nine people were killed in that assault, which a local official said was carried out by "heavily armed terrorists" on motorcycles who fled back into Mali.



All the countries involved are former French colonies. On Saturday, the French foreign ministry "condemned the attack in the strongest terms", expressing its "full solidarity with the authorities and people of Niger", adding it stands by their side "in the fight against terrorism".

Over 61,000 Malian refugees shelter in Tahoua and Tillaberi, according to the United Nations.

After the departure of French soldiers from Mali last year and a scheduled pullout shortly from Burkina Faso, France will field only 3,000 troops in the restive Sahel region -- in Niger and Chad.

# Scholz's Social Democrats risk upset at Berlin vote rerun

BERLIN (AFP/APP): German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats face the prospect of an embarrassing loss on Sunday during the rerun of a chaotic 2021 regional election in Berlin.

The German capital, one of the country's 16 federal states, has been ordered by the courts to return to the ballot boxes as the last vote on September 26, 2021, failed to meet basic democratic standards.

Opinion polls in the run-up to the election put the CDU conservative opposition in pole position, ahead of Scholz's SPD, who came first in 2021. If the trend is confirmed, it would mark the first time in over 20 years that the CDU has topped the regional vote in the capital.

SPD general secretary Kevin Kuehnert underlined the impact of the local vote on a national level, warning that it could determine whether Scholz continued to have strong SPD-led states behind him as he seeks to implement his plans for Germany. Any upset risks shifting the balance of power in the Bundesrat, the upper house of the federal parliament, which represents the regional states. "A lot has changed since" the vote in 2021, making for an unusual contest, said Thorsten Faas, professor in political science at Berlin's Freie

Universitaet.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has shifted the political landscape and the timing of Sunday's vote -- no longer falling on the same day as federal elections -- means turnout will likely be lower, he told AFP.

The rerun in Berlin is only the second time in German post-war history that a state election has been declared invalid, after irregularities were reported in a vote in Hamburg in 1991. Incumbent Mayor Franziska Giffey, who leads a fractious coalition between the SPD, the Greens and the far-left Die Linke, has described the ordered repeat vote as a "difficult and challenging situation, particularly in the current crisis" with soaring energy prices in the wake of the Ukraine war.

Opposition parties have made hay with the electoral debacle, as well as an outcry surrounding violent clashes during New Year's celebrations in the city and tussles over transport policy.

CDU challenger Kai Wegner might claim a mandate to lead a coalition government in the city, if his party comes top with 25-26 percent of the votes as suggested by opinion polls. The balance of power in the Berlin Senate after the vote however could still be in Giffey's favour, offering her an easier way to remain

mayor by marshalling current partners.

But the Social Democrat has insisted that she is campaigning for the "SPD to remain the strongest political force in this city".

The organisation of the 2021 election on the same day as a national vote, a local housing referendum and the Berlin marathon had led to wide-spread logistical problems.

Ballot papers got stuck in traffic as roads were closed for the race, with lines forming outside polling stations struggling to process votes.

Federal election officials found voting irregularities in Berlin districts equivalent to about half the city.

The German parliament has also resolved for national elections to be partly repeated in Berlin, with the date of that vote yet to be set.

The 2021 fiasco is a further stain on the reputation of the capital, where administrative snags are commonplace. Sunday's election will take place under the watchful gaze of international election observers from the Council of Europe, invited in by the city itself to restore trust.

Berlin has also called up an army of 42,000 election helpers -- 8,000 more than last time around -- and plans to give polling stations extra ballots to avoid shortages.

# New York truck attacker may face death penalty despite Biden pledge

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): President Joe Biden promised to abolish capital punishment for federal crimes, but the US government is due to argue, beginning Monday, that an Uzbek man should get the death penalty for killing eight people in New York half a decade ago.

The same 12 jurors who last month convicted Sayfullo Saipov of several murder and terrorism charges will decide whether he should be jailed for life or sentenced to death.

Although the Biden administration declared a moratorium on all federal executions, if Saipov receives the sentence he could be put to death, either under a future president or if the moratorium is lifted.

Saipov, now 35, drove a rented pickup truck down a Manhattan bike path as New Yorkers prepared to celebrate Halloween on October 31, 2017.

The dead included a group of five friends from Argentina. At least 12 other people were injured before police shot Saipov in the abdomen.

It was the deadliest attack in New York since the September 11, 2001 Al-Qaeda hijackings brought down the World Trade Center.

Saipov, who moved to the United States in 2010, claimed to have acted in the name of the Islamic State group, which described him as one of its "soldiers."

He expressed no remorse during his trial, which heard harrowing testimony from victims.

Immediately following the attack, then-president Donald Trump called for Saipov to be executed, and the Department of Justice (DOJ) sought the ultimate penalty in its initial filings.

Under Biden, the DOJ has maintained that stance, prompting criticism from human rights groups.

"It is not too late for the Biden administration (to) make good on the president's campaign promise to relegate the cruel, unusual, unreliable and racist federal death penalty to the dustbin of history," said Brian Stull, deputy director of the American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU) Capital Punishment Project.

The Trump administration oversaw a record 13 executions in its final months, ending a 17-year spell in which federal authorities had not carried out any.

Biden has not issued a complete ban on the death penalty, but his attorney general, Merrick Garland,

announced the moratorium in July 2021.

The president has been criticized for not commuting the sentences of 44 federal inmates waiting on death row.

Saipov's lawyer, David Patton, wrote in a court filing dated January 30 that there was "ample evidence" that the decision to seek the death penalty was "both arbitrary and based on impermissible factors such as his religion and national origin."

Garland has also allowed the DOJ to pursue the death penalty for Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, convicted of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, which killed three people and injured hundreds. Observers say the two examples suggest the DOJ favors capital punishment for terror offenses.

"In this narrow area of criminal law, where you're dealing with horrific terrorist acts, the attorney general believes in his mind and heart that the death penalty is an appropriate punishment," said Pace University law professor and former prosecutor Bennett Gershman.

Unlike under Trump, Gershman added, the current approach is evidence the DOJ has independence from the White House.

Other experts believe the department uses the threat of capital punishment to pressure suspects to plead guilty in exchange for life terms.

Jurors in Saipov's case will need to reach a unanimous decision, and he would still have opportunities to appeal.

Richard Dieter, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center, notes that the process could take years to resolve and could come at considerable expense, with victims' families left in limbo.

"If we don't get to use it, (then) let's get rid of the death penalty. A lot of states really have come to that conclusion. And so the death penalty is dwindling," Dieter told AFP.

In America, most executions are carried out by states, not the federal government.

There are currently around 20 executions per year -- mostly carried out by a handful of Southern states -- down from about twice that number a decade ago.

New York has abolished the death penalty at the state level.

The most high-profile New York executions were those of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. They were electrocuted in 1953 as Soviet spies at the height of the Cold War.

# Race to identify Turkey quake victims



KAHRAMANMARAS (AFP/APP): Tuba Yolcu is desperate for news of her missing aunt and scours a sports hall where victims of a powerful earthquake that hit her hometown in Turkey lie in body bags.

"We hear (the authorities) will no longer keep the bodies waiting after a certain period of time, they say they will take them and bury them," she said. "God willing we will find her."

Yolcu said, with worry etched on her face. Monday's 7.8-magnitude tremor struck Kahramanmaraş in the country's southeast, unleashing catastrophe in the region and Syria, killing at least 28,000 people. Anguished families flock to sports halls, hospital morgues or cemeteries in the severely hit city -- where bodies are piling up -- in a bid to find their missing relatives. "Every unidentified body will eventually be returned to their family," a prosecutor said, trying to soothe the families.

"Don't worry, blood samples are taken from each and every missing

body," he assured. Families -- who cannot reach their loved ones during the rescue work -- check one by one bodies either in bags or wrapped in blankets. "We show the faces to their immediate relatives," a crime scene investigator in a hazmat suit told AFP at a large grave outside the city.

Funeral cars deliver a stream of bodies, burying them one by one.

"If the identity is unknown, we take fingerprints and tooth samples and compare them with their relatives," said the investigator, who carries a camera around his neck.

About 2,000 bodies have been identified at the cemetery, which is filled with freshly dug graves.

Next to the wooden headstones at the makeshift cemetery, where some are wrapped by scarves, people mourn their relatives. One woman sits near the grave, unable to stop crying.

Missing bodies are stored lower down, where investigators take pictures and notes. Yusuf Sekman, from

the religious affairs directorate, said the unidentified bodies are also divided according to where their collapsed building was located. This allows relatives to "also look, based on the recovered body's address", he said. "Their samples are taken, and noted down on body bags" to help with identification.

Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said on Friday he hoped the missing bodies would be identified and said the government was doing everything it could.

"We upload unidentified patients' photographs to a special software in order to match," Koca said. Unfortunately for Yolcu, her aunt was not at the sports hall since an official said all the bodies have been identified. When the quake struck, her aunt was in the city but Yolcu was in a village. "We cannot find her body," she said, adding that she won't stop looking. As she stepped out of the hall, she turned back to her husband and said: "Let's return to the rubble", hoping that perhaps her aunt had yet to be pulled out.

# Texans of Chinese descent fret that 'dreams have been smashed'

HOUSTON (AFP/APP): With his hat, big belt buckle and cowboy boots, Ly looks the part of a Texan and even speaks with a twang. He's served in the US Navy but on Saturday, he was doing battle on a different front -- against a proposed law that would bar Chinese citizens from owning property in Texas.

About 300 protesters marched through Houston's Chinatown on Saturday, shouting "Stop Chinese hate" and "Texas is our home." Demonstrators wearing a Chinese dragon costume marched alongside, and others pounded and clanged drums and cymbals.

Their ire is aimed at a proposal by Republican

state Senator Lois Kolkhorst that would bar Chinese, Russian, North Korean and Iranian citizens or businesses from purchasing property in the state.

"I'm a veteran of the United States Navy. I feel that there are many patriots in the military... Some of them probably have the same last name as me. And they cannot... buy any house or land or property in Texas (under this bill). That doesn't make any sense," said Ly, 23, who declined to give his full name.

He said he had just obtained US citizenship a few days earlier.

"This law here is discrimination against one people simply because where (they are) from. We

are all created equal," said Nancy Zhao, a 50-year-old accountant. The distress of people like Zhao and Ly comes as tensions mount between the US and China over a host of issues, including the status of Taiwan and the intrusion earlier this month of a Chinese balloon into US airspace. After the balloon drifted across the country, President Joe Biden ordered the military to shoot it down, and it fell into the Atlantic Ocean off South Carolina on February 4. The Pentagon called it a surveillance airship.

Proponents of the Texas bill say it is needed for national security, and Kolkhorst says it will not affect legal residents, or

green card holders.

But ironclad legal protections are not written clearly into the bill as it stands now, experts say, and issues such as how it would affect dual nationals (those who are citizens of the United States and another country, like China) are either not addressed or ambiguous, leading immigrants to fear the worst. "I worked 18 years," said Frank Win, a 31-year-old scientist. "I paid my tax. You know, I'm working hard. And we just had a little boy last July. So we're thinking about buying a new house for him." "But now this bill came out, it's suddenly like, all my American dreams have been smashed."

# Fears for remains of Jerusalem's lost Mughrabi quarter

JERUSALEM (AFP/APP): At Jerusalem's Western Wall plaza, a recent excavation has alarmed some heritage specialists who fear the traces of a centuries-old Arab neighbourhood razed by Israel may disappear.

There are no signs on the expansive plaza to recall the history of the Mughrabi neighbourhood, or Moroccan quarter, which was demolished by Israeli forces after they captured east Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War.

The area now bustles with tourists and worshippers who cross the stone square to the Western Wall, which marks the holiest site where Jews can pray.

The only indication of its North African heritage is a Moroccan flag, flying discreetly in a nearby private garden.

Last month, excavations which the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) said aimed "to strengthen, stabilise and improve infrastructure" at the site "revealed parts" of the Mughrabi quarter and uncovered the remains of homes.

French historian Vincent Lemire said the discoveries included walls nearly a metre high, traces of paint, a cobbled courtyard and a system to drain rainwater.

"No one expected to discover so many remains of the Mughrabi quarter, so well preserved," said Lemire, who has authored a book about the neighbourhood's destruction.

For a brief time, "we could literally walk in the middle of the ancient Mughrabi quarter -- in its streets, in its courtyards, in its houses," said Lemire, who also heads Jerusalem's French Research Centre.

Within days, AFP journalists saw that some stone remains appeared to have been removed and the area was covered up once more.

The district was initially founded in the 12th century by Saladin, who defeated the Crusader kingdom in Jerusalem.

It was established for Muslim pilgrims from North Africa as it stood below the Al-Aqsa mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam.

The mosque compound is above the Western Wall and is also holy to Jews, who refer to the site as the Temple Mount.

After Israeli forces seized east Jerusalem and its Old City in June 1967, Mughrabi residents were forcibly evicted and the neighbourhood was demolished overnight.

"From previous archaeological activities in the Old City and its surroundings, we are deeply concerned" about the recent findings, said Alon Arad, director of Israeli organisation Emek Shaveh, which fights against the politicisation of archaeology.

He said the IAA's priority was to create a vast archaeological site which celebrates only the Jewish heritage of Jerusalem.

The IAA has been involved in numerous controversial digs in east Jerusalem, which Israel annexed years after the 1967 war.

Among them are excavations in a Jewish settlement area in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan, just beyond the Old City walls, and tunnels beneath the Western Wall plaza.

The tunnels are now a vast museum displaying ruins dating to the time of the Second Temple, which the Romans destroyed in 70 AD, leaving only the Western Wall standing.

The 1996 public opening of the tunnels sparked violent clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinians that killed more than 80 people. Palestinians fear their use threatens the foundations of Al-Aqsa

mosque. Arad accused Israeli authorities of "silencing any other heritage or cultural affiliation" and of using excavations for the "Judaisation" of the Old City.

The IAA disputed Arad's claims as baseless, telling AFP that it works on "all the antiquities of Jerusalem, from all the cultures and religions that lived in the holy city".

The remains discovered last month are too recent to be considered antiquities, the IAA said, but the findings were documented and details would be published in a scientific journal.

The body did not respond to an AFP question about a potential public display.

Morocco, which revived relations with Israel in 2020, "seeks to promote 'intangible Judeo-Moroccan heritage'," said Ali Bouabid from the North African country's Abderrahim Bouabid foundation think tank.

"It's a strange contrast: when one celebrates diversity loudly, while in silence the other organises its disappearance," Bouabid told AFP.

Visitors to the plaza are invited to pray at the Western Wall or explore the tunnels, where they can "touch the true stones which recount the history of the Jewish nation".

There is no mention of the residents who lived for centuries in the site's shadow.

But the recent dig also unearthed everyday objects such as toys, tools and cooking utensils. Exhibiting such items could serve as a testament to the "ordinary history of this extraordinary neighbourhood", said Lemire, suggesting some building remains could be "preserved, displayed and highlighted in a tourist route". "If these final remnants are destroyed in the end, the material traces of this history will be lost forever," he said.

# UN chief calls terrorism 'an affront to humanity'; underscores extra vigilance

UNITED NATIONS (APP): With extremist groups expanding their reach, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Sunday called on the international community not to lower its guard against terrorism.

The appeal came in his message to mark the first-ever 'International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conductive to Terrorism', established in December by the UN General Assembly.

The UN chief described terrorism as an "affront to humanity as it undermines the values that bind us together." Terrorism also threatens collective efforts to promote peace and security, protect human rights, provide humanitarian aid, and advance sustainable development, Guterres said. "We must be more vigilant than ever," he said, noting that "terrorist and violent extremist groups are finding fertile ground on the

internet to spew their vicious venom."

He said neo-Nazi, white supremacist movements are becoming more dangerous by the day and now represent the top internal security threat in several countries, as well as the fastest growing. Countries must act to confront the challenge through prevention, and by addressing the underlying conditions that drive terrorism in the first place, he added.

He highlighted the importance of inclusion and ensuring that counter-terrorism strategies reflect a wide array of voices -- especially minorities, women, and young people. Human rights must be at the core of all counter-terrorism policies, he added.

"Today and every day, let us work together to build more peaceful, inclusive, and stable societies in which terror and violent extremism have no home," the secretary-general said.



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## Deadly earthquake and global response

The unfortunate earthquake in the border regions of Turkiye and Syria has passed over 25,000 deaths while casualties are continuously increasing and the scope of the recovery of the survivors still buried beneath the rubble of the buildings diminishes every passing movement. According to the details, search and rescue operations are continuing and thousands of volunteers and military men are searching for signs of life beneath the wreckage of destroyed buildings and recovering dead bodies for an early funeral in quake-hit regions in neighboring nations.

The 7.8 magnitudes deadly earthquake brought tremendous destruction and misery in Turkiye and Northwestern Syria causing thousands of deaths, and injuries and the destruction of buildings, road infrastructure, and mass displacement in tremor-hit regions. The earthquake was one of the worst and largest disasters in Turkiye's history since 1939. The volume of destruction is so vast that 10 Turkish provinces suffered tremendous losses, 6444 buildings completely collapsed and thousands received partial damage.

The reports suggest that the humanitarian conditions are very dire in conflict-ridden Syria where search and rescue teams and relief workers are unable to reach quake-hit areas un rebels control. The earthquake completely erased 2000 buildings while damaging over 5000 constructions in violence-hit Aleppo and Jableh cities in Northwestern Syria. According to an estimate, over 5.3 million people became homeless due to the devastating earthquake. who need shelter, warm clothes, meals, and healthcare on an urgent basis, while nearly 15 million Syrians were already in need of humanitarian assistance prior to the recent earth shake. The UN Secretary-General and his team are working to get safe passage of relief goods to Syrian rebel-held territory through coordination with the Bashir-al-Asad regime along with through the Turkish-Syria border crossings.

The convulsion has brought sudden and unimaginable losses to the victim nations while the freezing winter made up another challenge for survivors as well as for rescuers. The enormous calamity has attracted an encouraging and unified response from the global community. Presently, over eight thousand search and rescue workers from 70 countries across the world are busy around the clock in search and relief operations in Turkey, while UN relief goods and humanitarian assistance from Arab Nations had been started reaching Syria's earthquake-hit regions. Erdogan's government has announced a 3-month emergency in 10 disaster-hit provinces to effectively mitigate the losses. The world has expressed solidarity with earthquake victims in Turkiye and Syria while donor nations and aid agencies are rushing to deploy their personnel and send their relief assistance to crisis-hit nations.

At the time, the exact estimate of the human and economic losses brought up by the earthquake in Turkiye and Syria is not possible, however, the cataclysm was horrific and the volume of destruction is unbelievable. After the search and rescue operation accomplishes, the colossal tasks of reconstruction and rehabilitation would begin, which will last for years and need billions of dollars in investment. Ankara has witnessed a drastic economic downturn and faces serious financial challenges amid the global energy crisis while Syria has been embattled with domestic violence and political unrest over the past decades. Thus, both nations need continuous financial and technical support from the international community to tackle the gigantic challenges in the post-earthquake period to successfully rehabilitate their earthquake victims. Hopefully, the global community will uphold its moral duty by keeping the same pace of cooperation with quake-hit nations in the future.

## Pakistan's commitment to peace

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi visited foreign ships of navies participating in the 8th Multinational Naval Exercise AMAN-23. The Naval Chief interacted with Senior Officers and guest sailors and attended briefings regarding the mission. Pakistan's Amir-ul-Behr precisely highlighted Pakistan's contribution toward peace and stability in the region.

Pakistan is a peace-loving nation and a preacher of Peace (Aman) in the region and beyond, while it specifically illustrated its quest for peace through words and actions at all forums throughout history. Pakistan's peace endeavors spread across all spectrums of international relations ranging from peace Diplomacy to regional and global peace mechanisms, bilateral and multilateral joint Military drills to global campaigns against terrorism, piracy, and transnational organized crimes.

Pakistan faces eternal animosity from a staunch rival since from very existence and confronts an all-time risk of aggression and military incursion from its Eastern frontiers, thus Pakistan's defense forces including the Pakistan Navy have shored up their operational activities within territorial waters, coastal areas, and land borders to effectively safeguard the nation's territorial sovereignty, alongside enhancing their professional interaction and collaboration with allied nations and global partners.

The current complex geopolitical and geostrategic dynamics have caused significant security challenges for Pakistan Navy which demands an all-weather kinetic strategy and heightened vigilance to effectively thwart potential hazards. Pakistan Navy has always remained committed to maintaining regional peace and stability along with ensuring the safety and security of the Country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the global energy/trade routes through the country's territorial waters. Pakistan Navy's participation in bilateral and multilateral exercises and regular hosting of a multinational AMAN Maritime exercise is a practical manifestation of Pakistan's seriousness for regional and global peace. Although, the Pakistani nation always lobbies for the preservation of peace and harmonious coexistence with its neighbours however our defense forces are ever ready to foil any malicious attempt against the sovereignty of their motherland.

# Why are Palestinians shunning the protests against judicial reforms?

Yossi Mekelberg

Something that at first glance might seem paradoxical is happening in the current protests against the new Israeli government's plans for its so-called reform (or obliteration, to be more accurate) of the judiciary: The absence of Palestinian citizens of Israel among the protesters.

Considering the number of rabid, racist, anti-Arab members of the current administration, many of them unashamedly so, it was surely to be expected that the Arab Palestinian community in Israel would mobilize in large numbers and be at the forefront of these weekly demonstrations.

But the opposite is happening: Most Palestinians are staying away from this display of public dismay about the government's brutal attempt to fatally wound the democratic system, despite the fact that they, more than any other segment of Israeli society, are the ones likely to pay the heaviest price for the changes.

For those who are surprised at this behavior, chiefly the Jewish progressive elements who are genuinely endeavoring to prevent this most recent version of a Benjamin Netanyahu government from being the last to preside over a liberal democracy, it is time for a reality

check.

They should listen to the resentment of their Palestinian compatriots for the Jewish Israeli society in all its shades, and join arms with them in ensuring that a just, equal and respectful society for all its people is what characterizes the Israel of the future.

The hesitation, even absence, of the Arab voice in the protests is not the paradox it might at first appear to be: it is their own protest within the protest, against all strands of the Israeli-Zionist discourse that has marginalized them since the establishment of Israel in 1948 and denied them their history and identity.

To begin with, a state that defines itself by its Jewishness sends an immediate message to those who are not Jewish: You do not belong here and/or do not have equal status with your Jewish neighbors. This tension between Jewish and democratic could have been resolved over the years with the required wisdom, ideological flexibility, tolerance of the other, and adherence to the principle of equality for all citizens, not to mention goodwill toward the Arab-Palestinian minority.

Instead, Palestinians have been discriminated against through legal means, as well as informally, from the very first day of Israel's independence, and

lived under military administration for the first 18 years of the state's existence. It made very little difference to them whether a left- or right-leaning government was in power.

Rejecting participation in the current protests against the government's judicial coup, as with previous protests, is a result of the deep-rooted feeling among Palestinian Israelis that they are not welcomed by the vast majority of the Jewish population, and that there is no intention to develop an equal partnership with the rest of the society.

To begin with, the Jewish population, individually and officially, refuses to recognize them as Palestinians and insists on referring to them as "the Arabs of Israel," to differentiate them from other Palestinians. This has a lot to do with the Jewish-Zionist obsession with the demographic balance between the Jewish and Palestinian populations.

It is a combination of denial, ignorance and fear, but the fact remains that the Arabs who live in Israel are Palestinians who survived the 1948 war and the Nakba without being forced into exile or driven away by the violence, including that committed by the Israeli

army. But it does not make them, or their descendants, any less Palestinian. That is merely a fiction invented to suit the Zionist narrative but it is a leitmotif of all Israeli governments and institutions, confirmed by the country's ideology, with very minor differences.

Tragically, the participation of an Arab Palestinian party in the previous Israeli government, for the first time in the country's history, only emphasized the widespread hostility to the Palestinian minority in the country at large. One of the main accusations in the venomous attacks by the right against the previous Bennett-Lapid government, with no foundation whatsoever, was that it included Hamas and terrorist supporters, despite the fact that the Ra'am party led by Mansour Abbas was one of the most responsible and moderate forces in that government.

Shunning the protests might not serve to improve the status of Palestinians in Israel but it should at least serve as a wake-up call for the progressive elements in Israel who would like to coexist with Palestinians as equals, to up their game. In what threatens to be a crucial watershed in the country's history, at this point when its very democratic future is in the balance, the

group of citizens who are likely to be most affected by the government's agenda is remaining silent out of despair and distrust of the rest of society, because of being increasingly forced to exist as second-class citizens.

This is a development that should reverberate across the country. It is also happening, ironically, at a time when the number of Palestinians in Israel graduating from universities is higher than ever and, despite the hardships, many are improving their economic conditions, although they still lag behind the Jewish population.

Whether it is the result of the Nation-State Law that legalized the discrimination against Palestinians in Israel, or other legislation that limits their access to land and construction and excludes them from national decision-making centers, or the racism ingrained in Israeli society, many Israeli Palestinians have been left bruised, angry and, as a result, disengaged.

Years of neglect have led to high levels of violent crime in this community, claimed many lives and spread fear among its members, which has added to the perception that their lives are worth much less than those of their Jewish neighbors.

And yes, there is the

nexus with the situation on the other side of the Green Line, and the cruel occupation and blockade of their brethren in the West Bank and Gaza while others languish in refugee camps in neighboring countries. Not only did the organizers of these demonstrations refuse to include these issues on their agenda but most of the Jewish participants are utterly blind to the indisputable correlation between the 55 years of oppression of millions of Palestinians and the constant erosion of Israel's democracy.

No democracy can survive when it discriminates against so many of its own citizens (20 percent in this case) and deprives an entire nation of its most basic human, political and civil rights, characteristics that are more common to authoritarian regimes than democratic states.

The game is up and the results of the anti-democratic actions against the occupied and blockaded Palestinians have now spilled over to the other side of the Green Line, and Israel's Jewish population is living in willing denial of that.

And so they should not be surprised that when they need their Israeli Palestinian neighbors to join them in efforts to save Israel's democracy, they are encountering a very reluctant response.

## Google vs. Microsoft: Who will lead the way in the AI conversation?

Dr. Bashayer Al-Majed

Several months after artificial intelligence research lab OpenAI launched its ChatGPT-3.5 chatbot and InstructGPT, Google has unveiled its own AI program and interface, called Bard.

These systems use a neural-net style AI system,

an answer that has enough depth and is in a natural enough "human" language to pass as, for example, the work of a student? From what I have seen, the responses returned by the chatbot are impressive but do not yet have enough depth or clarity. Perhaps a

information comes from whatever web pages its search engine can find. There are a lot of highly accurate pages out there but also a lot of fallacious information, whether unintentionally erroneous

a list of the top 10 most successful people to hold such a role.

The error made by Google Bard this month was not catastrophic; it is still undergoing rigorous testing and will improve

all the loosely relevant information, collating it and filtering it to be more directly specific to the question asked, then summarizing that information in what appears like natural language.

At the end of the day, the information it outputs

Hoover or Google itself, for example, all of which are brand names that became synonymous as a verb for the very function of their main products.

But technology can evolve and change in ways and directions that none but the most tech-savvy

**Google's Bard, meanwhile, suffered a setback last week when, in a video demo, it responded with incorrect information to a question it was asked. This highlights a major flaw in current AI: The information it shares is only as good as the information it is able to access. In Google's case, the information comes from whatever web pages its search engine can find. There are a lot of highly accurate pages out there but also a lot of fallacious information, whether unintentionally erroneous or deliberately deceptive. A human might be able to tell (though sometimes might not) which sources are reliable and which are spoofs or merely inaccurate. A computer program might not have the information required to make that determination, however, and would therefore fail to screen out false information. Information can also contain biases, including historic omissions. Consider, for example, an AI program assessing job candidates to select one for the role of CEO of an IT company. If we assume no Arab woman has previously held the role of CEO of an IT company, then the AI might reach the conclusion that Arab women would not be successful in the job because, for example, they do not feature on a list of the top 10 most successful people to hold such a role.**

based on the idea of a mammalian brain with lots of small "cells" that individually process data but are part of a whole, interactive network. They utilize natural language processing to better understand and process human speech, so as to more accurately comprehend a user's question or request, and then return data in a form that is recognizable as human speech or prose.

Therein arises the controversial question of plagiarism. Students can input an essay question and the bot will return a completed essay on the subject. Similarly, the technology could be used to complete job applications or write a Shakespearean sonnet.

But can the program understand a question well enough and truly assemble

teacher unfamiliar with their student, and with a lot of essays to mark in a hurry, might not notice. But in all likelihood, ChatGPT is not quite there yet.

However, Microsoft clearly believes it will eventually get there and that it is the future, given that it has just invested \$29 billion in working with OpenAI to upgrade all of its platforms, including its search engine, Bing.

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over time as information is updated, errors are identified and it "learns." But it serves as an important reminder to all of us that computers are not infallible.

The situation is akin to listening to an overconfident person telling you about "facts" they are convinced are right, when they are not. You might end up believing them simply because they sound so sure of themselves, and perhaps even doubt yourself if you question their information. Many people still believe computers cannot possibly be wrong — but they are only as accurate as the information that is fed into them.

This particular AI technology is mostly concerned with language: Analysing a question asked by the user, finding

is dependent on how good its search engine is. However realistically Microsoft's new AI-powered bot can speak, if the quality of the information it gathers comes down to a direct comparison between Bing and Google, then unless Bing massively upgrades the ways in which it finds information, and regardless of Google's error in its demo video, there will be no competition. Google is simply a much more effective search engine than Bing. There is a reason why more people "Google" what they want to know, rather than "Bing" it.

It is difficult to predict which platform will lead the way into the future of AI. Sometimes a single innovator truly claims that pioneering mantle in an industry; look at Xerox,

among us might imagine, and even major brands, technology and activities can quickly become obsolete. Take, for example, pioneering brands such as Kodak, Nokia and AOL, which were once commonplace in many homes, yet few Gen Z adults would recognize them now. And in the 1960s, a computer took up an entire room; now you can wear one that is much more powerful on your wrist.

Regardless of which company ultimately prevails and enjoys greater success, AI is here to stay and it is clear it will revolutionize everyday technology, the ways in which we interact with it, and the ways in which we interact with one another. However, privacy and intellectual laws will still need to be addressed.

## Middle East fintechs will have to change their ways in chasing growth

Marwan Hachem

As a fintech founder, I have been watching the global economy and its likely impact on the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA) markets. While the region is a growing economy, the global economic outlook poses a significant challenge, especially for the tech industry.

For fintechs, it is critical to be an enabler of the broader ecosystem. Growing economies feel the effects at a slower rate, which leads to more frequent fluctuation, and the regional markets being more fluid. As a result, the business impact is much greater in the long term if

companies are not prepared to weather a storm through adaptability and diversification.

This will for sure come to fruition for many startups this year. The fintech startups with singular product lines will suffer because their offering becomes too niche or has been already saturated by another player in a market like this.

Pressure to consolidate This will result in a growing number of M&As in our sector. We will see more JVs between neobanks and lenders and as a result, the sector will streamline creating betting opportunities for both

their businesses and their consumers. We must also consider that the crucial addressable audiences are both Generation Zs and the younger cohort of millennials, all of whom will turn away from an app or digital service that is not seamlessly integrating all their personalized needs into one platform. Therefore, multiple product-lines are essential to maintain growth this coming year. The MEASA fintech sector saw rapid growth for several reasons. The advancement of digital economies accelerated exponentially trig-

gered by the pandemic. This also had a positive effect on mobile and internet penetration, enabling greater access to financial services for many.

With that came an increase in demand for financial services that can be accessed at a touch of a button, in the same way, one would order Deliveroo or book an Uber. Investments in the sector saw a significant rise as well, particularly in the first-half of 2022, reaching \$819 million – more than the total in the whole of 2021 and 14 times more than in 2016. We saw fin-

tech players rapidly scale their business and operations throughout the past year. As we reached the end of 2022 and the global market started to look uncertain, there was a lull in both investment and confidence in the sector on a macro scale.

To stay afloat, fintechs born into growing economies such as the Middle East need to be able to adapt in real-time and face challenges with a dynamic approach. The key to maintaining growth is to become an enabler of the ecosystem.

This is a model we at YAP set out to achieve and have followed since Day

One. Collaboration is undeniably the way to expand and sustain success and we will likely see more partnerships this year. We are now on a mission to position ourselves as the future of digital banking for these specific markets, where on-demand and accessible financial services were almost non-existent before. We focus on providing solutions that meet the specific needs of the local market.

This can be achieved by understanding the local market conditions and tailoring products and services to meet unique demands.



# Libya’s transition is going nowhere fast — by design

This week is the 12th anniversary of the outbreak of the first Libyan civil war but there will be no fanfare or grand speeches commemorating what was the beginning of the end for Muammar Qaddafi's regime.

Instead, the occasion will be marked only by disheartening commentaries and revisiting the growing corpus of informed discourse seeking to demystify the country's puzzling post-2011 trajectory and its stalled transition.

Unlike an impatient-turned-indifferent global community that appears content with the managed chaos within the North African country's borders, for average Libyans the situation is getting worse.

The divisions are as varied as they are plentiful, from the political and societal to sectarian and even geographical, fueled by grievances — both real and imagined. As tensions ebb and flow in a land awash with small arms and people who are aggrieved, the risk of renewed open warfare remains high, a situation that is easily exploitable by malign interference from beyond Libya's borders.

Meanwhile, the absence of the rule of law means that even when there is irrefutable evidence of flagrant human rights violations, the perpetrators will never see justice, which in turn convinces the victims not to even bother seeking it.

The catalog of woes is endless, and the scuttled aspirations of yesteryear

have festered into the permanent helplessness of today, leaving little hope that a stable, fully functioning state can still be cobbled together from the ashes and debris of the Arab Spring tumult.

A woeful reality has settled on a land that has been frozen in place for the equivalent of about a quarter of Qaddafi's 42-year rule.

It is a reality that is unlikely to change, given the caliber, ambitions and excesses of a political elite that is much too preoccupied with seizing and maintaining power than exercising it to further any interests other than its own.

Twelve years on, it is clear that Libya is going nowhere fast — and what lies at the end of all this is anyone's guess.

Prior to the ceasefire just over two years ago, it was easy to simply point to episodic violence as a primary impediment to Libya's democratization, or some semblance of it. However, the cessation of all-out war has not convinced a political elite, divided between the west and east of the country, to seek reunification, the disarmament of non-state actors, the restoration of state institutions, democratic elections and, eventually, stability.

Rather, the feuding parties only go so far as to hold discussions with ambitious stated objectives such as the integration of Libya's numerous armed groups into a single police and military force, in an effort to restore to the state its monopoly over the use of force.

### Hafed Al-Ghwell

Despite the glaringly obvious impracticalities of pursuing such objectives, however, these open-ended talks are still highly regarded and lavished with effusive praise as a sign that there is still some momentum in Libya's transition.

Unfortunately, it is all deceptive — and even malicious, to an extent. Discussions about, say, integrating the armed forces resonate well with outside actors who have a vested interest in the country's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts.

Yet to Libya's political elite, this recent warming up to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is just another attempt to replace the feuding parallel governments with another interim authority, pending elections, supposedly featuring officials from both sides.

Of course, any move to disarm or in some way disadvantage either side will just heighten the risk of renewed conflict and further entrench the divisions in Libya, which means this discussion, like many others before it, is already a non-starter.

The same applies to an announcement last month about brokered talks between the two parallel governments to produce an agreement on a constitutional basis for elections.

It is nothing Libyans have not heard before, nor is it a clever gambit never before tried. It is merely the latest outlandish pro-

posal designed to gauge the public's reception and/or draw reactions from abroad before mobilizing either in support of it or to protest against it.

Furthermore, this sudden openness to reconciliation has all the hallmarks of a ploy to sideline the UN, which seems intent on reviving the electoral track that is touted as the only credible, potent challenge to the elites who have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

This development underscores just how much Libya's future is now undermined by a cabal of the self-interested few who are well-insulated from a crumbling state and beholden to influences, obstructionist, malign or otherwise.

On paper, the attempts at reconciliation present new possibilities, once again re-energizing the discourse about a possible end to Libya's bifurcation and the beginning of, well, something other than the status quo.

However, when these attempts coincide with a sharp rise in corruption and shady deals with shadowy entities across Libya's oil sector, they should be treated as distractions designed to conceal the theft of precious state resources by elites on both sides, reassured by their tacit bargain to monopolize power.

So sure of themselves are these elites that they easily misappropriate some \$6 billion with little pushback or alarm from within Libya or abroad, especially considering a part of those funds went

to the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group that has its fighters stationed around major oil facilities and key military bases in Libya.

In short, for all their posturing, the Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh-led Government of National Unity in the west and the eastern coalition — comprising Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army that draws legitimacy from the House of Representatives and Fathi Bashagha's Government of National Stability — have one thing in common.

Their shared tactic is infuriating commitments to performative gatherings where nothing of substance materializes, other than further delays to anticipated elections and the entrenchment of politicians with only one preoccupation: Holding onto power at all costs.

The only realistic projection for Libya, moving forward, is that the North African country will remain torn between its east and west, an informal partition that is slowly consolidating its permanence.

Fortunately, there is still a moment of opportunity for genuine progress, even if it also constitutes a risk for the spoilers and detractors who are threatened by it.

Should the latter continue to dominate the narrative, and what goes on in the few corridors of power that remain in Libya, then the country will just recede into conflict to find in blood what could not be settled in ink.



# UK PM’s reshuffle is akin to rearranging deckchairs on the Titanic

### Andrew Hammond

After about 100 days in office, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Tuesday announced a reshuffle intended to recharge his government. Yet it might ultimately amount to little more than a case of “rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic,” and it reverses much of the post-Brexit, “Global Britain” agenda of his predecessors.

The reshuffle, the fifth in about 20 months by successive leaders of the Conservative government, did not actually reassign many Cabinet ministers. Rather it moved around existing members of the prime minister's top team in what was actually more of a reform of government architecture.

This restructuring of the departmental landscape resulted in the former Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy being split into three. It is only the latest change for the department, which was founded in 1861 as the Board of Trade and has undergone many wide-ranging alterations since

until 1983.

Overall, the changes effectively recreate the former Department of Trade and Industry, which was previously instituted twice (in 1970 and 1983) by Conservative governments before being split up or refocused by Labour administrations. They also mark the demise of the short-lived Department for International Trade, which was created by May as part of her efforts to deliver a “Global Britain” in the wake of Brexit.

The move does little for ministerial stability within the important business brief. Badenoch is the sixth secretary of state responsible for business since the 2019 election. Renewing — and in some cases rebuilding — relationships with stakeholders and setting new departmental directions all takes time, while the clock ticks toward a general election likely to take place next year.

It is likely that Sunak's former role as UK finance

next general election. It is highly unlikely this will be the case.

For one thing, redrawing the political landscape of the UK in such a way often leads to “turf wars,” uncertainty among staff and the creation of new working practices that tend to delay rather than accelerate change in the short term. It is estimated by some that new information technology and human resources systems might not be fully operational until 2025.

Moreover, even if Sunak is proven right and his changes turn out to be a route to longer-term growth, turning the UK into a science and technology superpower is not a natural campaigning issue. He will therefore struggle to make this issue resonate with the electorate.

Another looming headache for the prime minister is that while the reshuffle might provide him with some political breathing space to once again focus on his main priorities, following the sacking of Nadhim Zahawi as a Cabinet minister, another

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the 1960s.

The latest restructuring creates three “new” government entities: The Department for Business and Trade, which will be headed by Kemi Badenoch; the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, led by Grant Shapps; and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, led by Michelle Donelan.

The reforms are intended to bring a fresh approach to efforts to deliver on the prime minister's policy priorities, which include halving inflation and growing the economy. In some respects, however, they represent more of a return to the past. A department devoted to energy, for example, existed between 2008 and 2016, when Theresa May abolished it, and before that from 1974

minister could have played a significant role in his decision to salami-slice the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, after he clashed last year with Kwasi Kwarteng, the business secretary at the time, over the government's response to the energy crisis, in the widespread belief that the department was too big to get a grip on the issue.

As much as contrasting personalities, this rivalry reflected the deeper, long-standing tensions between two pillars of government who had often found themselves at odds over how the economy should be managed.

Politically, the key question arising from Sunak's shuffle is whether it might allow him to make unexpected strides before the

threat looms large in the form of the investigation into Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab. Pressure is building over allegations of bullying by him that could boil over in the spring.

Raab continues to head the Ministry of Justice, as Sunak wants to follow due process while the minister, who insists he is innocent of all the accusations, is under investigation. The challenge for the government is that should Raab eventually be forced to resign or be sacked, there will need to be another mini-reshuffle in the next few weeks, which would lead some Conservatives to question why Sunak did not wait to find this out rather than have to go through two periods of Cabinet-level change in short order.

# Can solar panels in space help provide power to the Earth?

### Robin Mills

Where can we go that is even sunnier than the Middle East and North Africa? Not many places on Earth, perhaps, but in space the sun shines eternally, unobstructed by clouds or dust. So it is understandable that a desert kingdom might team up with a foggy island nation in an effort to harness this energy source.

Saudi Arabia's NEOM project, the futuristic new smart city being built in the country's northwestern corner, is investing in British company Space Solar.

The UK's business secretary met the chairman of the Saudi Space Commission in January to discuss collaboration in the space technology sector. The US, Japan and China have also shown serious interest in generating solar power in space.

Ground-based solar photovoltaic power has taken tremendous strides forward in recent years, with the Middle East hosting the cheapest and largest systems in the world.

Along with wind turbines, solar has emerged as the favored workhorse for the new, low-carbon energy economy that is essential for efforts to avoid disastrous climate change.

But even in the best

locations, solar power's capacity factor — the ratio of annual output to the maximum instantaneous generation — is only about 20 percent. Naysayers are fond of reminding us that the sun does not always shine, as if this is a new discovery.

There are partial solutions to this: Daytime solar energy can be used to charge batteries or generate hydrogen for storage, for example, or different time zones and latitudes can be connected through high-voltage cables thousands of kilometers long. One consortium is planning such a link between Morocco and the UK.

But “green” hydrogen technology is nascent and relatively expensive, and batteries have limited capacity to see a country through a long, sunless winter. Not all countries have readily-available land.

Long-distance cables could be surprisingly cost-effective but they present political and security vulnerabilities.

The off-world concept calls for an enormous system of mirrors and solar panels in geosynchronous orbit around the Earth, where the sun is visible almost all of the time.

The electricity this generates is converted into high-frequency radio waves, little of which are absorbed by the atmos-

phere, and beamed to a ground station that converts them back into electricity. The array can be easily redirected so it can serve several, widely-spaced receivers, switching from one to another as night falls or demand increases.

A report funded by the British government found that space-based solar power was technically feasible and affordable. Its potential viability has rocketed as a result of two major recent developments: The dramatic fall in the cost of solar panels, to the point of being the cheapest terrestrial source of electricity, and the declining cost of space launches, facilitated by reusable systems such as SpaceX.

When I wrote about the topic in 2014, the cost of lifting material into orbit was about \$10,000 per kilogram, and photovoltaic panels cost about \$0.70 per watt.

Now, the cost of a SpaceX launch is just over \$1,000 per kilogram, and PV panels come in at about \$0.20 per watt.

By 2035, Space Solar hopes to have a full-scale, operational, 2 gigawatt system.

For comparison, this is the same size as the Al-Dhafra solar plant under construction in Abu Dhabi that is set to be the

world's biggest and would generate about as much power as a large nuclear reactor.

The UK government report is more cautious and suggests 2040 as a start date. Based on conservative assumptions, it estimates an electricity cost of about 6 cents per kilowatt-hour.

This is significantly lower than new nuclear plants, hydrogen, or natural gas with carbon capture, which are the other main contenders for continuous, low-carbon electricity.

A development program designed to advance to the first operational system could cost about \$20 billion and would probably need substantial government support in the early stages.

The basic components of the system are well-understood; the main technical challenge would seem to be mastering autonomous robotic assembly and maintenance in space.

The panels would need to be as lightweight as possible but modular, easy to assemble, robust and resilient to damage from micro-meteorites, and highly efficient. The launch rockets should use zero-carbon fuels.

It is not certain that space-based solar power can be made commercially viable. But it appears a rather easier prospect than

other futuristic energy options, such as nuclear fusion.

It also seems a more practical candidate for the first large, cosmic industry than another popular idea, which is to mine asteroids for rare metals.

We might question why nations in the Middle East, which is set to be a leader in the deployment of terrestrial solar energy, should be looking to the skies as well.

But if other countries are going to launch such space-bound systems, it would be better to be on board.

Locations with plenty of open land close to the equator also make superior receiving sites. Ground-based solar, with its lower costs, could be a good complement to its orbital cousin.

The UAE has its own active space program, which has sent an orbiter to Mars, which entered orbit around the planet in February 2021, and a probe to the Moon, which should touch down in April.

The research and development required over the next two decades to make a space-based solar system a reality will have many technological spin-off benefits.

What was science fiction only a few years ago might soon help illuminate even the Earth's sunniest regions.

# Investors learn on the fly in the ‘Year of the Rabbit’

### Marc Van de Walle

Remember the word ‘un-investable’ that became the catchphrase associated with financial assets in China last year as they ploughed new lows amid economic and regulatory uncertainty? Or how investors were avoiding global stocks and bonds as both fell more than 10 per cent for the first time on record?

Global stocks and bonds are up almost 20 per cent and 10 per cent since those lows in October, while Hong Kong stocks and Chinese High Yield bonds have gained more than 50 per cent, outperforming most asset classes. Investors are now scrambling to price a U-turn in China's economic prospects this year.

Less than a month into the ‘Year of the Rabbit’, this spectacular bounce reminds us of some of the golden tenets of long-term

investing.

First, always stay invested, disregarding the noise, because markets can be unpredictable, confounding the best of forecasters. History teaches us that time in the markets is more important than timing the markets, but we often forget to practise it, especially when the going gets tough. Those who panicked and sold financial assets last year - and this includes a vast swathe of institutional investors - perhaps not only did so accepting some losses, but they now also must scramble back into the market, re-entering at much higher price points. Staying in the market does not mean taking on more risk than we are willing to stomach; it means staying exposed to various asset classes commensurate with our individual risk appetite.

This is best done

through a diversified portfolio which reflects our personal risk tolerance.

The second lesson is beware of (and thus benefit from) human biases, especially negativity bias, which is often a close cousin of recency bias. As human beings, our brains are wired to flee at the sight of danger. So, when the going gets rough, our instinct is to cut and run.

This clearly hit Chinese assets hard last year as the country's tight mobility restrictions contrasted with a gradual normalisation of global activity as the world came out of a once-in-a-century pandemic. This contrast fed the negativity bias among investors about China's economic outlook. Yet, in hindsight, this was the best time to add to Chinese financial assets as they went on sale, trading at near-record discounts to the rest of the

world.

The third lesson is staying disciplined as an investor. This tenet sounds simple, but I know from my years of experience working with clients that it is hard follow. It encompasses the whole life cycle of financial decisions, starting from planning and portfolio construction, to review and the occasional rebalancing, if the portfolio goes off balance due to unexpected events and is no longer positioned to meet our long-term objectives.

It would be an understatement to say that we have experienced highly unexpected events in the past three years: a once-in-a-century pandemic, the first all-out war in Europe since World War II and a first-ever 10 per cent plus drop in both

global stocks and bonds in a calendar year. These events have no doubt shaken the confidence of the most courageous amongst us.

However, these are the times when following a disciplined approach can help us make sound financial decisions, enabling us to bring our portfolio back on track to meet our long-term financial needs and goals.

2022 was an unusually challenging year for investors, with both stocks and bonds hit by soaring inflation and a robust central bank response to tame it. As investors rebuild their portfolios in the Year of the Rabbit, we believe they have at least one option which is likely to deliver positive returns - i.e., bonds and other income assets which now

offer close to the highest yields in a decade.

This is especially so if inflation continues to decline and the US and Europe both go into a recession as we expect. The Fed and the ECB would then be forced to cut rates by the second-half of the year. Meanwhile, we should also be positioned to take advantage of the tailwinds from a likely strong economic recovery in China.

We have tried to capture these emerging risks and opportunities in our investment theme for the year, ‘Playing SAFE’, where:

S stands for “securing

your yield” through high quality bonds and other income assets which are likely to do well as the US and Europe likely head into a recession;

A stands for “allocating to long-term value”, especially found in Asian equities and Asian USD bonds which are also likely to benefit from China's economic reopening;

F stands for “fortifying against further surprises” by diversifying investments across asset classes and regions and allocating a portion of assets to cash and safe havens such as gold; and

E stands for “expanding beyond the traditional

assets” into alternative investments such as hedge fund strategies and private credit.

Markets will almost certainly surprise us, this time perhaps positively! For instance, China's growth could significantly beat consensus estimates as three years of pent-up demand and savings are unleashed.

Investors who follow a disciplined approach, reposition their diversified portfolios to bring them back to their desired objectives and garner the resilience to stay invested, ignoring the noise, are likely to be well rewarded.

### Important Notice

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# ICCI collects donations from business community for victims of Turkiye, Syria

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) organized a ceremony to offer Dua for those who died in Turkiye and Syria due to the recent devastating earthquake.

The event was attended by a large number of the business community including Presidents of various markets.

On this occasion, donations were also collected for the relief of earthquake victims, said a press release issued here.

Speaking at the event, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, ICCI said that the business community is standing with the earthquake victims of Turkiye and Syria in this difficult time and are trying to help them in every possible way.

He said that the most destructive earthquake in history has caused a lot of destruction in Turkiye and Syria because the number of people killed by the earthquake in both countries has exceeded 24,000, of which 20 thousand deaths have occurred in Turkiye alone.

He said that due to the earthquake, the economies of both countries have suffered a loss of billions of dollars, while millions of people have been displaced and they are facing severe difficulties in this winter season.

He said that when there was a devastating earthquake in Pakistan in October 2005, the aid teams of Turkiye had arrived in Pakistan immediately, while Turkiye always

came forward to help Pakistan in every difficult time, so it is our responsibility to help them in this difficult time.

Ahsan Bakhtawari appealed to the business community to donate generously for the relief of the earthquake victims of both countries so that the hardships of our Muslim brothers and sisters can be reduced.

He expressed his determination that Islamabad Chamber of Commerce will collect a reasonable amount of donations and will send relief goods to the earthquake victims of Turkiye and Syria.

He said that the business community can deposit donations in ICCI Bank Account No. PK86ALFH04300100408

0135, Bank Al Falah, Islamabad.

He further said that camps will be set up in all major markets of Islamabad to collect donations and each market association will receive donations from the traders of their market and give them to ICCI.

Zafar Bakhtawari, Tariq Sadiq, Muhammad Shakeel Munir former Presidents ICCI, Asad Aziz President Jinnah Supermarket, Ahmed Khan President and Tahir Abbasi Group Leaders F-10 Markaz, Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Raja Imtiaz, Rizwan Chheena, Faseehullah Khan others were present on the occasion. The dua was offered for the elevation of the ranks of those who died due to the earthquake in Turkiye and Syria.



PESHAWAR: Shopkeeper roasting peanuts for sealing purpose.

## Govt making efforts to get country out of challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Syed Naveed Qamar said on Sunday that the country was facing a challenging economic situation but through austerity and better use of resources, the government would overcome it.

He said increase in exports was necessary for economic growth.

Regarding the IMF, he stated that talks with them were in process and necessary steps were being taken to revive the IMF programme.

Replying to a question regarding elections, the minister said all the political parties should develop a consensus about it as holding of general elections in accordance with the Constitution are in the better interest of the country.

## Pak-US business council urges access to US markets

ISLAMABAD (APP): The founder Chairman of Pak-US Business Council Iftikhar Ali Malik on Sunday urged the United States to provide direct market access to Pak products to stabilise its fragile economy that suffered irreparable colossal losses in the fight against terror in the region.

Talking to a delegation of exporters led by Muslim Khan Buner here today, he said Pakistan was one of the front-line coalition partners with the US to stamp out the menace of terror, offering more than 90,000 human sacrifices, besides suffering trillions of dollars in economic losses in addition to the collapse of major

chunk of its infrastructure.

He said still Pakistan economy could not absorb the vast financial losses inflicted by war on terror.

He said the whole of the world, including US and West, several times publicly acknowledged Pakistan's role and the tremendous sacrifices of its valiant armed force in flushing out the terrorists from their hideouts.

He said Pak exports during the last two decades were also severely affected due to insecurity in the region which went nose-diving hitting the national economy to its lowest ebb besides rampant disruptions in the balance of payment.

Iftikhar Ali Malik, who is also President SAARC Chamber, said both countries have many shared interests as Pakistan-US cooperation is a major factor of stability in South Asia.

He said ground realities and our bleak economy due to the war on terror speaks volume of scrambling devastation in every sphere of life.

He said in the prevailing scenario of financial crunch, heavy losses in the wake of covid, catastrophic floods followed by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Pakistan must be provided free market access at zero duty for one decade to provide oxygen to its fractured economy.

## Poland-Pakistan trade volume reaches over 723m: Ambassador

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Poland to Pakistan Maciej Pisarski on Sunday said that the bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Poland has reached over 723 million and both countries are focusing on exploring more avenues of trade and investments in multiple sectors like information technology, food processing, and agriculture sector.

The good news for the Pakistani side was that Poland was in a huge trade deficit of almost half a billion Euro deficit as Pakistani exports in textile, sportswear, foodstuff and leather products were much higher while Poland's exports are less, the Ambassador told APP during an exclusive interview.

It was mostly due to the introduction of the GSP plus trade mechanism which allowed Pakistani exports to the European Union, he told.

Ambassador Maciej Pisarski said Poland has

been one of the fastest-growing export markets for Pakistan. The European Union was the largest destination for Pakistani exports, and Poland had supported the inclusion of Pakistan in the GSP Plus to grant non-reciprocal preferential treatment to Pakistan's exports, a special arrangement under which Pakistani products had privileged access to the European market.

He said, we are celebrating this year the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relationship between Poland and Pakistan and both countries have accomplished a lot as our economic cooperation both in terms of trade and investment increased.

He said that the bilateral agenda concentrated on economic cooperation, political and military dialogue and the development of people-to-people relations during the last six decades.

Answering a question about educational cooperation, he urged for institu-

tional partnerships between the universities of Poland and Pakistan to seek potential, talented and skillful students in the field of science and technology and higher education for better outcomes. So, this would enhance educational cooperation and people-to-people relationships.

The Ambassador said Poland has been a reliable partner of Pakistan when it comes to gas exploration. Polish oil and gas exploration companies had invested millions of dollars in Pakistan during the last 25 years. The Polish companies have invested \$300 million in gas exploration and they are willing to do more. If Polish companies would explore more gas in Pakistan then it would be three times cheaper than the imported gas, he added.

He said that the gas explored by the Polish companies was being sold to local consumers in Pakistan considering it a significant aspect of Poland's economic

cooperation.

The Ambassador said it was the priority of his mission to enhance parliamentary diplomacy, people-to-people exchanges, business opportunities, information and renewable technologies, besides cooperation in the economic and defense sectors.

In reply to a question on the Ukraine war, he said that the Russian aggression against Ukraine should be ended. Poland is providing multifaceted support and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. We have supported Ukraine in terms of military equipment because Poland strongly believes that Ukraine has the right to defend itself", he added.

About his experience in Pakistan, he said, "I have been learning the Urdu language for more than a year and spoke in Urdu that he wants to make better foreign relations with Pakistan".

## GSP carries out seismic surveys in three years

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Geological Survey of Pakistan (GSP), an attached department of the Petroleum Division, carried out around 9,628 Line Kilometers (L-KMs) 2D and 3,531 Square Kilometers (Sq-KMs) 3D seismic surveys during a three-year period to identify the untapped hidden reserves of oil and gas in potential areas of the country.

"The GSP has conducted the surveys across the country which greatly helped oil and gas companies initiate exploration and production activities in the marked potential pockets," a senior official privy to petroleum sector developments told APP.

He said the geological experts undertook 2,880 L-KMs 2D surveys during the year 2019, while 4,511 L-KMs in 2020 and 2,237 L-KMs in 2021 collectively in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh.

Similarly, they carried out 1,917 Sq-KMs 3D seismic surveys during the year 2019, whereas 716 in 2020 and 898 in 2021 in all four provinces.

## Energy alternatives not ready to shoulder heavy burden of global demand

RIYADH (Agencies): Energy transition policies and goals have created a dangerous path for global demand, as alternatives are not in position to supply the entire world, the CEO of Aramco has warned.

During the Saudi Capital Market Forum held in Riyadh, Amin Nasser, CEO and president of Saudi Aramco, gave a speech warning capital markets of the ripple created in global energy supply due to unrealistic energy transition plans.

"Popular energy transition narratives paint a picture of a utopian world where alternatives are ready to replace oil and gas overnight. They assume the massive global energy system in many developing countries can be transformed instantly," he said.

"Alternatives are not ready to shoulder the heavy burden of global demand. From my perspective, for a less risky global energy transition, everyone includ-

ing capital markets must take a more realistic view of how the energy transition will unfold," Nasser added.

He explained that investments in oil and gas have fallen drastically as upstream investments in 2022 were at \$400 billion half of the peak in 2014. He further added that the reason was due to pressure caused by "flawed arguments and assumptions."

"We should be concerned that continuing to impose energy transition plans will lead to unintended consequences, that include but are not limited to, compromising affordability, creating energy insecurity, and bringing back people to burn more coal and more animal waste. Something that is already happening," he added.

Nasser stated that finding the right balance is the main challenge for global capital markets, by financing new energy sources

while continuing to support conventional energy and its decarbonization.

He further added that the current imbalance is leading to a dangerous path, as emerging markets are already struggling with high energy costs.

In 2022, the world committed \$1.1 trillion toward the global energy transition. However, investment in two main areas, carbon capture storage and clean hydrogen, amounted to less than one percent of the total investment, he explained.

"Capital markets have an obvious opportunity to currently address the trilemma of energy affordability, energy security, and sustainability by restoring investment in vital conventional energy sources, increasing investment in technology that reduces the carbon footprint of oil and gas, and investing in new energy sources including renewables and green and blue hydrogen," he concluded.

## Global Economy including Pakistan to confront tough time in 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman and Chairman Kyrgyzstan Trade House Meher Kashif Younis Sunday predicted that not only Pakistan but also the global economy will confront a tougher year in 2023 as main engines of global growth --the US, Europe and China -- are experiencing bleak economic conditions.

Speaking at a seminar on "Impact of global recession on Pakistan economy & study chances to avoid it" held under the aegis of Gold Ring Economic Forum, a strategic think

tank, quoting IMF MD Kristalina Georgieva he said she had also hinted that "the new year is going to be tougher than the year we left behind".

Meher said the reason is the three big economies-the US, European and China- all slowing down simultaneously. He said the Russia-Ukraine conflict is attributed as one of the major factors behind this dismal economic growth and mounting spiralling inflation pressure coupled with high-interest rates engineered by central banks aimed at bringing price pressures to heel.

He said for the first time in 40 years, China's growth in 2022 is likely to be at or below global growth. He said, "IMF had also predicted that a third of the global economy will be in recession and half of European will also be in a recession this year. However, the US is most resilient and it may avoid recession as its market remains quite strong."

He said since China has scrapped its zero-covid policy and embarked on a reopening of its economy, consumers there remain wary as coronavirus cases surge.

Meher said the prevailing slackening global economic scenario will also affect the fragile economy of Pakistan. He said not only Pakistan but 90 other countries of the world have also faced massive devaluation of their currencies against the dollar.

He said one of the viable options left is to revert to the century-old barter system to offset the dollar pressure on economies. He said the business community should be ready to face global economic shocks which are beyond control and tailor their plans timely to absorb their shocks.

## E&P companies discover 16 hydrocarbon deposits in 2021-22

ISLAMABAD (APP): Exploration and Production (E&P) companies, operating in different parts of the country, have collectively discovered 16 oil and gas reservoirs during the last fiscal year in pursuit of making the country self-reliant in the energy sector.

Out of these, ten discoveries were made in the oil and gas fields of Sindh, four in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and one each in Balochistan and Punjab, according to an official document available with APP.

Initially, the companies started extracting oil and gas from seven newly discovered wells of Sindh province including Taj-1, located in Tando Allahyar district, Turk South-1 & Mulaki West-1 and Bhatti North-1 in Badin district, Fazil-1 in Ghotki district, Mohar in Khairpur district and Naimat West DT-1 in Sanghar district. Currently, their accumulative oil and gas production stood at 1258.98 barrels per day and 10.91 million cubic feet per day respectively.

The E&P companies, under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, carry out different development projects in the surrounding localities of their operational fields for the welfare of local communities regularly.

Accordingly, the companies during the last five years have collectively deposited Rs3108.309 million in joint bank accounts of DCOs/DCs of different districts of Sindh Province.

In line with the Petroleum Concession Agreements (PCAs)/Social Welfare Guidelines issued by the Petroleum Division, the E&P companies are obligated to deposit a certain amount in the joint accounts of the concerned District Coordinator Officers (DCOs) and Deputy Commissioners (DCs).

The social welfare projects related to health, education, clean drinking water, and road infrastructure are executed under the supervision of district-level committees, having adequate representation of local parliamentarians.

## Govt additional tax measures' annual impact to be over Rs500b

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) on Sunday opposed the new taxes in the proposed minibudget, as the government has agreed to impose more taxes to put the additional burden of Rs170 billion on exporters and domestic industry, including 1% increase in GST rate, to meet the conditions of the IMF for the revival of its stalled loan program.

FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said that the annual impact of the new tax measures would be more than Rs500 billion. The government has also assured the IMF of raising gas tariff and

petroleum levy rates to chase a much-delayed staff level agreement.

Mian Anjum Nisar, expressing serious concern over the proposed minibudget to raise revenue by further enhancing the ratio of existing taxes, asked the government to tighten its own belt rather than continuing its previous policy of burdening the trade and industry through further indirect taxation that would devastate the economy, given the appalling state of the economy and menacingly high inflation.

He said that the pressure of new taxes will be on the businessmen, as tariffs, particularly on gas and electricity, will rise significantly as part of the IMF condition to achieve full cost recovery rather than to

focus on dealing with sectoral inefficiencies.

He said that the regular attempt of economic managers to impose new taxes and increasing oil prices along with the hike in power and gas tariffs will ultimately harm the government's pledge of reducing the production cost for the businesses. The IMF has asked Pakistan to impose new taxes to achieve the tax-to-GDP ratio target of 9.5%. Possible shortfall in the coming months may expose the government to more pressure from the IMF. He said that slapping additional taxes on industrial raw material and essential items would lead to further hike in inflation which is already in double-digit.

The IMF statement indicated that Pakistan would

have to take all the needed measures before a staff-level agreement could be reached. Pakistan has agreed to implement the prior actions, which include imposing taxes amounting to Rs170 billion, as increasing the GST rate to 18% was part of the taxes -- a measure that was highly inflationary and would hurt poor people more than the rich. He said the Rs170 billion taxes would be collected during the remainder period of the current fiscal year while the annual impact of the new tax measures would be much more than Rs500 billion -- a figure that was closer to the IMF's original demand.

It is to be noted the government has agreed to minimize the untargeted subsidies in the gas and energy

sectors and this process would be completed with the approval of the federal cabinet, as, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet approved withdrawing the electricity subsidies for exporters and farmers. Mian Anjum said the country's generation cost was around Rs2.9 trillion while only Rs1.8 trillion was recovered. He added that this resulted in an increase in either the circular debt or fiscal deficit. However, the entire difference in amount would not be recovered by increasing the tariff, he maintained.

He said that the IMF was looking for a significant increase in that area in light of the projected 29% inflation rate for the current fiscal year.

He said the industry is the main victim of this International Monetary Fund (IMF) interference, as the donors' involvement in Pakistan's economic matters and dictations to the policymakers for taking harsh measures would add to the economic miseries of the country.

The BMP Chairman said that Pakistan's inflation rate is the highest among all the South Asian nations. He said that the world is moving towards alternative sources of electricity generation but the Pakistan government's policies are contrary to it.

Mian Anjum said that the decision may have severe socio-economic implications attributable to a 24.5 percent Consumer Price Index, besides lower

output due to administrative and exchange restrictions that are negatively impacting on raw material imports and therefore on unemployment levels.

The BMP Chairman observed that the tax compliance should be improved and tax base should be enhanced, which cannot be achieved with a single policy change, but through a systemic approach.

He said that businesses are already in a complicated state-of-affairs, while anti-business actions against business community will not only add to the miseries of the business community but also promote trust deficit between the government and the business community.

He said that in the past instead of focusing on con-

trolling under-invoicing, curbing smuggling and expanding the tax net, the FBR seems to be inclined to pressurize registered taxpayers, who are already suffering due to a high rate of sales tax, income tax, and custom duties by creating fictitious cases for recovery of outstanding dues to meet revenue target.

Pakistan is the most frequent customer of the IMF and the governments often depend on borrowing from the lending arm and accepted stringent conditions, despite the fact that this institution is merciless money lender, which has always forced Pakistan to adopt bad policies like new taxes in the budget, rupee depreciation and massive increases in the electricity and gas tariffs.





## In brief

## ACB picks Naveed, Imran

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Former Pakistan cricketers, Imran Farhat and Rana Naved-ul-Hassan, have landed coaching gigs with Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB). Rana Naved has been appointed the bowling coach of Afghanistan Cricket's High Performance Centre, while Farhat has been handed the responsibility of the batting coach at the same centre. The High Performance Centre has been recently established in ACB's office in Kabul. Both cricketers have signed a 1-year agreement with ACB, which can be extended based on improved performance. Farhat is expected to fly to Kabul on February 15, while Rana will reach Kabul after the conclusion of HBL PSL 8. While confirming the development to Cricket Pakistan, Rana said: "Afghan Board had offered me \$2,500 per month which also included other benefits, which is more than what PCB offers." "It is an honour for me to get an international assignment. I will try to share my experience with the young cricketers of Afghanistan," he said.

## Faisal wins 18th Cholistan Rally

BAHAWALPUR (APP): FAHAI ShadiKheh has won the 18th International Cholistan Desert Rally held in Cholistan. He finished his 2 rounds in the accumulated time of 3 hours 59 minutes and 3 seconds. Zain Mehmood won the second position with a time difference of only 6 seconds. He completed his rounds in 3 hours 59 minutes and 9 seconds. Asif Fazal remained third with a time of 4 hours and 4 minutes. As many as 37 vehicles participated in the prepared category race.

## National Netball C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): The quarterfinals and semifinals of the National Men's and Women's Netball Championship 2023 concluded here at Chanan Din Tennis Coaching Center in Gulberg on Sunday. Hamza Ali Rizwan clinched the first title of the tournament by beating spirited Zohaib Afzal Malik 7-5, 6-4 after a tough fight. Hamza then completed the brace of the titles when he, partnering with Shahid Zahid, outpaced the duo of Ismail Ahmed and Zohaib Afzal Malik 8-4 in the boys U-18 doubles final. Hamza completed the hat-trick of the titles by beating Zohaib Afzal Malik 8-3 in the boys U-14 final. He claimed the fourth title when he, partnering with Zohaib Afzal Malik,

## Taimoor to fight Boxing Champion

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani boxer and Asian Boxing Federation Heavyweight Champion Taimoor Khan is planning to go in a bout with former World Boxing champion Mahmood Charr next month in Dubai. It may be mentioned that Taimoor Khan retained his Asian Boxing Federation Heavyweight Championship title after defeating his Thai counterpart, Aekkaphob Auriawan, in a highly anticipated bout in Bangkok last month. Taimoor knocked out his opponent in the second round to defend his title and extended his overall fight record to seven wins, which now include six knockouts.



CAPE TOWN: Jemimah Rodrigues takes a leap to celebrate India's win.

## Rodrigues, Ghosh lead India to T20 World Cup win over Pakistan

CAPE TOWN (Agencies): Jemimah Rodrigues and teenager Richa Ghosh took India to a seven-wicket win over Pakistan in their Women's T20 World Cup match at Newlands in Cape Town on Sunday.

What had been a tense run chase turned into a comfortable win with an over to spare as Rodrigues and Ghosh put on an unbeaten 58 off 33 balls.

Rodrigues batted with calm skill to make 53 not out off 38 balls while Ghosh, 19, hit powerfully to score 31 not out off 20 balls. Pakistan posted 149 for four after deciding to bat on a dry pitch.

It was a total which looked unlikely when they were labouring at 68 for four in the 13th over.

But captain Bismah

Maroof (68 not out) and Ayesha Naseem (43 not out) transformed the innings in an unbeaten partnership of 81 off 47 balls.

The left-handed Maroof faced 55 balls and hit seven fours while the 18-year-old Naseem hammered her runs off 25 balls, hitting two fours and two sixes.

Naseem almost immediately went on the attack with some powerful hitting, including a six beyond long-off in an over from the medium-paced Renuka Singh which cost 18 runs.

The Indian innings followed a similar pattern with Pakistan left-arm spinner Nashra Sadhu bowling superbly to take two for 15 in her four overs.

Sadhu dismissed Shafali Verma, who was superbly caught on the boundary by

Sidra Ameen, and Indian captain Harmanpreet Kaur, leaving India needing to score at almost 10 runs an over in the last six overs.

But Pakistan paid the price for only picking five bowlers and the remaining bowlers were expensive, while their fielders were guilty of several misfields.

Three boundaries by Ghosh off successive balls from Aiman Anwer in the 18th over effectively settled the match.

## Brief scores:

Pakistan 149-4 in 20 overs (Bismah Maroof 68 not out, Ayesha Naseem 43 not out; R. Yadav 2-21) v India 151-3 in 19 overs (J. Rodrigues 53 not out, S. Verma 33, R. Ghosh 31 not out; Nashra Sadhu 2-15)

Result: India won by 7 wickets

## Hamza claims four titles in 1st Ch Nazir Memorial Junior Tennis C'ship

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): High-flying Hamza Ali Rizwan clinched four titles in the 1st Chaudhary Nazir Ahmad Memorial Punjab Junior Tennis Championship 2023 concluded here at Chanan Din Tennis Coaching Center in Gulberg on Sunday.

Hamza Ali Rizwan clinched the first title of the tournament by beating spirited Zohaib Afzal Malik 7-5, 6-4 after a tough fight. Hamza then completed the brace of the titles when he, partnering with Shahid Zahid, outpaced the duo of Ismail Ahmed and Zohaib Afzal Malik 8-4 in the boys U-18 doubles final. Hamza completed the hat-trick of the titles by beating Zohaib Afzal Malik 8-3 in the boys U-14 final. He claimed the fourth title when he, partnering with Zohaib Afzal Malik,

got w/o against Abdul Rahman and Hajra Suhail in the U-14 doubles finals.

Talking to the media, Hamza Ali Rizwan dedicated his four titles to his Ace Tennis Academy and Aisam ul Haq Qureshi. "I am grateful to the tennis legend of Pakistan Aisam Bhai. Under his patronage, the Ace Tennis Academy has been transforming the young talent into the champions. The players of the academy are winning national and international titles and I am hopeful that under his able guidance, I will also succeed in winning international laurels for Pakistan."

In the boys/girls U-10 final, Mustafa Uzair Rana beat M Maaz Shahbaz 6-2. In the boys/girls U-8, Ahsan Bari grabbed gold medal, Daniyal Afzal Malik

silver medal and Murtaza bronze medal. In the boys/girls U-6, Shahreem Umer claimed gold medal, Mamnoon Bari silver medal and Mian Murad bronze medal. In the beginners stage category, Semi bin Anooosh earned gold medal, Arham Ahmad silver and Riam Shehryar Arshad bronze medal.

International tennis player Asiam ul Haq Qureshi and ITF seniors champion Rashid Malik (Tamgha-e-Imtiaz) graced the concluding ceremony as chief guests and distributed prizes among the winners and top performers. Tournament Director Imran Nazir, Mepco tennis coach Mrs. Shehla Rehan, Tournament Coordinator, players, their families and tennis lovers were also present on the occasion.

## Makhachev retains UFC lightweight title

PERTH (Agencies): Islam Makhachev beat home favourite and featherweight champion Alexander Volkanovski by unanimous decision to retain his lightweight title in an engaging contest at UFC 284 in Perth, Australia.

In a close contest, Russian Makhachev's counter striking and offensive wrestling gave him the edge over a gallant Volkanovski. In victory, Makhachev 31, could replace Volkanovski, 34, who was attempting to become a double champion, as the UFC's pound-for-pound number one.

The bout was billed by the UFC as the first ever meeting between their current pound-for-pound number one in Volkanovski, and the number two-ranked fighter in Makhachev.

Volkanovski, who has dominated the featherweight division since winning the title in 2019, was stepping up to lightweight in the hope of following Conor McGregor, Amanda Nunes, Daniel Cormier and Henry Cejudo in becoming the fifth simultaneous double UFC champion.

Makhachev, meanwhile, was making the first defence of his title since beating Charles Oliveira at UFC 280 in October.

The Russian was a big pre-fight favourite with bookmakers because of his bigger size, with pundits pointing to his high-level wrestling as being the difference, but the fight was much closer than some predicted.

There was a party atmosphere as Volkanovski made his way to the octagon, voraciously cheered by the Australians inside the RAC Arena, while in contrast Makhachev sported a stern, focused look as he was booed during his walk-out.

Makhachev was also fighting without his coach, mentor and former UFC lightweight champion Khabib Nurmagomedov in his corner, after the latter suggested in January he was stepping away from the sport.

The fight begun with both athletes showing patience as Volkanovski feinted and switched stances, while Makhachev looked for openings.

Just over midway through the round, Makhachev had his first significant moment as a punch stunned Volkanovski, illustrating the difference in power, before he landed a takedown and ended the round in a dominant position.

The key moment in the second round belonged to Volkanovski however, as following another takedown from Makhachev, he managed to achieve what many previous opponents have struggled to do and got back to his feet.

## Pakistan thump India to win 21st Asian Junior Squash C'ship

CHENNAI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's junior Squash side on Sunday breezed past arch-rivals India in the final to win the 21st Asian Junior Team Squash Championship here at the Indian Squash and Triathlon Academy.

Pakistan's Noor Zaman locked horns with India's Krishna Mehra in the first encounter of the enthralling final that lasted tense four games with the former, consequently emerging victorious 3-1.

The two players went hard at each other in the hard-fought first game but Noor held his nerves calm to triumph 12-10 to attain the early lead.

Mehra, however, soon responded with an 11-9 win in the second game only for Noor to ante his level up and run away with the victory by soaring in the last game 3-1.

Following Pakistan's magnificent start, squash sensation Hamza Khan – a two-time Asian Junior champion and a British



Junior champion – competed against Paarth Ambani.

It was an easy affair for Hamza as he dominated Ambani and secured a comfortable 3-0 victory.

Following the national junior side's remarkable achievement, the Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) took to Twitter and congratulated the nation.

"Congratulations Pakistan. Weldone Team Pakistan we are proud of

you. Pakistan is once again Asian champion and beat India in the final of Asian Junior Squash Team Championship 2023 Chennai (India). Pakistan beat India 2/0," wrote PSF as they shared pictures of national players posing with the silverware.

It is pertinent to mention that Pakistan booked a berth in the final after beating Malaysia in the semi-final, while India beat Korea.

## Punjab Cup Polo: FG Polo win historic trophy



LAHORE (APP): The FG Polo team won the historic trophy of the Century 99 Punjab Cup Polo Tournament 2023 after defeating Newage Cables/Master Paints by 6-4 in the main final here at the Lahore Polo Club on Sunday.

Directors of Century Ventures Private Limited, Ayaz Lakhani, Kamran Afzal, Wasim Mazhar, Nazia Wasim, President of Lahore Polo Club Umar Sadiq, Secretary of Pakistan Polo Association (PPA) Lt Col Ayaz, former President of Lahore Polo Club Syed Shahid Ali and a large number of people from all walks of life were present on the occasion to witness and enjoy the enthralling final. At the concluding ceremony, the chief guests distributed prizes among the winners while President Lahore

Polo Club Umar Sadiq thanked sponsors Century Ventures for sponsoring the historic polo event. Raul Laplacette emerged as hero of the main final from Team FG Polo as he played outstanding polo and exhibited excellent mallet and pony work that helped him contribute with four fantabulous goals. Ramiro Zavaleta also played well and pumped in the remaining two goals. Simon Prada thrashed in three goals and Juan Cruz Greguol converted one for Newage Cables/Master Paints.

FG Polo opened their account through field goal by hero of the day Raul Laplacette to take a 1-0 lead, which couldn't last long as Newage/Master Paints made a good comeback by firing in a field goal to equalize the score

at 1-1. FG Polo then changed their game plan and started playing aggressive polo. It worked well as they succeeded in banging in back-to-back goals to earn a healthy 3-1 lead by the end of the first chukker.

FG Polo maintained their supremacy in the second chukker as well as they banged in a beautiful brace to further enhance their lead to 5-1. The third chukker saw both the sides scoring one goal each, with FG Polo still enjoying a 6-2 lead. The fourth and last chukker was though fully dominated by Newage/Master Paints as they scored two back-to-back goals yet they lost the final by 4-6. John Fisher and Chris Hyde officiated the match and Amirreza Behboudi was the match referee.

Before the main final, the subsidiary final was contested between Master Paints and Remounts and after a good competition, Master Paints won the encounter by 7-5. Manuel Crespo did the magic with mallet and polo pony and smashed in all the seven goals for Master Paints. Jota Chavanne hammered a hat-trick of goals for Remounts while Swr Naeem slammed in two goals.

## PSL producing good players for country: Rizwan



MULTAN (APP): Captain of Multan Sultans and wicket keeper of the national cricket team, Muhammad Rizwan said that Pakistan Super League (PSL) was not only providing entertainment to cricket fans but also producing good players for the national team.

In a press conference at Multan Cricket Stadium on Sunday, he said that he was expecting a lot from his team in the 8th season of PSL starting from Monday. He said that Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris of Lahore Qalandars were world-class bowlers adding that the Multan Sultans would enter the ground with a comprehensive strategy against them.

Muhammad Rizwan said that fans of Multan had always showed their love and support for the team. He said that many players have not been reached Multan due to flight issue. He also pointed that the dew factor would play an important role in the match. Sultan's captain said that game with bravery would produce positive results adding that whoever plays bravely will win.

To a question, Muhammad Rizwan said that he would disclose the name of the bowlers after the tournament who gave him tough time in the season. He said that through playing such tournaments players would get international-level experience. He said that Ihsanullah was bowling well and he could be another Haris for the national team. He said that credit of Pakistan's good performance in T-20 goes to PSL and hope that PSL would continue in future.

Responding to another question, Rizwan said that the players always get handsome earning from the leagues.

## All set for HBL PSL 8 opening ceremony today

MULTAN (APP): All set for the most anticipated tournament in the domestic calendar as HBL Pakistan Super League is going to start today, February 13, with Multan Sultans, the winners of the 2021 edition would clash with the defenders Lahore Qalandars at the Multan Cricket Stadium.

It is pertinent to mention that Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi would also host the matches of the 8th edition of PSL.

Karachi's National Bank Cricket Arena will host the second match of the tournament when the Karachi Kings will lock horns with Peshawar Zalmi.

Quetta Gladiators will begin their campaign in Multan on 15 February, whereas Islamabad United to play their first match on 16th February in Karachi.

Action will move to the northern half of the country from February 26 with Lahore and Rawalpindi hosting the latter part of the tournament.

Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium will host the four playoffs and the final. This would be in addition to five league games alongside Rawalpindi stadium, which will stage 11 matches.

The winner of the tournament will not only lift the Supernova Trophy but will also collect a cheque of Rs 120 million while the runners-up will receive a cheque of Rs 48 million.

Final will be played on March 19th.

The HBL PSL was conceived with the idea of providing a platform to the young and emerging cricketers who can have a flavour of international cricket – by playing high-quality cricket under pressure environment – before graduating to the apex level.

The first-ever HBL PSL match in Pakistan – the final of the 2017 edition in Lahore – brought World XI for a three-match T20I series before Sri Lanka played a solitary T20I in Lahore.

The 2018 edition reopened the doors of international cricket for Karachi as the final between Islamabad United and Peshawar Zalmi, after the two playoffs in Lahore, was followed by the West Indies' tour of the city for three T20Is.

The 2019 edition, when Karachi hosted eight matches, further boosted the confidence of international sides, and the 2020 edition, the first time Pakistan hosted the tournament in its entirety, established Pakistan's credentials as a destination that could host complete international tours.

All six franchises have won the HBL PSL title at least once, which underscores the quality of all six sides and the higher level of competition in the tournament.

## Lahore Qalandars to play positive game: Afridi



MULTAN (APP): Captain Lahore Qalandars, Shaheen Shah Afridi said that the team would play a positive game in 8th season of the mega event starting from Monday at Multan Cricket Stadium.

Holding a press conference at the stadium here on Sunday, he said that all teams of the event were strong and they were not considering any team week. He said that the only aim was to play role in victory of the team to defend the title.

Lahore Qalandar's captain and national cricket team fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi said that the 8th season of Pakistan Super League (PSL) is going to start, in which all the participating teams were well balanced. He said that Lahore Qalandars has supporters in many places adding that the Multan fans have also always given love to the team. In the first match between Lahore Qalandars and Multan Sultans, the people of Multan will support both teams with a jam-packed stadium to boost the opening match.

To a question, he said that injuries were part of the game but his goal was to play positive cricket and gave good performance for the team.

To another question, Afridi said that the pitch has not been seen yet, the pitch will not be known for two days before the match adding that hopefully it would be good. He said that Lahore Qalandars would try to get top orders of Multan Sultans down to put pressure on the rival team.

Responding to another question, he said that players always focused on their game and tried to play a vital role in the victory of the team.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 94,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 94,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 58,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1483.40 feet and was 85.40 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,900 cusecs while outflow as 45,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1127.25 feet, which was 77.25 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 15,700 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 56,200, 44,700, 32,100 and 6,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 14,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and zero cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Police help reunite a lost child

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a heartwarming act of kindness, the National Highway and Motorway Police (NHMP) recently found a lost child and helped reunite him with his family on Sunday. According to the NHMP official, the child, aged 10, was found on the Murree Expressway (N-75) during routine patrolling and was unable to provide his address. NHMP utilized the "Public Address System" and gathered local people in the area to inquire about the child and his family. After the efforts of NHMP, a local recognized the child and provided the contact number of his father. The police confirmed the credentials and handed over the child to his parents, who expressed their gratitude for the efforts of the NHMP. The community also appreciated the action taken by the police, and the incident was praised as a shining example of NHMP's commitment to the safety and well-being of the people they serve. The efforts of the police have been widely praised and serve as a reminder of the important role they play in ensuring the safety of those on the roads.

### Metro donates safety masks

ISLAMABAD (APP): Metro, Pakistan's market leader in retail and wholesale sector, donated 10,000 safety masks for health and sanitary workers of Capital Development Authority (CDA). The safety masks were handed over by Director Corporate Affairs Metro Pervaiz Akhtar to Chairman CDA Noor ul Amin Mengal at a meeting held at the CDA office, said a press release. Expressing his gratitude, the Director Corporate Affairs Metro said, "Metro has donated the safety masks, as part of its Metro care & share initiative, which has in the past also provided relief through essential food and safety supplies to the affectees of national calamities, like recent floods and earthquakes, and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative aims at providing necessary protection to the CDA staff susceptible to health and safety hazards in the line of their duty." In a meeting, it was further agreed that Metro and CDA will partner on environment-friendly initiatives including the tree plantation drive in the city. The chairman CDA thanked the management of Metro Pakistan for the gesture and reaffirmed his vision of providing necessary support to the private sector for enhancing business activity in Islamabad.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed addressing during Pakistan International Maritime Expo & Conference (PIMEC) 2023.

## Zardari pays tribute to women who worked for democracy

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) Asif Ali Zardari Sunday paid tribute to the women who raised their voices for the Constitution and democracy during the Zia dictatorship on National Women's Day. "Mother of democracy, Begum Nusrat Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto were the

torchbearers of the struggle for freedom and democracy among the womenfolk of the country," he added.

He said Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto defeated the powerful dictators through democratic struggle. Asif Zardari said the women leaders and workers of the PPP endured imprisonment in the Shahi Fort in the struggle for the restoration of democracy.

"PPP ensured the participation of women in all sectors," he said, adding that it is important for a dignified and civilized society that women should have equal rights. He said the mindset that considers women as inferior and weak has to be defeated. The PPP would continue the struggle to give women the dignified position they deserve.

### Kite flying poses serious threats to human lives: AKFV

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Anti-Kite Flying Volunteers Association (AKFV) has raised the alarm on the dangers posed by the sport of kite flying and called for self-regulation among citizens to avoid hazardous activity. Talking to APP here on Sunday, a representative of AKFV Yasir Farooq Usman said that kite flying posed serious risks, particularly to human lives and birds. He said, "The strings used for kite flying are made of strong and sharp materials that can cut the throats of unsuspecting people and birds." The kite flying season usually starts in February, and law enforcement agencies were making efforts to apprehend the kite sellers and illegal hoarders as the police could not prevent people from engaging in the sport, he added.

Yasir highlighted that kites flown in close proximity to one another could collide and result in serious injuries to the people operating them. Kites could become entangled in power lines, leading to electrical outages and the risk of electrocution for the person operating the kite, he added.

He pointed out that anti-kite flying laws were not in place in the KP province. People brought kites and string rolls from Punjab to the KP province. The AKFV wrote a letter to KP authorities, calling for the implementation of anti-kite flying legislation, and the group intended to send a reminder this year, he maintained.

## Alvi felicitates Iran on 44th anniversary of Revolution

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi, on behalf of the government and the people of Pakistan, has felicitated Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, on the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

In his message to the leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the president said that the fraternal relations between Pakistan and Iran were rooted in linguistic, cultural, and religious bonds.

He said that Pakistan remained committed to further strengthening of these ties across the entire gamut of bilateral relations. President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Sunday.

The president conveyed his best wishes for Seyed Ali Khamenei's health and happiness and for the continued progress, prosperity and well-being of the brotherly people of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## Our women not only capital rather support of the country: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman in her message on National Women's Day on Sunday said the courageous women drive Pakistan's documented and undocumented economy who were not only the capital rather the support of the country. In a series of tweets, the federal minister paid tribute to the women of the country playing a vital role in nation-building and development of the country. Senator Rehman said, "On the occasion of National Women's Day, I pay tribute to all the brave, hardworking and brave women of the country."

She added that 49% of the country's population consisted of women, adding, "Be it Lady Health Worker or Benazir Income Support Programme, PPP has always initiated public and revolutionary projects."

Now, through the Sindh government's People's Poverty Reduction Programme, women across the province are setting a new example of development, Sherry Rehman mentioned. The minister underlined that our women were laying the foundations of a self-sufficient society. Under the project, she said poor women were being provided interest-free loans for their businesses. "Women are ensuring economic stability and growth through a revolutionary project. 1.3 lakh women have benefited from this project which has been going on for 4 years, while more than 80 thousand families have come above the poverty line," Sherry Rahman said.

Along with this, many other projects of the Sindh government for women and social development were also going on, she added. "We don't just create slogans and narratives of 'change' but work on revolutionary projects for the development of society. Social and economic revolution in society does not come from slogans alone, it comes from vision and performance," Sherry Rehman ended.

## Railways all set to launch 'RABTA' to ensure hassle-free services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways is all set to launch the Railway Automated Booking and Travel Assistance (RABTA) in collaboration with Chinese companies, which will help passengers to plan their journey. "The application will help the passengers to manage their tickets, seats, booking, food, hotel and taxi-related matters during their travel from home to respective destinations and vice versa," an official of Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) had already been signed between Pakistan Railways and two Chinese companies – M/s Easyway and M/s Norinco International Cooperation to launch RABTA.

"The RABTA, IT-based solution will not only facilitate the passengers but also help the organization (PR) to generate more revenue and maintain its record through the booking of tickets," he added.

Through this application, the official said that parcel booking and tracking facil-

ity would also be available while the passengers would also be able to have access to trains' operational management system.

He said that the step was based on revenue sharing with the companies which would also modernize train operations across the country.

To facilitate passengers, he said the Pakistan Railways had introduced a mobile application "Pakrail Live" for real-time tracking of trains.

The official said the high capacity/high-speed hopper trucks had been inducted in the current fleet for swift movement and unloading of coal.

"New high capacity high speed rolling stock coaches and wagons are being procured." He said the railways had also introduced services like online E-Ticketing through Jazz Cash, UBL Omni and credit cards to facilitate passengers at their doorstep and attract more passengers through outsourcing of non-core activity.

## Country's only 'History Museum' falling short of capacity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Nations keep themselves alive by preserving their natural history, scientific heritage and achievements of their ancestors for transferring the legacies of ancient times to coming generations.

Therefore, the role of natural history museums is acknowledged globally as powerhouses of scientific enquiry and voice of authority to inspire the younger generations with valuable knowledge about current and historical specimen.

But, in our country, the only-of-its-kind Pakistan Museum for Natural History (PMNH) is not getting due importance by the authorities despite its huge contribution in terms of collection, preservation, identification of natural history and research activities.

Situated in federal capital, this valuable asset relates to natural resources of the country and is a plausible source of imparting education through dioramas, exhibits, lectures, workshops, seminars, posters and film shows. The matter of the construction of remaining six blocks of the museum is lingering on since its establishment in year 1976, compelling the PMNH administration to display maximum specimens of natural resources even in small rooms and corridors. Visiting the museum is rather painful when one sees the authorities using even small spaces of the constructed two blocks to exhibit nearly 1.5 million conserved specimens of rich natural resources.

The museum comprises a state-of-the-art Gemstone gallery and Biodiversity Gallery and galleries hosting Birds of Pakistan, Dinosaurs, Fossils, Higher Plants, Medicinal Plants, Lower Plants, Mammals, Reptiles and Fishes.

Being the only of its kind, this museum provides as a source of education for thousands of the students and researchers who visit it daily and the administration keeping within the available resources try to provide them comfortable environment and maximum facilities.

"PC-I for the construction of six remaining blocks of the museum with a proposed cost of Rs. two billion was approved last year to expand its display and activities to benefit students," informed Acting Director General, PMNH, Dr. Saima Huma Tanveer. "As the funds could not be allocated during last budget due to economic crunch and devastating flood, the expansion is delayed. However, we hope that allocations are made during next budget," she said.

Under the supervision of Dr. Saima Tanveer, the PMNH is undertaking a number of research projects of national importance including "cooperative development of an innovative auto-ID platform for beetles (order Coleoptera) from China and Pakistan" with the cost of Rs. five million.

Other projects are "Hazards of wildlife aircrafts strike and their prevention" to be completed at the cost of Rs. 4.3 million and "Biosystematics of Insect Fauna of Khunjerab National Park, Gilgit Baltistan" at Rs. 4.5 million.

The other projects include development of outdoor volcano display, integration of QR code technology to enable visitors to scan code of the exhibit through their android phone and get all linked information, development of teachers training and STEM Resource Lab and maintenance of museum building etc.

Another novel idea conceived by the DG PMNH is to start a training program for school kids to teach them filming of short videos and acquire knowledge about conservation of nature procedures.

PMNH is the only museum, working under Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF), and has conserved the 1.5 million specimens of rich natural resources collected from all over the country.

During year 2022, in all 7218 people visited the museum during month of November, 13910 in October, 11530 in September, 15643 in

August, 23,761 in July, 18,121 in June, 19, 656 in May, 2351 in April, 11912 in March, 14577 in February and 18737 people visited it in January. "The museum has generated revenue worth Rs. 6,398,755 during the Financial Year 2021-22, through 86,587 visitors including 102,085 students and 658 foreign visitors," the Acting Director General informed.

She said the PMNH prepared 16 technical reports for field surveys and baseline studies of flora and faunal diversity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) merged districts under 'Ten Billion Tree Tsunami (BTTP)' project.

"The collections made were 10,783 specimens including flora, fauna, rocks and fossils from across. Some 33,111 specimens or samples of plants, animals, rocks, minerals and fossils were curated during the stipulated time," she said.

Moreover, the administration ensured cataloging of 21,193 specimens was done and 7,695 samples were also digitized with the scientific divisions getting published 51 research papers in reputed scientific journals. Researchers of PMNH carry out extensive field works from the Coast of Arabian Sea to the Alpine Regions, roam through barren areas for collection of flora and fauna, rocks, fossils and minerals for research and education.

PMNH regularly organizes trainings, workshops, seminars, symposia and other educational interactive activities on natural history, environment and biodiversity of the country. It has also formed national and international liaisons with other research institutes within the country and abroad.

Since, this settlement provides ample opportunities for studies and research for both the young students and experienced researchers, therefore, the authorities must pay required heed to this museum for preserving our natural assets for the coming generations.

## APSUP & PAMI launches mission essar earthquake relief fund

ISLAMABAD (APP): In order to assist earthquakes-affected people in practical terms in south-eastern Türkiye and north-western Syria, the Association of Private Sector Universities of Pakistan (APSUP) and the Pakistan Association of Private Medical & Dental Institutions (PAMI) have collectively launched Mission Essar Earthquake Fund. Both the organisations have a humble tradition of standing with our brothers and sisters in need, be it here in Pakistan or in our brotherly Muslim countries anywhere in the world with PKR 477.6 million contributed to such noble causes so far.

The relief fund would help ease the suffering of countless individuals and families who have lost their loved ones, their homes,

and their livelihoods. Millions remain in dire need of food, shelter, medical care, and, above all, an arm around their shoulders.

Superior University has already contributed 5 million rupees to APSUP & PAMI's Mission Essar Earthquake Relief Fund for Türkiye and Syria. The confirmed death toll from the deadliest quake in the region during two decades stood at more than 24,000 across southern Türkiye and north-west Syria. Chairman APSUP and President PAMI, Prof. Dr. Chaudhry Abdul Rehman urged all the partner institutions of APSUP and PAMI as well as the Pakistani nation to come together in this hour of need and extend a helping hand to support the suffering humanity in the affected areas.



5b Afs in revenue collecteded

PAKITA (Agencies): Paktia Customs office siad that since the beginning of the current year 1401, they have collected 5 billion Afghanis in revenue and delivered it to the state treasury. The deputy of the customs department of the province, Mawlawi Tayab, said that in the current year, they have collected 5 billion Afghanis in revenue, which is an increase compared to other years. The department collected the revenue through a transparent process, which resulted in an increase he added.

Police arrests 17 criminals

HELMAND (Agencies): Local security officials of Helmand say that last week, 17 people were arrested on charges of robbery in Nawa, Garmseer Babaji districts and from Lashkargah, the center of the province. Police reports say that 11 were arrested along with various stolen properties people from the first, second, third, and sixth police districts of the province, adding 7 people have been arrested for robbery.

‘Kabul wants legitimate interaction with world’



KABUL (TOLONews): At a ceremony in the province of Khost, acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani criticized the country’s situation, calling it intolerable. Haqqani said that the Islamic Emirate wants “legitimate engagement”

with the international community, while speaking at the ceremony in Khost for those who had memorized the Holy Quran. “Today, we consider ourselves righteous enough, and our views and thoughts have dominated us to such

an extent that challenging, targeting, defaming and monopolizing the entire system has become an initiative, a view and a basis for us. May Allah correct our intentions and actions. This situation cannot be tolerated,” he further added.

Speaking at the event, the acting interior minister noted: “Now, we want to have a legitimate interaction with the world and build a legitimate way,” Haqqani said.

The acting interior minister commented on the situation in the country and emphasized that it is important to provide the nation with opportunities.

The leader of the Islamic Emirate, Mawlawi Hebatullah Akhundzada, had previously stressed the engagement of the current government with the international community within the framework of Islamic principles.

This comes as the international community has repeatedly said that respecting women’s rights, particularly the right to education, creating an inclusive government, and not using Afghanistan’s territory against other nations, are crucial for recognition of the current government of Afghanistan.

‘Tajikistan, Uzbekistan to return ex-govt’s copters to NRF fighter’

KABUL (Khaama Press): General Abdul Rashid Dostum, leader of the Junbish-e Milli political party has called on Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to hand over the former government army’s helicopters to National Resistance Front (NRF) fighters.

The leader of the Junbish-e-Milli party has said that these helicopters should be used by the NRF personnel in different provinces of Afghanistan.

General Dostum has expressed these comments in a ceremony in London commemorating the martyrdom of Khair Mohammad Khairkhaw, one of the key NRF commanders who was killed in the fight against the Taliban in Andarab valley in northern Baghlan province.

At least 40 helicopters of the former government’s army were transferred to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, according to Dostum. Prior to this, the Defense Ministry of the United States had announced that 46 flights had landed in Uzbekistan and 18 in Tajikistan until August 21, 2021.



In April, Uzbek authorities announced that helicopters and aircraft of Afghanistan’s former government will not be handed to the Taliban. Ismatullah Irgashev, Uzbekistan’s special representative for Afghanistan had said that the military equipment belongs to the US and will be kept in Uzbekistan in collaboration with Washington.

Abdul Rashid Dostum says that the Taliban kills former Afghan National Army with no mercy – the group conducts door-to-door search

operations, find former army personnel, tortures them in the worst possible manner, and eventually kills them.

Pointing to the death of NRF fighters, Dostum said that ‘Andarabi and Panjshiris’ deaths will be avenged. He said that the Taliban will not sustain itself for much longer, and called on the opposition parties to regroup against the repressive regime.

Dostum further added that opposition groups should decisively stand against the Taliban, and carefully think about the future structure of Afghanistan, otherwise, there will be no escape from the continued tortures and killings of the ruling regime.

His remarks came days after the Brookings Institution based in the US released an investigative report, claiming that NRF’s resistance would not pose any immediate threats to the Taliban regime. The reports also added that they do not see any alternative group or power to replace the ruling regime in Afghanistan.

Cold snap, closed roads hinder access to health services



FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): Recent snowfall has closed roads kinking districts and the capital of western Ghor province, limiting residents’ access to health services.

Abdul Basir Ahmadi, hailing from Pasaband district, told Pajhwok Afghan News: “The snow has closed most of the roads to our villages. We cannot take the sick to health cen-

ters or hospitals in the provincial capital.” Khuda Rahim, another inhabitant of the district, said: “As a result of the week-long snowfall, roads are closed and we cannot go to the city.

“My two-year-old child is very sick and doctors here want me to take him to the main provincial hospital for medical treatment. I

have no idea what to do,” he added.

Mohammad Amir, a resident of Lala wa Sarjangal district, confirmed they could not evacuate their patients to health facilities due to heavy snowfall.

He told Pajhwok: “The roads are closed because of snow. We cannot take ailing children and elders to clinics. We want the govern-

ment to address this serious issue; otherwise our patients will die.”

While some of residents complain about the lack of health services, social activists say the long winter, cold snap and impassible routes have blocked for 70 percent of residents access to health services.

Mohammad Reza Joya, a civil society activist, said: “The snowfall blocks most of roads every year. The government is responsible for ensuring the availability of health facilities and doctors in vulnerable areas. It should build more clinics in remote localities.”

Gul Ahmad Sahel, deputy director of public health, said: “All district clinics are operating and providing services to some extent. It is winter and there are some problems in inaccessible areas, but officials are still trying to provide the facilities it has to the people.”

Abdul Karim Abu Shoaib, director of public works, said their teams were busy working to clear roads of snow.

‘Education essential for everyone’

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate spokesperson said the caretaker government considers learning science necessary for everyone in the nation and says that the current government would act in accordance with Islamic teachings, on the “International Day of Women and Girls in Science.”

The International Day of Women and Girls in Science, is implemented by UNESCO and UN Women, in collaboration with institutions and civil society partners that aim to promote women and girls in science.

“Science and knowledge are essential to human

beings, and we are working to take steps in this regard and find solutions to our challenges. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan acts in line with Islamic principles,” said Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres emphasized gender equality in learning science at the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.

“More women and girls in science equals a better future for all. We must promote gender equality in science by affirming women’s rights & breaking down stereotypes. Let’s all do our part to fill classrooms, labo-

ratories & boardrooms with women scientists,” he said.

On the International Day of Women and Girls in Science the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Called for More Participation of Women and Girls in education, training and Science and Technology.

“On the International Day of Women and Girls in Science celebrated, Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), has called upon Member States and relevant OIC institutions to intensify efforts in ensuring the rights of all Women and Girls in Science and technology, and to strengthen

international cooperation, raise awareness about the rights of women and girls in science and technology,” OIC statement reads.

The United Nations on the International Day of Women and Girls in Science said that “Afghan women and girls deserve to be educated at all levels.” “They are a great example of hope and hard work - if Afghan women/girls are given an opportunity, they can help build the innovative, technology-enabled world of the future. Afghan women and girls deserve to be educated at all levels,” US Embassy Kabul said in a tweet.

Meanwhile, female stu-

Laborer works provided in Baghlan

KABUL (Agencies): Local officials of Baghlan said that laborer works provided to thousands of people in the “Program work against Wheat”.

The provincial head of Baghlan Economy, Abdul Mateen Akhundzada told BNA that the World Food Programme provides food aid to more than 62,000 needy families in the province every month, 30% of which is free and 70% of which covers 45,000 people works against wheat.

The process is carried out under the supervision of the Department of Economy through the development councils in the districts and with the coordination of the Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, he said.

Thousands of needy to receive winter aid

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation signed two cooperation agreements with the Afghanistan Education Development Organization (ADEO).

Based on the agreements signed, the ADEO will provide aid to almost 2 thousands of families who suffered past years’ war and natural disasters in the provinces of Baghlan and Sar-i-pul, said the Ministry in a statement.

The agreements were signed by the deputy of the Minister of Refugees, Mawlawi Abdul Rahman Rashid, and the officials of Afghanistan Education Development Organization, added to the statement.

ARCS stressed timely distribution of aid to needy

KABUL (Agencies): Both organizations the Afghan Red Crescent Society and the International Federation of National Populations in the region, during a coordination meeting stressed timely distribution of humanitarian in the country Afghanistan in remote areas.

The head of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, Mawlawi Mutiul Haq Khalis, met with Alexander, the head of the International Federation of National Populations in the region, and discussed a number of mutual interested issues, according to ARCS’s statement.

“Last year, the Afghan Red Crescent Society, in addition to providing assistance to many needy people, help displaced, and those who suffered earthquakes,” the head of ARCS said.

He said that this year we are determined to help beggars in the market and on the road, illiterate children who collect garbage in the market, and poor widows so that they are no longer in need.

The ARCS assisted the victims of Floods and earthquakes, but national populations and international aid agencies should help the Afghan Red Crescent Society to provide them with shelter before next winter, he added.

dents asked the Islamic Emirate to reopen schools for girls as soon as possible.

“We ask the international community, Islamic countries and particularly the Islamic Emirate to reopen schools for students,” said Nazira, a student.

“If a woman is literate, she produces a literate society, and if a man is literate, he can only address his issues,” said Nargis, another student.

Girls have been denied an education in middle and high schools for more than 500 days, and on December 20, 2022, the Ministry of Higher Education also banned them from going to university.

\$40m cash aid package reaches Kabul: DAB

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan’s central bank on Sunday announced that \$40 million, as part of the UN’s cash aid package, had reached Kabul.

Afghanistan central bank also known as ‘Da Afghanistan Bank’ (DAB) on Sunday said on Twitter that as part of United Nations cash aid, a fresh \$40 million has been transferred to Kabul.

According to the central bank, so far, 24 \$40 million and more than 30 \$32 million aid packages have been dispatched to Afghanistan. After the return of the Taliban to Power in August 2021, the international community’s cash aid packages reach a total of \$1.873 billion.

The central bank has stated that the government

appreciates the international community’s support in shipping cash into the country aimed at helping vulnerable families during these difficult times. The central bank is trying its best to strengthen the private banking sector of the country, it added.

Besides thanking the UN, the central bank wished that the cash shipment could be transferred through the banking system. Since the Taliban’s return to power, Afghanistan’s banking system including private and public has been paralyzed and has minimum access to global banking systems.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) had earlier clarified that cash packages shipped to

Afghanistan are deposited in UN accounts in a private bank, and will be used by UN agencies solely for the purpose of humanitarian aid and other supportive programs. The money will not be handed over to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the announcement said.

The United Nations transports cash into Afghanistan for use by UN agencies. The UN uses the funds to conduct its work in Afghanistan, primarily in providing critical humanitarian assistance to millions of Afghans requiring support.

A central reason the UN brings cash into Afghanistan is due to the disruption to international banking transfers and liquidity issues since August 2021.

Residents complain of inadequate facilities



URUZGAN (TOLONews): Many people who live in Uruzgan province’s Omari township complain about not having access to basic necessities.

They said the lack of medical and educational centers is one of their fundamental challenges.

According to the residents, although they live near the province’s center, the township lacks many essential amenities, and life is challenging.

“When the survey was done here, it had 68,000

inhabitants, which meets the second requirement for becoming a district,” said Saat Mohammad, a tribal elder.

“We need a road, schools, and a hospital. Because there are no cars, believe me when someone becomes ill, only a motorcycle will do, which costs 10,000 kaldars, because there is no car,” said Bashir, a resident of Uruzgan.

Some of the township’s citizens demanded that the township’s development initiatives begin.

“Projects should be started out here, roads built, and intersections built. We live in a rented house and don’t even have a place for our staff to stay,” said Saifulah, a resident of Uruzgan.

Meanwhile, local officials are talking about the implementation of development projects in this township.

“We and the leadership of the Islamic Emirate should provide these services,” said Mohammad Ali Jan, the governor of Uruzgan province.

Turkey earthquake: Afghan survivors now living in tents

MALATYA, Turkey (TOLONews): The Afghans who survived the devastating earthquake in Turkey, are struggling with dire living conditions under tents.

The survivors said that they lost everything they had and they are now in difficult conditions facing the cold weather.

Malatya, Turkey is one of the earthquake affected provinces in Turkey.

“A large number of Afghans were stranded in the earthquake in this city. Some of them have been martyred and some of them have been wounded. Some families are still stranded under the ruins,” said Farzana, a citizen of Afghanistan.

“Half of my body, hand, foot and head had been damaged, they said the doctors will arrive but no one has yet arrived,” said Farzana, an Afghan citizen.

“Our houses have been destroyed by the earthquake, we are now living in this tent, it is snowing and



the weather is cold. Our children are struggling with cold,” said Abdul Ali, an Afghan citizen.

The Afghanistan embassy in Turkey and social and cultural institutions said the teams have been sent to the vulnerable areas to assess the situation.

“In Hatay province, more than 80 of our citizens have been martyred and 35 others have been martyred in Adiyaman. Thus is the unofficial tally,” said Musadiq Faqiri, an official of the Afghanistan embassy

in Ankara. “We have visited the most vulnerable areas of Kahramanmaraş, Hatay, Adiyaman, Gaziantep, where our Afghans have been severely affected,” said former deputy Minister of Public Health, Fida Mohammad Paikan.

The acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Muttaqi, held a telephone conversation with the Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, in which he expressed readiness to send rescue teams if Ankara asked for it.

Illegal weapons and ammunition recovered

BAGHLAN (Agencies): The Intelligence Department of Baghlan said that their forces have recovered a large number of weapons and ammunition from Baghlan Province of Afghanistan.

The intelligence department of the province in a statement said that the officials of the department

have discovered a large number of weapons and ammunition, which were illegally stored, in the center of the said province.

According to the news release, the weapons recovered were 5 Kalashnikovs, 1 rocket, 14 pistols, 13 boxes of Pika bullets, 5 boxes of Kalashnikov bullets, 13

rounds of hand grenades, 2 boxes of Zikvik bullets, 1 box of terrorist bullets, 10 a mortar shell and some military clothes and military shoes have been seized.

Sources said that many weapons and ammunition were recovered by the security forces from this area so far.



# Ukraine says Russia launched new wave of aerial attacks

KYIV (INP): Ukraine has said that Russia had launched a major new wave of aerial attacks, as President Joe Biden announced he would mark one year since the invasion by visiting Kyiv's neighbour Poland.

Strikes were reported from the eastern region of Kharkiv to the western region of Ivano-Frankivsk, a day after President Volodymyr Zelensky travelled to Brussels to lobby EU leaders for long-range weapons and fighter jets. Zelensky said on Friday Russian missiles had crossed over ex-Soviet Moldova and Nato member Romania while heading to Ukraine, though Bucharest denied the claim.

With the bloody conflict approaching its one-year anniversary on Feb 24, the White House said Biden would travel to Nato ally Poland on February 20-22. Biden to visit neighbouring Poland to mark one year since Kyiv's invasion.

Biden will make a speech to mark "Russia's brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, addressing how the United States has rallied the world to support the people of Ukraine as they defend their freedom and democracy", the White House said. The Kremlin on Friday also announced that Russian President Vladimir Putin would deliver his annual state of the nation speech on Feb 21.

Russia last targeted Ukraine with a mass strike in late January, days after Western allies agreed to deliver heavy

tanks to Kyiv. Zelensky called the new Russian attacks "a challenge to Nato", adding that "this is terror that can and must be stopped".

Romania's defence ministry said it detected an "aerial target launched from the Black Sea from a Russian Federation ship" but "at no point did it intersect with Romania's airspace". The Moldovan defence ministry confirmed that Russian missiles had crossed its airspace, adding that it would summon Russia's ambassador. Kyiv residents on Friday rushed to shelters as Russia battered the pro-Western country with missiles and drones. The Ukrainian air force said Russians targeted cities and critical infrastructure, adding that Iranian-made explosive drones were launched from the Sea of Azov and Kalibr cruise missiles from the Black Sea.

Russia also carried out a "massive" attack with "up to 35 anti-aircraft guided missiles" targeting the eastern region of Kharkiv and the southern region of Zaporizhzhia, the air force said.

Ten missiles were shot down over Kyiv, according to officials. Friday's wave of attacks follows Zelensky's visit to Europe, where he urged allies to supply Ukraine with long-range missiles and fighter jets as Kyiv braces for a renewed Russian push in the east. Zelensky warned that Ukraine needs military supplies faster than Russia can prepare what he said would be a dangerous new offensive.

## Pakistan sends 10-member medical team to Turkiye

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 10-member medical team from Pakistan left for earthquake-affected Turkiye on Sunday to take part in the ongoing relief operations in the quake-hit areas.

According to the health ministry spokesperson, another medical team of 10 doctors from the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) is set to leave for Syria later today.

He said that a ten-member medical team of PIMS along with the medicines left for Turkiye, while a separate 10-member doctors' team will leave for Syria today's evening.

Minister for National Health Services Abdul Qadir Patel extended heartfelt sympathies to the brotherly Turkiye and Syrian people on the human and material loss in the wake of the recent devastating earthquake.

He said that Turkiye has always helped Pakistan and Islamabad will also not leave Turkiye at this testing time and will provide every possible support.

He said that the medical team will serve the earthquake victims with full dedication and commitment in both countries.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman NDMA Lt General Inam Haider Malik along with Turkish Ambassador H.E Mehmet Pacaci attended special NEOC Session at NDMA.

# Special NEOC session on humanitarian assistance to quake-hit Turkiye & Syria

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: NDMA held a special NEOC session to review humanitarian assistance package for quake-hit Turkiye & Syria today. Federal Minister for Planning & special Initiatives Dr. Ahsan Iqbal chaired the meeting through video link whereas Chairman NDMA, Lt. General Inam Haider Malik and Turkish Ambassador H.E Mehmet Pacaci joined the session. The session was attended by Ambassador of Pakistan in Turkiye Dr. Yousaf Junaid, Ambassador of Pakistan in Syria Air Marshal (R) Shahid Akhter, DG NLC and representatives of Ministry of Health Services, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Pak Navy and PDMA.

Chairman NDMA briefed that NDMA has arranged and dispatched 162 tons & 9 tons of relief goods to Turkiye and Syria respectively whereas relief consignment of 447 tons collectively has been sent off through NLC trucks to both coun-

tries. This consignment contains large family-sized winterized tents and blankets as per current need of quake affectees. Additionally, deputed Pak Army USAR team and Rescue 1122 team has undertaken several rescue operations in Turkiye.

Chairman NDMA informed that consignment of 195 tons consisting double-ply tents and procurement of 1600 tons' of food bags are under process which will be dispatched through NLC trucks & Pak Navy ships to both countries in coming days. He highlighted that NDMA is also coordinating additional rescue and medical teams for Syria and Turkiye. He said that NDMA has notified 13 collection points for donations across the country for quake-affectees.

Federal Minister appreciated NDMA for swift relief assistance and laid stress to arrange mobile medical teams along with essential medicines for quake-hit countries. He said that a fundraising campaign was also launched in educational institutions

across the country to collect funds for victims of the earthquakes. The drive was launched in schools, colleges, and universities in response to the prime minister's call.

Turkish Ambassador thanked the People and Government of Pakistan for spearheading relief efforts with the highest priority.

The Ambassador also expressed the request of the Turkish side to send additional humanitarian aid in form of insulated tents, solar batteries and generators. DG NLC gave briefing on road logistic arrangements for relief supplies to Syria and Turkiye. DG PDMA Punjab informed that PDMA has collected 7986 blankets and 221 food bags through public mobilization which will be handed over to NDMA.

During meeting, Ambassador of Pakistan in Turkiye Dr. Yousaf Junaid and Ambassador of Pakistan in Syria Air Marshal (R) Shahid Akhter briefed the meeting about current situation and ongoing rescue operations in their respective countries.

## Govt ends electricity subsidy given to Kisan, exporters

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Accelerating the efforts to meet conditions set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the federal cabinet has approved a plan to increase electricity prices and end subsidies.

The federal cabinet approved a revised circular debt management plan through circulation in this regard. According to the plan, which will be presented to the IMF, the government will jack up electricity prices by Rs7.91 per unit in four quarterly adjustments – Feb-March 2023, March-May 2023 June-Aug, and September-November.

Under the circular debt management plan, the government will charge Rs3.21

per unit from now onwards, Rs 0.69 from March-May and increasing again to Rs1.64 per unit from June onwards to August of 2023. From Sep-Nov, the govt will hike power tariff by Rs1.98 per unit.

The consumer base tariff will be increased from Rs15.28 per unit in June 2022 to Rs23.39 per unit till June 2023.

The government also approved to end electricity subsidy of Rs65 billion given to the exporters, with effect from March 2023.

The government will be able to get Rs 51 billion from the withdrawal of subsidy on electricity for exporters while Rs 14 billion will be collected by ending the subsidy on elec-

tricity under Kisan package from March 2023.

For the export sector, the subsidy of Rs 12. 13 per unit on electricity will be taken back.

About 250 billion rupees will also be recovered from electricity consumers by June 2023.

Under the plan, a surcharge of Rs 3.39 per unit will be levied, sources said. Rs73 billion will be obtained from the increase in quarterly adjustments till June. In the quarterly adjustment, electricity will be expensive up to Rs 4. 46 this month, sources said.

The government is taking all the steps to continue the IMF loan program under Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

## Polio campaign kicks off in 39 districts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Polio vaccination campaign has kicked off in 39 districts of the country to vaccinate more than six million children under the age of five after sewage samples in Lahore tested positive for wild poliovirus last month.

In a statement received here Sunday, Minister for National Health Services, Abdul Qadir Patel encouraged the parents and caregivers to ensure that their children are vaccinated in this and every campaign to protect them from the disability-causing virus and to stop it from gaining a foothold in their communities. The full polio drive will be started from February 13 to 17 in nine districts, including the seven endemic districts of Bannu, D.I.Khan, Tank, Lakki Marwat, North Waziristan, Upper South Waziristan and Lower South Waziristan in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and two districts of Punjab including Lahore and Faisalabad.

The partial campaigns will be conducted in 30 districts during which children will be vaccinated in selected union councils (UCs) of Sheikhupura, 57 UCs bordering Afghanistan, 58 UCs with Afghan refugee camps and 107 UCs of Multan with high-risk mobile populations.

## US jet shoots down new mystery 'object' over Canada

OTTAWA (AFP/APP): A US fighter jet shot down an unidentified object over Canada on Saturday -- in a joint operation by the North American neighbors and the second such takedown in their skies since the dramatic downing of a suspected Chinese spy balloon a week ago. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said he ordered the takedown of the object, the latest of a series of mysterious air intrusions. "Canadian and US aircraft were scrambled, and a US F-22 successfully fired at the object," Trudeau tweeted Saturday.

"The object was flying at an altitude of approximately 40,000 feet, had unlawfully entered Canadian airspace, and posed a reasonable threat to the safety of civilian flight," Canadian Defense Minister Anita Anand told reporters later.

Trudeau said Canadian forces in the Yukon "will now recover and analyze the wreckage of the object." He said he spoke with US President Joe Biden over the latest "incursion" while Anand also said she spoke with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. "We detected this object together and we defeated this object together," Anand said of the US-Canadian partnership known as the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). The "small, cylindrical" object was downed approximately 100 miles (160 kilometers) from Canada's border with the United States, she added.

## Pakistan International Maritime Exhibition and Conference (PIMEC) held

F.P. Report

KARACH: The three days Pakistan International Maritime Exhibition and Conference (PIMEC) 23 culminated at Karachi.

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Faisal Ali Sabzwari graced the closing session as Chief Guest while Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi was also present during the event.

Addressing the audience, the Chief Guest highlighted that Pakistan Navy has been the driving force to spearhead the dynamic initiatives in Maritime domain and has rendered invaluable services for the socio-economic uplift of Coastal areas. The minister also underlined that Government is launching new projects for beneficial collaborations and successful maritime business partnerships. The Chief Guest

added that recommendations of the conference will provide guidelines to embark on profitable initiatives for accelerating development of maritime sector and conduct of next PIMEC in 2025.

Earlier, Commander Karachi Rear Admiral Mian Zakirullah Jan extended profound appreciations to the visiting delegates, scholars and experts on maritime affairs and valued exhibitors for their forthcoming participation and dynamic presence during the event. He also emphasized that through PIMEC, Pakistan's ocean based industry will come together, exchange ideas and creates new avenues for prosperous future of Pakistan's Blue Economy. The Admiral also praised the efforts of NIMA for successful conduct of International Maritime Conference on the theme of 'Embracing Blue Economy

- Challenges and Opportunities for Developing Countries' during the event.

During the last session of IMC, President MCE Rear Admiral Javid Iqbal, Maritime Security Director MIDES Malaysia Capt Dr. Tay Yap Leong, Director of Waterlink Group of Companies Mr. Ahsan Malik and Regional Strategy Manager Thales Middle East Mr. Louis Brayle contemplated upon the dynamic theme of 'Importance of Secure Oceans and Emerging Trends in Shipping & Port Operations'. The conference was attended by a large number of dignitaries from across the globe, Officers from Defence Forces of Pakistan and friendly countries, academia, media representatives and researchers from local and international think tanks.

## UN to launch flash appeals for donor support for quake-hit Turkiye, Syria

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The United Nations and its humanitarian partners will this week launch flash appeals for urgently-needed funds to provide relief to thousands of victims in the earthquake-hit Turkiye and Syria, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths has said.

Griffiths was speaking in the Turkish city of Kahramanmaraş, where recovery efforts are ongoing in frigid temperatures, the UN said in a press release released in New York. The top relief official met with families left homeless by the disaster and listened to their stories of shock and devastation.

He also spoke with search and rescue teams as they carried out their opera-

tions in the devastated central parts of the city, amid collapsed buildings with excavation equipment digging through the debris.

UN teams are already on the ground, and more than 130 countries have dispatched responders, sniffer dogs, experts and other personnel. "There has never been an international response, a Turkish response, to a natural disaster, as we see here in these terrible days," Griffiths said.

He praised the courage of people, including parents, who are working round the clock in efforts to rescue their families and children from the rubble – "hoping for one more sound, for one more person to survive."

It is estimated that more than 22,000 people have

died in the double earthquake, which struck southeastern Turkiye and northern Syria early on Monday morning.

Millions more have been left homeless, including Syrians displaced by the 12-year war in their homeland and thousands of refugees who have fled across the border.

For Griffiths, the next phase will be to look after those affected by the tragedy, the press release said. "And I've met some of them already today," he said, "people who've lost their homes, whose children don't have schools to go to, who have no food, who have no money, who depend on the generosity of the Turkish people, the Turkish government and the international community."

## Modern-day threats to global peace, include terrorism, piracy, poverty: CM Sindh

KARACHI (NNI): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that the modern-day threats to peace are extremist ideology-based terrorism, illegal activities by transnational criminal syndicates, maritime piracy, and poverty.

Natural calamities as a result of climate change, environmental degradation, and the traditional threat of inter-state rivalries based on nationalistic agendas devoid of moral principles and justice happen to be great challenges. This he said while speaking to the Heads of Foreign delegates/participants of Exercise Aman 2023 who made a collective call on him here at the CM House on Sunday. Minister Information Sharji Memon, Minister Labour Saeed Ghani, Minister Local Govt Nasir Shah, Advisor Law Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Sohail Rajput, IG Police Ghulam Nabi

Memon, Special Assistant Qasim Naveed, Cdr Mohammad Nasir Iqbal was head of the delegation.

Mr Shah said that 'Aman' meant 'Peace' in the Urdu [language] and peaceful co-existence was the centerpiece of Pakistan's foreign policy. Our religion Islam also commands all Muslims to establish peace in the world for the peaceful existence of mankind and its living environment; in fact, the word 'Islam' also means peace in the Arabic language which has been chosen by Almighty Allah Himself for this religion which was sent through our Holy Prophet, he said and added peace could be achieved by countering the prevailing threats, therefore countering threats to mankind and the environment where we lived was a cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy as ordained upon us by our religion.

The CM said that in this age threats to peace have not increased manifold but have changed their nature and character. Modern-day threats to peace are extremist ideology-based terrorism, illegal activities by transnational criminal syndicates, maritime piracy, and poverty, he said and added natural calamities as a result of climate change, environmental degradation, and the traditional threat of interstate rivalries based on nationalistic agendas devoid of moral principles and justice were also a form of threats and challenges.

Murad Ali Shah said that due to the changing nature of threats in modern times, it was not possible for any single nation to single handedly counter such threats, therefore, this required the collaboration of all countries, especially in the international maritime areas.

## Nato chief's departure plan relaunches succession race

BERLIN (AFP): The Nato alliance confirmed on Sunday that its long-serving chief would leave office in October, launching a new round of speculation about his successor. Diplomats in Brussels say there is no consensus as to who should replace former Norwegian prime minister Jens Stoltenberg as the Western alliance's top civilian official.

Some allies were considering a plan to extend his already nine-year-old term to oversee Nato's response to the crisis unleashed by Russia's war against Ukraine. But, on Sunday, shortly after Stoltenberg returned from high-level meetings in Washington, his spokeswoman confirmed that he would leave office later this year. "The mandate of Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has been extended three times and he has served for a total of almost nine years," spokeswoman Oana Lungescu said.



KARACHI: A view of the beginning of the multinational naval exercise in Karachi.