

**ECP summons meeting**  
ISLAMABAD (INP): In connection with the President's announcement over holding elections in Punjab and KP, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) summoned an emergency meeting on Tuesday. The meeting will review the dates announced by the president for holding the elections in both provinces. As per the ECP spokesperson, the electoral watchdog will take any decision as per the law, after receiving the president's letter.

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# President announces April 9 as election date in Punjab and KP

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has announced the date of April 9, 2023 (Sunday) for holding the general elections of the Provincial Assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under Section 57 (1) of Elections Act, 2017 and has asked the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to issue Election Programme in accordance with Section 57 (2) of the Act.

In his letter to the Chief Election Commissioner of Pakistan (CEC), the President said that he was under oath to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan under Article 42 read with third Schedule of the Constitution. He wrote that there being no restraining order from any of the judicial fora, there was no impediment in invoking the power and authority vested in him under Section 57 (1) of the Elections Act, 2017, empowering him to "announce the date or dates of the general elections after consultation

with the Commission".

Therefore, he added, he had felt it necessary to perform his constitutional and statutory duty to announce the date of elections to avoid the infringement and breach of the Constitution and law i.e., holding elections not later than ninety days. The President further said that the Governors of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were not performing their constitutional duties for appointing a date, not later than ninety days from the date of dissolution of Provincial Assemblies as per the Constitution of Pakistan. He added that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was also not fulfilling its constitutional obligation to hold polls for the Assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"Both the constitutional offices are placing the ball in each other's court, thus, resulting in delay and creating a serious danger that constitutional provisions may be violated", he said. The

President pointed out that the Election Commission of Pakistan had already indicated the possible dates of elections in its various communications to the constitutional functionaries showing its own responsibility of holding the elections within ninety days.

The President stated that he had initiated a serious consultation process with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) under Section 57 (1) of the Elections Act, 2017 to announce the date for the general elections of the aforementioned Assemblies, however, the ECP replied that the Commission could not participate in a meeting on the subject matter with the Office of the President. He said that in the exercise of powers conferred upon him under Section 57 (1) of the Elections Act, 2017, he was announcing the date of 9th April 2023 (Sunday) for holding of general elections of the Provincial Assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Rothschild and Co. called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## 15 dead in deadly bus crash near Chakwal

**F.P. Report**

CHAKWAL: At least 15 people were killed in a fatal bus accident with over 60 others wounded near the Kallar Kahar area of Chakwal, on Monday.

As per the reports, the driver of the bus carrying a wedding party lost control of the vehicle after its brakes failed while en route to Lahore from Islamabad. Rescue officials said that the bus went off track and rammed into three different vehicles moving on the opposite track.

Chakwal Deputy Commissioner Qurat-ul-Ain said that the number of injured passengers was 64, including women and children, who were shifted to a hospital. This was the second such incident in less than a month.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the authorities concerned to provide the best medical treatment to the injured. Expressing deep grief over the loss of life, the prime minister prayed for the departed souls to rest in peace and for the early recovery of the injured.

Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durran expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives. The speaker and deputy speaker instructed the relevant authorities to provide the best treatment for the injured while praying for the departed souls.

## President has nothing to do with poll dates: Sana

ISLAMABAD (INP): Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah has assailed President Dr Arif Alvi, saying the President should stay within the limits of the constitution, advising him to refrain from using the office as a base for blackmail. In a tweet uploaded on Monday, the PML-N stalwart said that President has nothing to do with the election dates.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is not your slave to obey what you say, he said adding President cannot force the ECP to comply with illegal and unconstitutional orders. According to the interior minister, Imran Khan has harmed the economy, international relations and national interests, and now he is using the position of the head of state for conspiracy.

Meanwhile, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said the ECP was being pressurized unconstitutionally to get a date of the elections. In a statement on Monday, the minister said the Election Commission of Pakistan was a constitutional institution and no one would be allowed to transform it into Imran Khan's Tiger Force.

She urged that the office of the President should be loyal to the Constitution and any violation could invoke Article 6. The minister said the office of the President did not allow favouring of any particular political party. The minister alleged that President Arif Alvi had already violated the constitution by dissolving the National Assembly illegally last year.

## 'Rioting, terror' case LHC grants Imran protective bail

LAHORE (Agencies): Marking an end to the hours-long ruckus created inside its premises, the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday approved Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's protective bail plea till March 3 in a case pertaining to protests in Islamabad.

Meanwhile, the high court disposed of PTI chief's second petition in case regarding protests outside the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) after he withdrew his plea. The ousted prime minister, who was removed from power via a no-confidence move, was booked in the terror case in October last year after the Toshakhana verdict was announced by the ECP, sparking countrywide protests.

After Khan appeared before the court, the two-member bench granted him a protective bail till March 3. "Under the law, the petitioner is required to approach the court of first instance but in the interest of justice, we are inclined to grant him ad-interim anticipatory bail protective in nature until 03.03.2023 to enable him to approach the court of first instance," the written order issued after a while mentioned.

The court, however, clarified that this order shall cease to have its legal effect after the said date. The PTI chairman 'finally' appeared before the LHC on Monday after several notices served to him in order to present himself in two separate hearings as the judges told his lawyers that his presence was mandatory in bail pleas.

Despite reaching LHC premises within the allotted time — 5pm — the disposed prime minister could not appear before the court till around 7:30pm as his convoy was surrounded by a massive number of party supporters. Khan's convoy faced difficulty in moving towards the courtroom due to a large number of lawyers and supporters gathering outside to support their party leader. Amid the mismanagement, the cricketer-turned-politician remain seated inside his car as a massive number of people increased security risk.

Due to the delay, the LHC had granted the former prime minister the last few minutes to present himself before the court after the initial deadline of 5pm lapsed, warning lawyers that the judges would leave if the former prime minister won't reach the courtroom in the given time. The court ordered the security officials to immediately present the PTI chairman in the courtroom, following which Khan stepped out of his car amid tight security



and limped towards the courtroom.

After multiple adjournments, a two-member bench of the LHC — headed by Justice Ali Baqar Najafi — resumed hearing of Khan's bail plea. Advocate Khawaja Tariq Rahim — Khan's counsel — apprised the bench that the former prime minister was present in the court's premises and pleaded with the court to mark the attendance of the wounded leader in his vehicle. At this, Justice Najafi directed the counsel to produce his client before the court as he has reached the court's premises. Referring to the rush inside the court's premises, the lawyer said that Khan's plaster would damage if someone pushes him. "Suspect's appearance in court is mandatory for interim bail," remarked the judge.

Meanwhile, the court adjourned the hearing till 7:30pm. Earlier on Monday, Khan's counsel, in view of the PTI workers' massive rush inside the court's premises, pleaded with the court to mark the attendance of the injured leader in his vehicle but the court turned down the request. Khan appeared before the court along with his counsel after the adjournment and sought a protective bail in the terror case. Taking the rostrum at the outset of the hearing, Khan said that he has to undergo x-rays on February 28. He pleaded with the court to grant him a two-week protective bail. The PTI leader also told the two-member judge that he respects the court as his party's name also refers to 'Insaf'. Later, Khan appeared in Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh's court as the LHC had noted the discrepancy in the documents last week during the hearing of a protective bail plea of Khan, who was unwilling to appear in court due to security concerns.

## Biden visits Ukraine as air-raid siren sounds

KYIV (Agencies): The US will back Ukraine in its fight against Russia for "as long as it takes" President Joe Biden said as he made an unannounced and symbolic visit to the capital, Kyiv. "We have every confidence you're going to continue to prevail," he said. Mr Biden's first trip to Ukraine as president came days before the first anniversary of Russia's invasion.

He said President Putin had been "dead wrong" to think Russia could outlast Ukraine and its Western allies. He met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and the pair visited a memorial to soldiers who have died in the nine years since Russia annexed Crimea and its proxy forces captured parts of the eastern Donbas region. Mr Biden's presence was intended to reaffirm America's "unwavering commitment to Ukraine's democracy, sovereignty, and territorial integrity", according to a White House statement.

The New York Times reported that he took a 10-hour train journey from Poland to reach Kyiv. He left Ukraine on Monday to travel to Poland. After the visit, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced a new package of security assistance for Ukraine val-

ued at \$450m (£373m), including ammunition for howitzers and the Himars rocket system, Javelin missiles, and air surveillance radars.

The US will also provide Kyiv with an extra \$10m (£8.3m) in emergency assistance "to keep Ukraine's energy infrastructure up and running", Mr Blinken said. A new wave of sanctions against individuals and companies "that are trying to evade or backfill Russia's war machine" will also be announced later this week. Mr Zelensky said: "The results of this visit will surely be reflected on the battlefield in liberating our territories."

He also said that the two leaders had discussed the possibility of sending other weapons that so far had not been supplied. Mr Zelensky has repeatedly called for F-16 fighter jets, something the US and other allies have so far stopped short of approving. National security adviser Jake Sullivan - who was among President Biden's entourage - said the US notified Russia about the trip a few hours before President Biden's departure for "deconfliction purposes".

He refused to comment on how Moscow had responded to the news.

White House officials said planning for the trip had been happening for "months", and that a final decision to travel was made on Friday. In a scene that added drama to the most high-profile visit to Ukraine since the war began, air raid sirens wailed while President Biden and Mr Zelensky were in St Michael's Cathedral in central Kyiv. The sirens sound regularly in Kyiv.

While other world leaders have visited Ukraine over the past year, the US president's appearance in the capital during a war in which American soldiers aren't fighting is a show of unity at a time when Russia says Western support for Ukraine is waning. The visit was welcomed by Ukrainians in Kyiv. "I'm so grateful for his support - it means so much to us," Roksoliana Gera told the BBC.

"I appreciate his courage, that he took on this challenge and came to show the support of the American nation," Oleksandra Soloviova said the visit was an "important sign for the whole world". "For Russia first of all, it shows the US supports us and will continue supporting us, with sanctions and military equipment," she said.

## LHC suspends ECP order denotifying PTI MPs

LAHORE (Agencies): In another immediate relief to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday suspended the order of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) that denotified the party's lawmakers elected from Punjab who had resigned en masse last year in April.

A single-member bench of the LHC headed by Justice Shahid Karim heard the PTI plea today and issued the notices to the ECP and National Assembly Speaker Raja Parvez Ashraf and others, directing them to submit their responses by March 7.

The lawmakers had approached the high court challenging the acceptance of their resignation and subsequent denotification by the commission after the high court suspended a similar order of the ECP regarding 43 PTI MNAs.

Speaker Ashraf had accepted the resignation of 34 PTI lawmakers on January 17 and 35 MNAs on January 20, including Imran Khan ally Shiekh Rashid, which were then denotified by the commission and by-elections were announced.

Earlier this month, Riaz Fatyana and 42 other MNAs whose resignations were "accepted by the NA Speaker Ashraf on January 22" had filed a petition challenging the decisions of the NA speaker and the ECP. The LHC judge had on Feb 8 ordered that the notification of the ECP shall remain suspended and the election schedule for the seats shall not be announced by the ECP.

"The process of by-elections to these seats shall remain suspended," the court order reads. The court had admitted the petition for regular hearing seeking replies from the NA speaker, the ECP and the federal government by March 7.

## Governor Sindh visits Peshawar

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori called on Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan here on Monday at Chief Minister House. In the meeting they discussed issues of mutual interest and the country's political situation.

Governor KP Haji Ghulam Ali and others were also present in the meeting. Kamran Tessori expressed grief and sorrow over the tragic incident of Police Lines blast and expressed sympathy to the bereaved families of the martyrs. Kamran Tessori on the occasion congratulated Muhammad Azam Khan on assuming the post of Caretaker Chief Minister.

## Govt taking tangible steps to strengthen economy: PM

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said the government was taking tangible and necessary steps to strengthen the economy and prioritizing reduction in unnecessary imports by enhancing exports.

He said the incumbent government also faced the issues of mismanagement of the previous regime, and still in the face of such issues, it was committed to improving the economy with strenuous efforts. The prime minister was talking to a delegation of Rothschild and Co, one of the world's largest independent financial advisory groups, that called on him, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Finance Dr Ayesha Ghous Pasha and other relevant officials. Talking to the delegation, the prime minister mentioned that Pakistan faced natural calamity in the shape of recent floods spurred by the worst climate changes.

The delegation members termed the economic situation in Pakistan stable and said its talented manpower was its real strength. The present government was taking steps to take the economy on the right path, they observed. They also commended Pakistan Stock Exchange as among the best-performing stocks in the region. Pakistan had also created awareness, in an effective manner, about the impacts of climate change at the global level, they said.

**Shehbaz raises issue of Arshad Sharif's murder with Kenyan President:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday held a telephonic conversation with President of Kenya, Dr William Ruto. During the call, the prime minister raised the issue of renowned Pakistani Journalist, late Arshad Sharif, who was murdered in Kenya.

He thanked the Kenyan President for the cooperation extended to Pakistani investigation teams so far. The prime minister emphasized that Pakistan attached great importance to the late Arshad Sharif's case and requested for further

cooperation from the Kenyan side during the course of the investigation in bringing the matter to a closure for the family and people of Pakistan.

Kenyan President assured the prime minister of full support and cooperation in the matter. The two leaders discussed bilateral cooperation and issues of mutual interest. Highlighting the significance Pakistan attached to its relations with Africa, the prime minister conveyed Pakistan's strong desire to strengthen its historical ties with Kenya in all areas of cooperation.

**Premier invites Dutch companies:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday held a telephone call with Prime Minister of the Netherlands Mark Rutte wherein he invited the Dutch companies to invest in the areas of agriculture, horticulture, water management and renewable energy.

During the telephonic conversation, the two leaders took stock of bilateral relations and expressed satisfaction at its positive trajectory, besides agreeing to further enhance trade and economic relations. The prime minister appreciated the humanitarian assistance of the Dutch government for the flood victims in Pakistan as well as the support of Dutch water experts in preparing Pakistan's Resilient, Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Framework. Both leaders further agreed to continue cooperation on issues related to climate change. The two leaders also discussed important global and regional issues of mutual interest including the situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), Afghanistan and Ukraine.

The prime minister also stressed the need for the international community to raise a collective voice against Islamophobia and work together for promoting interfaith harmony and peaceful co-existence, for which mutual respect and religious tolerance were a must. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the Netherlands. The two prime ministers agreed to celebrate this milestone in a befitting manner.

## Imran makes law, judicial system a 'joke': Marriyum

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Monday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan had made the Constitution, law, and judicial system a joke and instigated his party workers to attack the Lahore High Court.

Talking to the media here at the Parliament House, she said Imran Khan should be taken to task for provoking his workers to attack the court which had summoned him in a case earlier in the day. "Imran Khan is wanted in many court cases, but for provoking an attack on the Lahore High Court today, he must be arrested immediately," she stressed.

The minister said the court wanted Imran Khan's presence in a matter pertaining to his 'false' signature on the bail petition, but he refused in the first place on the pretext that he was unable to leave his Zaman Park residence due to injury. But before appearing in the court, which had given him another deadline to ensure his presence by the evening, Imran Khan gave a call to

his supporters on social media to swarm into the LHC building, she added.

Once he arrived in the court, another excuse was made that he could not come out of his vehicle to present himself before the judge, she said, adding such tactics were employed to gain some time so that his workers could gather to attack the court premises. It was an irony that how Imran Khan's lawyer had asked the court to send a person to get his signature on the petition from outside the court where he was sitting in the vehicle, she remarked.

Marriyum asked whether such relaxation was available to all the people who were summoned by the same court and whether special hearings would also be arranged for them. A layman, she said, did not have all those facilities which were available to Imran Khan, who at one moment requested an ambulance and at the other sought an extension in the deadline for appearing before the court.

"This is (the matter of) bail before arrest, which shows his mala fide intention that he does not want to

be part of the investigation," she said, asking how could a person present himself before the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) if he did not bother to appear before the court. "The FIA says it wants to interrogate Imran Khan while the court is asking him to appear before it, but he is listening to nobody in a total disregard of the law and Constitution," she quipped.

The minister also recalled that Imran Khan had abused and threatened a female sessions court judge, who had summoned him in another case but later apologized to save his skin. He used to say that the country would achieve independence when the rich would come under the law, but ironically, he himself had been ridiculing the system and violating the law with impunity.

She said the three times prime minister Nawaz Sharif had presented himself before the court despite knowing that all the cases and witnesses were false and fabricated. Nawaz Sharif was not given an exemption from appearance before the court when it was sought due to the deteriorating health of his wife.

# CM highlights bravery of LEA, security lapses

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah giving a policy statement on the Karachi Police Office attack on February 17 on the floor of the assembly not only disclosed some details of the investigations made so far but also unveiled the post-attack security plan being enforced in the city.

The chief minister said that three terrorists wearing suicide jackets, drove through Police quarters in a 95-Model car and scaled the compound wall, and entered the KPO at around 7.10 pm on February 17, 2023.

The terrorists with their infiltration into the four-story KPO building opened indiscriminate fire with the objective to hostage as many police staff as possible, Shah said, and appreciated a Rangers Brigadier who along with a squad of six to seven Rangers was returning from somewhere rushed to the KPO and participated in the operation.

Meanwhile, DIG South and other police officers of CTD and Special Branch even though they were not posted in the area reached the spot and properly led the operation against the terrorists. Shah disclosed that he learned about the attack by 7.20 pm and without any delay, he talked to the IG police and told him to plan a ruthless operation against minimum loss to control the situation.

He further said that the Additional IG Karachi Javed Odho was in Islamabad, but he was in touch with his DIGs and IG Police. "I am proud to say that the policemen and rangers who participated in the operation demonstrated a national unity in the sense that they were of different languages hailing from nook and corner of the country," the CM said and added the KPO operation was the manifestation of national unity and against the terrorists. The CM disclosed that the Pak Army snipers were deployed on the rooftop of the nearby buildings and a plan was discussed to use Pak navy night-sighting helicopters in the operation but thanks to God that the police and Rangers killed two terrorists while the third one blasted himself at the third floor.

Murad Ali Shah said that Ranger Sub Inspector Taimur Shahzad of Shujabadd, Multan, a police constable Latif of Shikarpur, Head Constable Ghulam Abbas of Larkana, Constable Saeed of Orangi Town and sanitary worker Ajmal of Faisalabad lost their lives while fighting against the terrorists.

He said that 18 policemen and Ranger and one civilian sustained injuries and were shifted to hospital. CM raised a question about how the terrorists from North Waziristan and Laki Marwat carrying suicide jackets and weapons travelled all along and reached Karachi and attacked KPO required us to assess our intelligence work, security lapses, and weaknesses. Mr Shah disclosed that the 95-Model Car used by the terrorist was playing on a transfer letter though it has been sold to the fourth owner no one bothered to transfer it in his name. The TTP has claimed responsibility for the attack, he said and added an FIR No. 20/2023 has been registered and an investigation was in progress. CM said that the provincial police have a good track record of working out high-profile cases, though the terrorist attack on KPO has shaken us yet our resolve to defeat the enemies of our beloved country, people and religion has further strengthened.

Murad Shah said and added that he was satisfied that the people of Pakistan, particularly of this city have set aside their political affiliations and difference and shown unprecedented unity against the terrorists.

The people of this city experienced the worst law and order in the 1980s, 90s, 2000 decade and 2013 when the Karachi operation was launched after the attack on APS Peshawar.

"We had protected the people in those worst days and will protect our people this time too," he said and added, "we would not talk to them [terrorists] but kill them." The CM said that after the attack on a mosque of Police Line Peshawar, the Prime Minister chaired a meeting of the Apex Committee. "We are implementing the decisions taken in the meeting," he said.

Talking about issues, the CM said that there was a threat alert and then how the terrorists reached the KP – he questioned and then answered "it was security laxity." He said that it was also the weakness of our intelligence work that could not collect information. When the terrorist cut the barbed wire Constable Abbas Leghari confronted them in which he was killed. The question is where the other policemen were when they were cutting the [barbed] wires - they should have been killed there, he said. The chief minister disclosed the decisions his government has taken to face such threats including impounding of the vehicles playing on the open letter. "Our Excise department with the support of law enforcement agencies would start road checking to not allow others.



LAHORE: Minister for Planning and Development, Prof Ahsan Iqbal visits in different departments of Air Link Communication at Quaid-e-Azam Industrial Estate Kot Lakhpat in the city

## Sindh govt launch action against unregistered vehicle

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: The Sindh government has decided to launch massive action against the unregistered, applied for registration, vehicle with out number plates, fake number plates , tinted glass vehicles and vehicles running on open letters and owners of such vehicles have been given a week's time, other wise from February 28, all such vehicles will be confiscated. Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon along with Excise and Taxation Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla and Chief Minister Sindh's Adviser on Law Barrister Murtaza Wahab announced following the meeting chaired by Chief Minister Sindh at a Press Conference held today at Sindh Archives Complex.

The minister said that this non-stop campaign will be started after a week and nobody will be given any relaxation . He said that no showroom owner have authority to sale any unregistered vehicle. Whoever sells an unregistered vehicle and if such vehicle is used in any crime, the showroom owner will also be held liable for the crime. He said that after the attack on the Karachi Police Office on Friday, the Sindh government has taken important decisions and it has been decided to make SOPs for tackling such emergency situation in future.

He said that such emergency situation, the traffic will be managed in that area. The traffic police will play its role in this, but the public and all other stakeholders are also requested to cooperate fully in this regard. He said that in such a situation, the public will be informed through broadcasting organizations, FM radio and social media, to keep their vehicles in one lane and one lane to be completely kept empty and open for police, law enforcement agencies, ambulances, fire brigades and other related agencies to reach the scene.He said that as soon as the incident happened on Friday, the ambulance service of private welfare organizations parked their vehicles in front. He said that we appreciate their spirit . But if 10 vehicles are required while 100 of vehicles are moved ahead. It will block the way and create difficulty for police and law enforcement agencies to proceed and perform their work. He said that now the SOP has been made that after consulting the Deputy Commissioner and SSP of relevant area, the vehicles will be allowed to go ahead in such a situation. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Chief Secretary Sindh will convene a meeting with all private ambulance organizations in this regard. He said that media vehicles also reached the spot to air breaking news. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that breaking news is not important in such a situation. He pointed out that some channels aired that ten terrorists are inside the compound

which diverted the attention of police and security agencies. He said that on such an occasion the media needs to work with more responsibly and attentively and should proceed with consultation of administration.

In this regard, he said that PEMRA will also be consulted. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that after one week no one will be allowed to display weapons, those displaying weapons will be arrested and FIR will be registered against them. He said that no one will be spared in the campaign no matter how influential he is. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that no concession will be given to government ministers, advisors, members of assemblies and opposition party members.

He clarified that only police, rangers and other law enforcement personnel will be allowed to carry weapons in uniform, no official without uniform will be allowed to carry weapons. He said that even guards of private security agency will not have the authority to display weapons in uniform. If a person is found to be involved in the display of weapons, he will face the law. He said that the media should support the government in this campaign and if anyone displays weapons anywhere, it should be pointed out. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that citizens should keep an eye in their neighborhoods and report suspicious activities to Helpline 15. He said that if someone is renting a house, shop and car, he should share the information with area police station which mandatory for everyone under law.

The provincial minister said that private vehicles resembling police and security agencies will also be confiscated. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that all these laws are already in enforcement , they will be strictly implemented. Adviser to Chief Minister Sindh on Law Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that constitution is a social contract between the state and the people.

Like the government, the people also have the responsibility to play their role in implementing them. He said that all these laws exist, they are not implemented. He said that the government faced lots of hindrances in reponding to Friday terrorist attack on Karachi Police Office. He added that Rapid response is required in such an emergency situation. He said that the first injured in this incident was a volunteer of a welfare organization who was rushed to the hospital. He said that no one should come forward in such a situation without the permission of district administration so that the security agencies can work in better way.

He said that during the operation against the terrorists, it was being told on the TV channels that the snipers had reached the particular building and this information could be misused by the terrorist. The facilitator of terrorists who are sitting far away can give these messages to terrorists through mobile phones. He said that the media should show responsibility, Pakistan People's Party government believes in freedom of expression. Provincial Minister for Excise and Taxation Mukesh Kumar Chawla, in response to a question about the delay in the issuance of vehicle number plates, said that this problem was in the past, but since the issuance of new design number plates, the Excise and Taxation Department timely Ensuring issuance of number plates.

### Speakers stress improving industry academia relations

LAHORE (APP): Punjab University (PU) Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof. Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhter has stressed the need of promoting modern research in the higher education institutions for addressing the problems faced by the industry.

Addressing the opening ceremony of first ever three-day international conference on "Advances in Functional Materials" at Al Raazi Hall here on Monday, he said there is need to spend more money on modern research in order to bolster country's economy. More than 200 delegates from Pakistan and abroad will present 50 oral and 30 poster presentations during the three-day conference which is organized by the Department of Physics PU.

Chairman Department of Physics Prof. Dr. Mahmood-ul-Hassan, faculty members, scientists, researchers and students were present.

Dr. Niaz said the science departments of Punjab University are getting the services of the best experts and scientists. He said PU departments should work together to improve industry-academia relations.

He congratulated the organizers for organizing the conference on a good topic and hoped for good results. He advised the students to play a role in practical life by learning from the experiences of experts in such events.

Dr Mahmood-ul-Hassan said that the purpose of organizing the conference is to provide a platform to theoretical and applied physics experts.

### 5 killed, 1,107 injured in 1,035 accidents in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At least five people were killed while 1107 injured in 1,035 road traffic accidents in Punjab during last 24 hours. Out of the total injured, 546 people were seriously injured who were shifted to different hospitals, whereas, 561 minor injured victims were treated at the incident site by rescue medical teams, said a spokesman for Rescue 1122 here on Monday.

The analysis showed that 514 drivers, 40 underage drivers, 107 pedestrians, and 491 passengers were among the victims of these road traffic crashes.

The statistics showed that 230 accidents were reported in Lahore which affected 240 persons placing the Provincial Capital at top of the list followed by 78 in Faisalabad with 85 victims and at third Gujranwala 72 with 67 victims.

## CM reviews PSL security arrangements

LAHORE (APP): A follow-up meeting regarding PSL security arrangements was held under the chair of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at his office on Monday.

The meeting took a detailed review of security arrangements made for PSL matches in Lahore and Rawalpindi while the CM directed linking the Rawalpindi cameras with Lahore's Safe Cities Authority like Multan to enhance security coverage. He noted that a 4-tier security fence would be created to ensure foolproof security arrangements for the matches in Lahore and Rawalpindi like Multan.

While ensuring security on the PSL routes, the CM ordered that the duration of traffic stoppage should be kept to a minimum. An effective publicity campaign should be carried out to keep the citizens regularly aware of the alternative routes during the movement of the teams, he said. While directing the effective monitoring of the security arrangements, he added that line departments should maintain the best coordination among themselves.

The CM was briefed that a parking facility would be provided for visitors at

Gulberg College in Lahore and a shuttle service would run from the college to the stadium for disabled and elderly people. Arrangements were being made to install lights along the entire route and the stadium and route would be monitored with the help of 160 cameras in Rawalpindi.

Provincial Ministers Dr Javed Akram, Mansoor Qadir, Ibrahim Murad, Bilal Afzal, Amir Mir, IG police, ACS (Home), Addl IG (CTD), Addl IG (Special Branch), CCPO Lahore, MD Punjab Safe Cities Authority, commissioner Lahore, DIG (Ops) Lahore, Chief Traffic Officer Lahore and relevant officials attended the meeting while Multan and Rawalpindi commissioners, RPOs, CPOs, deputy commissioners, DPOs and CTOs participated through video link.

**CM grieved over loss of lives:** Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has expressed a deep sense of sorrow and grief over the loss of human lives in the traffic accident in Kalar Kahar Salt Range area and extended his heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved families. He sought a report from the administration and instructed to provide the best treatment facilities to the injured.

## Ahsan hints at focusing on foreign markets to boost exports, reserves

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof Ahsan Iqbal has said that the coalition government is trying to divert the orientation of industrial and corporate sectors from domestic to foreign markets, since it is the only way to bring in dollars, build up foreign reserves, and ensure the balance of payments.

He was talking to the media after visiting a mobile assembling factory 'Air Link Communication' at Quaid-i-Azam Industrial Estate, here on Monday. He said that ignoring the export sector

and relying on imports had been one of the key reasons for our failure on maintaining a balance of payment.

The planning minister said that the government had devised a five-point framework through which foreign reserves need would be fulfilled by improving exports. Exports, E-Pakistan's Information Technology, energy, environment or water food security and education, health and population control were the key segments of the framework.

Ahsan Iqbal said that government's economic emergency plan was export

sector and relying on imports had been one of the key reasons for devastation of economy.

He said that the government was making efforts to introduce friendly policies to boost enterprises as people and private sector of the country had lots of enterprise, adding that "Our supports was with the industry sector and we jointly steer the country out of crises." He mentioned that development of private sector was important to improve exports of the country.

About his visit to the plant, he said that he was pleased to see the world standard assembling mechanism and advanced technology at the factory.

**TEVTA**  
KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

**خیبر پختونخوا ٹیکنیکل ایجوکیشن اینڈ ووکیشنل ٹریننگ اتھارٹی**

**درخواستیں مطلوب ہیں**

**ہنرمند**

خبر پختونخوا کے شہرہ آفاق اطلاع کے جوائن سے درج ذیل کورسز میں داخلہ کیلئے درخواستیں مطلوب ہے۔

نمبر شمار	کورسز	تفصیلات قابلیت
1	Computer Operator/ Application	میسرک
2	Hand Embroidery	مڈل
3	Dress Making & Design	مڈل
4	Tailoring & Fashion Designing	مڈل

**نمایاں خصوصیات** مفت تربیت، اور ٹرانسپورٹ سہولت کے علاوہ ماہوار وظیفہ بھی دیا جائے گا۔

**ہدایات برائے درخواست دہندہ گان:**

- عمر کی حد 30 سال تک۔
- اگر آپ باقاعدہ فاؤنڈیشن انتظامی اور کے ٹیوٹا کے زیرِ قیادت کسی بھی ٹریننگ پروگرام میں حصہ لے چکے ہیں تو آپ دوبارہ درخواست دینے کے اہل نہیں۔ غلط بیانی کی صورت میں آپ کے خلاف سخت تادیبی کارروائی کی جائے گی۔
- منتخب شدہ جوائن کو ترجیح ادارے میں تمام اصلی تعلیمی اسناد جمع کرانے ہو گئے۔
- ناکمل اور مقررہ تاریخ کے بعد موصول ہونے والی درخواستیں قابل قبول نہیں ہوگی۔
- بر لحاظ سے مکمل درخواستیں، تعلیمی اسناد، ڈومیسائل، اپنا قومی شناختی کارڈ اور والد کا شناختی کارڈ کی تصدیق شدہ (Attested) فوٹو کاپیاں، دو حالیہ تصاویر بے رمبہ حلقہ نام (نام بچہ) مورخہ 07/03/2023 تک جمع کیے گئے۔
- پتہ پتہ پہنچ جانے چاہئے۔

**درخواستیں مندرجہ ذیل جگہوں میں جمع کروائیں جگہ تک ہیں۔**

- پروگرام ڈائریکٹر سیکڑو پبلچمنٹ سیکشن کے پی ٹیوٹا 4، لائبرسٹریٹ، اولڈ بارا روڈ، یونیورسٹی ٹاؤن پشاور
- گورنمنٹ ویمن ووکیشنل سنٹر سول کالونی غار باجوڑ (0942220336)

Phone# 091-3061019

پروگرام ڈائریکٹر، Skills Development Section (NMDs) KP-TEVTA, 4 Laiba's Street, Old Bara Road, University Town Peshawar

INFPT- 618/2023

## JI asks CEC to discharge constitutional duties, defy pressures

KARACHI (NNI): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi Ameer Engr Hafiz Naemur Rehman has asked the chief election commissioner to discharge his constitutional obligations while defying all pressures against doing so. The JI Karachi chief expressed these views while addressing a members convention held here at Idara Noor-e-Haq, the JI Karachi headquarters. On the occasion, he announced to host a convention of newly elected representatives on February 26.

Engr Naemur Rehman also demanded of the Election Commission of Pakistan to announce scheduled for the local government elections in the remaining 11 union councils where the polls were deferred due to demise of candidates.

He also demanded of the commission to decide on the next hearing at least the six open and shut cases as form 11 and 12 had already been available with the JI. He further said that he himself would also appear before the ECP on the February 22 hearing. The JI leader further said that the party has been running a campaign entitled Karachi Rights Movement for the progress and development of the city and betterment of Karachiites.



حکومت پاکستان  
(وزارت داخلہ)



NADRA  
REGISTRATION

**نیشنل ڈیٹا بیس اینڈ رجسٹریشن اتھارٹی (نادرا)**

**نوٹس بوجہ غیر حاضری**

آپ سید محمد (سوی۔ ای۔ آر۔ پی۔ ٹی) نمبر 52636، ولد محمد عمر (پیدائشی نام محمد عمر) نے اپنا شناختی کارڈ ایکٹو بنانے کے لیے نیشنل ڈیٹا بیس میں رجسٹریشن کے لیے درخواست دی تھی۔ تاہم، وہ اپنا شناختی کارڈ ایکٹو بنانے کے لیے نیشنل ڈیٹا بیس میں رجسٹریشن کے لیے درخواست دینے کے بعد 24-Nov-2022 سے اپنی ڈیوٹی سے بغیر درخواستیں (شناختی اجازت جواز اقتادی) مسلسل غیر حاضری میں ہیں۔

مقررہ تاریخ (2) ڈیٹا بنانے کے لیے درخواستیں: RHO/NADRA/Disp/08/HR/52636/First Notice

Dated : 27-Dec-2022 اور دو نم ڈیٹا بنانے کے لیے درخواستیں: RHO/NADRA/Disp/08/HR/52636/Second Notice Dated: 13-Jan-2023

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# Revolution possible with mutual cooperation

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Muhammad Adnan Jalil has admitted that any economy can become strong and invincible only if industry and commerce sectors are prioritized and brought to perfection.

"Industrial revolution is possible in KP if there is mutual cooperation and integrity between the government and the business community", he added. He was addressing joint consultation and meeting of Chambers of Industry & Commerce and Traders Associations of all the cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that was held at the cabinet room of Civil Secretariat Peshawar.

In this long consultation meeting which lasted over four hours, the problems and difficulties of the business and industrialists community of the province

were openly discussed. While for their solution and industrial and economic development, the senior Officers of the Industry and Commerce department and all its subsidiaries gave answers on the spot. The participants expressed great satisfaction on it and thanked the caretaker KP government, especially Adnan Jalil, for giving them a proper hearing and sense of confidence.

In the meeting, the Caretaker Minister also gave opportunities to the presidents and officials of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries and All Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chambers of Commerce and Industries including the women chambers to table their problems and recommendations separately and also assured them of redressal on priority basis.

The caretaker minister said that provincial government has a promise to the

industrialists that it will always prioritize the local investors consultation and take all steps based on their suggestions and recommendations so that the dream of industrial revolution in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa becomes a reality.

He said that apart from ensuring peace and tranquility, and a favorable industrial and business environment, the provincial government will endeavor for everything that the local investors need because our economic development lies in the restoration of their confidence.

"Only in this way industrial revolution and increase in employment opportunities in the province is possible", he maintained. He further assured all the chambers that all the high ups of the Industries department will come to their cities to meet them all very soon and will try best to resolve their problems and issues in the earliest.

Earlier, the coordinator of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries, Sartaj Ahmed Khan, highlighted the difficulties and challenges faced by the business and industrialists community across the province, while the caretaker Minister Industries invited the representatives of other chambers to have an open discussion. He listened to their woes patiently and assured to consider them on an emergency basis.

## Fahad takes charge as DC Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): In a formal ceremony held at the district administration office, Shah Fahad assumed his new role as Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar.

A grade 18 PAS officer from the 39th Common, he brings a wealth of experience to the job, having previously served as Deputy Commissioner Khyber, Kurram and Hangu. Fahad pledged to work tirelessly for the development and relief of Peshawar's citizens, says a press release.

"Under the leadership of Commissioner Peshawar," he said, "we will spare no effort in using all available resources to provide the people of Peshawar the support they need. We will serve them day and night and will work to ensure that Peshawar continues to grow and prosper."

The appointment of Shah Fahad as DC has been warmly welcomed by residents of Peshawar, who hope that his experience and dedication will help bring positive changes to the district. With a proven track record of effective leadership in previous positions, he is seen as a capable and committed public servant.

## Dry weather to prevail in most KP

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

During the last 24 hours, cold and partly cloudy to cloudy weather occurred over most districts of the province. However, scattered rain occurred in Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Bajaur and Khyber districts.

Rain recorded (in mm): Chitral 22, Dir 21, Drosh 12, Mirkhani & Kalam 11 (each), Timergara 05, Pashat-Bajaur 03, Pattan 01 and Risapur & Tirah-Khyber Trace (each).

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of KP were Peshawar City 26/13, Chitral 17/05, Timergara 22/08, Dir 20/04, Mirkhani 21/04, Kalam 14/03, Drosh 18/03, Saidu Sharif 21/09, Pattan 20/13, Malam Jabba 11/03, Takht Bhai 25/13, Kakul 21/10, Balakot 23/13, Parachinar 18/03, Bannu 30/10, Cherat 19/09, D.I. Khan 29/14.



PESHAWAR: Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori meeting Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan.

# Education leads to knowledge-based economy

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Secretary Information and Public Relations Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (IPR-KP) Arshad Khan has said that it is obligatory for a human being to acquire knowledge. Which is of two types, one is obligatory knowledge, the purpose of which is to make oneself a servant of Allah, while the other is obligatory knowledge.

By learning which a person learns to live the best life in the world. He said

that the purpose of education is to prepare a person with the best ways to live a good life in the world so that they can innovate to live a good life keeping in mind the challenges of the world.

These views were expressed while addressing a workshop in Mardan Board On Monday. On this occasion, high officials of the education department from Mardan, Swabi and Nowshera districts and people associated with education from the private sector

also participated.

Addressing the event, the Information Secretary said that for a person to live a good life, it is necessary to understand the process to clarify his abilities.

The Secretary of Information thanked the participants and said that in the present era, the biggest obstacle in the pursuit of education is the knowledge of the language for education. That is, online education is very easy and useful.

Chairman of Board of

Intermediate and Secondary Education Mardan Farid Ahmed Khattak and other participants also addressed the event and highlighted the modern method of learning and assessment including the acquisition of education.

The objective of the workshop was to create awareness among the public and to improve the scoring and assessment system to bring out their potential among students so that students can increase their thinking and creativity.

# NFFPNI holds review meeting on wheat flour fortification program

PESHAWAR (APP): National Food Fortification Program Nutrition International Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (NFFPNI) on Monday arranged a one-day progress review meeting on its Wheat Flour Fortification Program for the province.

Director of Food Department Yasir Hassan and other food department officials, Representatives of the World Food Programme, and academia participated in the event.

In opening remarks, Dr. Imtiaz Ali Shah, Provincial Program Manager of Nutrition International KP Chapter told the participants that Nutrition International has been improving health and nutrition in Pakistan

since 2001. Additionally, he told a team of more than 100 staff and consultants with an investment of \$60 million in Pakistan since 2003, has been hired by nutritional international including \$23 million directly spent on procuring and distributing vitamin A capsules.

While talking about the National food fortification program across the country Provincial Program Manager told that 992 mills in the country (75%) signed MoUs with the National food fortification program while it has installed 2,333 micro feeders at 992 mills leading to 35,000 Metric Tons of wheat flour fortification monthly. Moreover, 221-check laboratories for

testing iron in fortified wheat flour have also been established.

While expressing his views on reaching millions with low-cost, high-impact interventions Dr. Imtiaz Ali Shah expressed that approximately 20 million children receive two Vitamin A capsules every year, and more than 115 million people have gained access to iodized salt.

The initiative decreases severe iodine deficiency among mothers from 37 percent in 2001 to 4.6 percent currently and from 23 percent to 2 percent in school-aged children. Almost 5 million children received zinc and ORS to treat diarrhea, adequate fortification of wheat flour and

edible oil to benefit 127 million people and Increased coverage of birth packages for an additional 300,000 mothers and their babies.

"Nutrition International will continue its support till 2027 and will continue to scale up and sustain wheat flour fortification. Advocacy with the government for approval of the legislation, rules and regulations, and cost transfer/absorption mechanism, capacity building of millers, and government authorities in fortification and QAQC process.

We will also Engage Chakkies for increased coverage in all provinces in a Collaboration with other development partners' he added.



PESHAWAR: Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori meeting Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali at Governor's House.

# KPCTA arranges three-day excursion trip

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA), in collaboration with Pakistan Armed Forces, arranged a three-day excursion trip to Orakzai district for four operators where they were briefed about various aspects of the tourism industry and the role of the KPCTA.

According to a press release issued here on Monday, the trip was aimed

to inform tourists about various tourist attractions in the merged tribal districts and to help them explore opportunities for the promotion of tourism in the merged districts. The delegation of tour operators reached Orakzai district via Hungu and Kohat witnessing the natural beauty of KP province.

They were later taken to Zera Children Park and afterward went to Nanawar Cave and Kalaya, head-

quarters of Orakzai Scouts.

The next day, the tour operators visited Sampog top, Khaljo fort, Sikh monument, Lokheart fort, and Gulistan fort. They were also briefed about the geographical importance of the Orakzai tribal district.

The tour was arranged to promote the provincial tourism sector in tribal districts and to project the peaceful image of KP and its newly merged tribal districts.

# Power suspension on various feeders notified

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) on Monday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 220 KV Shahibaug Grid Station on 21st February 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. resultantly consumer of 132 KV Shahi Bagh, Peshawar Fort, Wapda House, Peshawar Cantt, Dalazak and Peshawar City grid connected 11 KV feeders will face inconvenience.

It said that power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Madyan Grid Station on 21st February from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Rahat Kot and Madyan

feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from 66 KV Timergara Grid Station on 21st February 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly consumers of 66 KV Timergara grid connected 11 KV feeders will face inconvenience.

Likewise, the power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Kohat Grid Station on 21st, 23rd and 27th February from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Lachi Express feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from 220 KV Mardan Grid Station on 21st, 25th and 28th February 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly con-

sumers of 11 KV Muhabat Abad, Sheikh Maltoon, Express and industrial feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Mansehra Grid Station on 21st February 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. resultantly consumers of 132 KV Balakot, Muzafarabad and Noseri grid connected with 11 KV feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Bannu Grid Station on 20th February from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. resultantly consumer of 132 KV Gurguri, Tall, Parachinar, Sada and Alizai grid connected with 11 KV feeders will face inconvenience.

# Transparency, impartiality pre-requisites for effective public service delivery

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Rector, National School of Public Policy (NSPP), Dr Ijaz Munir here Monday said that bureaucracy must adhere to the core values of transparency, impartiality

and integrity, which are pre-requisites for an effective public service delivery and good governance.

"Public servants will have to adapt themselves to the changing world and its associated challenges," he said while addressing the joint

session of the officers from different national and provincial groups and cadres including senior management course, mid-career management course, junior command course of KP police and revenue officers of KP at NIM Peshawar.

In his keynote address, Dr Ijaz Munir said the emerging requirements were compelling us as a nation to transform the civil service by equipping it with new skills and competencies coupled with specific focus on significant attitudinal changes and behavioral adjustment to resolve the economic challenges.

"This transition to me is inevitable," he said, adding institutional performance was dependent upon the quality of human resource. The multifaceted challenges could be best overcome through creating better human resource and institutional transformation with the spirit of high standards of professionalism and the requisite skills.

While highlighting the role of NSPP and its constituent units, the Rector pointed out that NSPP, being a premier national institution in the country for in-service training of the civil bureaucracy, is

focusing on knowledge, skills and attitudes, which enable the trainee officers to know about the modern management concepts, polish their requisite skills and develop aptitude for evidence-based decisions.

ICT interventions in public service contribute to better service delivery, therefore, the training design of NSPP also gives greater value to develop the technical skills of the participants through modern techniques. Apart from the different modules on important public policy areas, the best available resource persons from public and private sectors are engaged to impart knowledge and share their expertise with the trainee officers.

Dr Ijaz Munir stressed on civil servants to give time to people visiting their offices for resolution of their problems and deal with them with empathy and politeness.

He observed that the civil

servants should not look for the past precedents rather set their own precedents by addressing people's issues under the law swiftly, adding the civil servants can revisit any rule in case it creates hurdles in the way of public service delivery.

He advised the civil servants to take initiatives and make themselves an asset of the organization rather than liability, adding they would certainly get the choice posting once they prove their metal before the government.

Dr Ijaz Munir thanked the Director General NSM/PARD/PPSA Cap (R) Usman Gul and the management and appreciated the efforts of NIM Peshawar for imparting quality training to the public servants from the federal government, the four provinces including AJK and GB. Earlier, he inaugurated the newly launched Khyber Journal of Public Policy which is an initiative of NIM Peshawar.

Ijaz Munir said that launching such a prestigious journal was a laudable initiative of NIM Peshawar that will be a source of disseminating the research outputs of the officers through publications of their research papers on public policy and governance milieu in the country. Dr. Muqemul Islam Soharwardy, Chief Instructor MCMC briefed the chief guest on the objectives of the journal and its significance in terms of a forum for discourse on public policy issues in the country.

Dr Ijaz Munir also inaugurated the completion of NIM Complex and visited the newly completed infrastructure schemes and facilities for trainees. He also planted a sapling at the lawn of the NIM.

Director General Usman Gul thanked the Rector NSPP for visiting NIM Peshawar. Usman Gul while appreciating the cooperation of NSPP said

such training programs would immensely help in capacity building of the under training civil officers and enhance their professional competence.

## AG office de-notify state's counsel

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Office has de-notified state counsel enrolled before 31st December 2022, on Monday.

In this regard, AG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa issued a notification stating that the de-notified state counsel was representing government at court.

The notification further argued registered lawyers may submit their documents to work as state's counsel.





## In brief

### Action against thieves sought F.P. Report

GHALANAI: The local shopkeepers and traders held Jirga against thieves, robberies and other crimes in Chanda bazaar area of tehsil Haleemzai, Mohmand. The jirga argued competent authorities to take stern actions against culprits involved in the offenses. The local shopkeepers and traders gathered against raise in robbery cases in Chanda bazaar. The local traders demand provision of security guard and watchers for Chanda bazaar. The traders and shopkeepers argued local police to take strict actions against the culprits involved in thieves and robberies in the premises.

### Peer Baba 453th Urs concluded F.P. Report

BUNER: The celebrations of 453th Urs of popular saint Peer Baba has concluded with Chadar Poshi on the shrine while prayers were offered for peace and progress of the nations. The followers from all over country participated in tight security arrangements. The Urs comprised of Illuminations on the shrine and Masjid Darbar Pir Baba besides Khatm ul Quran Hamd O Sana Naat Khawani and speeches by religious scholars who highlighted different aspects of the life and personality and services of Hazrat Pir Baba. The Sajada Nashen Makhdom Syed Husain Shah family elders and yong members were arranged all from welcoming to celebrations Chadar Poshi and Langar. The Makhdom family spokesperson Noor Ali Shah while talking to The Frontier Post claimed they were behind all of the activities of two days Urs celebrations which they accepted every year and fell proud to have this opportunity. He thanked all of visitors and the security personnel and media persons for security and coverage respectively. The Sadat committee member Shamsad Bacha thanked all of visitors and assured all out facilities for them throughout yearlong visiting the shrine. The KPK Additional secretary Syed Anwar Shah in his brief comments hailed Makhdom family for services during Urs and the police for security and media for coverage.

### Free eye medical camp held F.P. Report

LODHARAN: Two days free eye camp was organized in Lodhran with the special support of Jahangir Tareen, a two-day free eye camp was organized in Galewal by the social organization LPP under his supervision. During the free eye camp, a total of 916 patients were checked up and free medicines were provided. The patients include 464 males and 452 females. 150 patients were also given free operations in the camp. The patients who came to the free eye camp while offering prayers to Jahangir Khan Tareen and Ali Khan Tareen said that due to poverty it was impossible for them to get expensive eye treatment, but through the free eye camp by bringing back the light of his eyes. Jahangir Khan Tareen and Ali Khan Tareen have given him a new life, for which they are extremely grateful and pray for him. The patients visiting the camp thanked the LPP management for the excellent arrangements and cooperation. On the occasion of organizing the camp, Jahangir Khan Tareen said in his statement that service to suffering humanity is our life goal.

# Dead bodies of two children recovered after 13 days

Hafiz Muhammad Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Two innocent children were allegedly killed in a brutal manner in Mohallah Hassan Town of Hafizabad city and their dead bodies were thrown in the nearby pond. The bodies of the children were recovered from pond after 13 days, the residents of the area protested against the alleged negligence and carelessness of the police.

According to the details, about 13 days ago, unknown suspects abducted two cousins, 5-year-old Abu Bakar and 4-year-old Faizan, from Mohallah Hassan Town, whose missing report was registered by the city police, but no interest was shown in searching the children and their relatives themselves kept making announcements in mosques as well as putting up missing advertisements with pictures of children all over the city. Last day, the dead bodies of the two children were recovered from a pond near the house, and fear and panic also spread in the area.

The rescue team shifted the bodies of the two children to the hospital for post-mortem. While the residents of the area protested against the lack of interest and alleged negligence of the police. The local residents alleged that the city police did not show any activity to rescue the children. If the police had taken proper interest in this matter, the children might not have died. The protestors demanded that the killers of the children should be immediately traced and arrested and strict action should be taken against the police officers and employees who are guilty of negligence.

Meanwhile, taking notice of the brutal killing of the children, the caretaker Chief Minister of Punjab has asked for a report from the IG Police Punjab. So far, the city police have not been able to trace any of the accused, nor has anyone been arrested.

**Relief activity continues for earthquake victims:** On the directions of government, assistance is being provided by the district administration, business, welfare, social organizations for the earthquake victims of Turkey and Syria. Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Umar

Farooq Warraich says that a cash amount of 47 lakh 20 thousand has been sent by the district administration for the relief of the earthquake victims, while the aid is continuing from various departments, organizations and civil society. Under the leadership of Fertilizer Dealers Association and ex-chairman Press Club Rana Arshad Anjum, Deputy Commissioner submitted cash relief funds for the earthquake victims. Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Intiaz Ali Baig was present on the occasion.

The Deputy Commissioner said that relief camps have been set up in Hafizabad and Pindi Bhattian by the district administration. He appealed to the public and the department to donate generously for the financial assistance of the earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria to support their Muslim brothers and sisters in this difficult time.

**Sports gala kicks-off:** A sports gala started in a renowned private college in Hafizabad to promote sports and positive activities. Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Umar Farooq Warraich inaugurated the sports gala. District Sports Officer Nabila Cheema, Principal KIPS College Muhammad Kashif Jalal Baig were also present on the occasion. On the opening day, college students and athletes marched past.

Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq said that along with educational activities, it is very important to organize sports and other positive activities for the mental and physical development of children. Such competitions create courage, self-confidence and spirit of competition among students. The organization of sports gala by the college administration is welcome with reference to the promotion of sports.

Principal Kashif Jalal Baig has said that the separate competitions of football, cricket, badminton, athletics and other sports have been organized for the students in the sports gala. On this occasion, the Principal also presented honorary shields to the Deputy Commissioner and District Sports Officer on behalf of the college.

## RPO conducts security audits of police facilities

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: In light of the orders of Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur, Regional Police Officer Muhammad Salem Marwat made an emergency visit to Ijaz Shaheed Police Lines Dera in connection with the security audit of police facilities.

RPO Dera issued orders regarding the security of police lines while reviewing the security situation and arrangements on all sides of the check points. That the entrance to the police line should be closed from two sides and only one main gate should be used for traffic.

District Police Officer (DPO) Dera Muhammad Shoaib, DSP HQ also accompanied him on this occasion. DPO Dera while giving a briefing to RPO Dera regarding the security arrangements of police lines said.

That in connection with

the steps taken to enter the police lines, police personnel and common people have to go through full checks in the police lines. Full clothes are searched at the time of entry, RPO Dera made a detailed inspection of the police lines offices, police men's mess, residential barracks, Basalha Koot and other parts.

Meanwhile, he issued instructions to DPO Dera to improve the facilities of the jawans, and ordered to further improve the walls of the police lines in terms of security, ordered to drain the standing water in the Police Colony in the Police Lines, went to the fronts of the Police Lines and met the policemen and while issuing appropriate instructions in the context of security arrangements, he said that in view of the current situation in the country, keep a close eye on the movements of anti-national and criminal elements, suspicious and strangers.

## Security arrangement reviewed

F.P. Report

MULTAN: Deputy Commissioner Umar Jahangir along with City Police Officer (CPO) Mansoor ul Haq Rana visited the sensitive places of Multan city including Khana Farhang and reviewed the security arrangements in view of the current situation of terrorism, on Monday.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Gilgash Division Babar Javed Joya, SHO Old Kotwali Shamooun Joyia, In-charge Security Faizan Ali Raza and other officers accompanied him, SP Gulgasht Division briefed CPO Multan regarding the security arrangements. CPO Multan issued instructions to the officers and men on duty to be alert on this occasion and perform their duty and keep an eye on suspicious persons.



QUETTA: Security personnel standing alert near firing site outside Sessions Court.

# DPO assure redressal public's grievances on priority

Saqib Mushtaq

BAHAWALPUR: District Police Officer (DPO) held 'Kuli Katcheri' while directed concerned officials to address public's grievances on priority basis, on Monday. The legitimate problems of the citizens of Bahawalpur will be resolved in every way so that the trust between the people and the police is restored. DPO Syed Muhammad Abbas.

According to the details, taking into consideration the orders of IG Punjab, DPO Bahawalpur Syed Muhammad Abbas has continued the series of open court for the citizens of Bahawalpur on a daily basis. Yesterday, many citizens approached the DPO office for solving their problems and submitted requests to the DPO for solving their problems. The DPO personally heard all the respected citizens on the spot and issued orders to the concerned officers to resolve their police related issues.

Speaking to the citizens on this occasion, the DPO said that the citizens of Bahawalpur are VIPs for him and listening to them respectfully and

solving the problems is my first responsibility. Anyone can come to me with their issue without hesitation so that their problem can be solved on merit. DPO Syed Muhammad Abbas said that it is important for the police to have trust in the people so that they can raise their problems. Doubts can be explained to the police, on which it is our duty to solve the problems of these citizens as much as possible.

Under the command of DPO Syed Muhammad Abbas, a major operation of police station Sadar Bahawalpur, more than 03 kilos of heroin was recovered, the accused was arrested, cases were registered. Drugs like poison will die only by eliminating them at any cost. Taking strict action against the culprits, they should be brought to justice. Actions against anti-social elements should be continued in the same way to eliminate social evils and suppress crimes. Bahawalpur police is working day and night. DPO Syed Muhammad Abbas.

According to the details, District Police Officer Syed Muhammad Abbas' campaign against drugs is in

full swing. Police station Sadar Bahawalpur recovered a huge amount of heroin. During the operation, 3 kilos and 200 grams of heroin were recovered from the accused Muhammad Javed. Accused Muhammad Javed son of Faiz is a resident of Shahdara.

Police registered a case and started investigation. This is an important development in the ongoing campaign against drug trafficking by IG Punjab. The DPO said that he is committed to eliminate drugs like poison at all costs. DPO Syed Muhammad Abbas appreciated the day and night hard work of Police Station Sadar Bahawalpur and well done. District Police Officer Syed Muhammad Abbas while issuing instructions. He said that by continuing the actions against the drug dealers, more effective actions should be taken so that the society can be cleansed from such evil elements. The DPO said that actions against anti-social elements should be continued in the same way, Bahawalpur police is working day and night to eliminate social evils and suppress crimes.

# Role of judicial employees in dispensation of justice lauded

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The district and session judge Ms Phool Bibi has said the role of judicial employees can not be forgotten in the smooth delivery and insurance of justice. She expressed these views during a farewell party hosted by the judicial employees on the transfer of the Additional Sessions Judge Timergara Ms Nusrat Naz and civil judge Syed Abbas Bukhari here the other day.

Ms Phool Bibi lauded the role of judicial employees and said that their role in the system was of great importance. She said the judiciary was the first and last hope of the nation and the legal fraternity and judicial employees all had to play their active and positive role for its maintenance.

The additional session judge Ms Nusrat Naz praised the performance of judicial employees and thanked them for remembering her on her transfer. She said the lawyers and judicial employees in Lower Dir had helped the judges in provision of justice to the oppressed.

Representing the judicial employees, Peer Intiaz Ahmad said that they had been performing their duties with utmost honesty to maintain the glory of the judiciary. The judicial employees presented shields and souvenirs to Ms Nusrat Naz and Syed Abbas Bukhari on the occasion. The district bar Timergara and judicial officers also arranged such farewell parties to honour the transferring judges and honorary shields were presented to them.

**Oath taking:** The newly elected

cabinet members of the Dir Printers and Publishers Association were administered oath during a function held at a local hotel here the other day. The association's provincial president Zafar Rehman Khattak was chief guest on the occasion. The 14-member cabinet including its president Izazul Haq and general secretary Muhammad Rehman were sworn in.

The Anjuman Tajirun Timergara president Haji Anwarul Din, president of Dir Chamber of Commerce and Industries Mian Noor Alam, Zafar Rehman, president Judicial employees association Lower Dir Hayatullah Khan and others addressed the function. The provincial president announced that elections on the provincial level would also be held soon.

# Mohmand: The city of marble in problems

Murad Khan

**MOHMAND District has a population of around 466,944 and an area of 2296 sq. km. The cultivated area is around 9% and water availability is an issue in most parts of the District. The prominent sectors include Agriculture and Minerals, vegetables are predominant products in Agriculture. In mineral sector Marble, Chromite, Silica Sand, Dolomite, Manganese, Quartz, Emerald, Nephrite and Feldspar deposits are also reported. Due to large number and high quality of marble reserves, a project is being initiated in order to process the available marble into world class products by establishing 'Marble City Mohmand' in collaboration with PASDEC. (Pakistan Stone Development Company). Infrastructure development of the estate is near to completion, but the people related to marble business are very much disappointed over lack of basic facilities of electricity and infrastructure.**

The Board of Directors meeting of special economic zone authority on 30th June 2021 approved and granted the status of Special Economic Zone (SEZ) to Mohmand Marble City. The meeting chaired by Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan approved the purchase of 2,000 acres of land for the city to convert it into the SEZ, while the authorities concerned were directed to start the feasibility study. The meeting was

informed that Mohmand Economic Zone covers an area of 350 acres, while 106 out of 290 plots of different categories in the zone have been allotted. Moreover, a 132KV grid station has been set up in the city to supply electricity to industries. The chief minister directed officials that shifting of marble factories from Warsak road, Malagori and Shabqar to the economic zone should be done on priority basis.

39 years old Rahman-ul-din, assistant Director Mines and minerals department in District Mohmand says "the main mines of marble are in Ziyarat, Khanqaa, gumbatay and speenkay tangay." The government gave annual contract on PRs: 6.5 million to a private firm, who takes Rs: 90/ton. He said that govt. is taking 4 types of tax on marble i-e Government royalty, TMA service tax, excise duty and the money taken by local owners of that mines. He added

About the benefits of marble industry Rahman-ul-din said that marble industry has various economic benefits, for example: more than 20 labors are working in a single mine (i-e technical staff, drill-man, machine operators, accountants, managers, cook and other employees), besides this, the people involved in transportation, loading and unloading, employees in marble factory, hotels and so many other indirect people are involved in marble industry. Besides top tiles, the waste and powder of marble is used in more than hundred industries, for example the powder is used in paint industry, whitening of

paper, medicine, cosmetics, rubber industry, filling materials, polishing and cutting industry.

AD Mineral and Mines suggested that instead of old and conventional methods (like blasting in mines), if the new technology (like wire-saw mechanism) is used for the extraction of marbles, it will minimize the cost and the end product will be in regular and good shape.

49 years old Naushad Khan, who is President of Mohmand Marble industries Union says "Due to its unique and beautiful shape the Mohmand's marbles are not only supplied to the whole country but it is also exported to China, KSA, UAE, Italy, Qatar and so many other countries, besides this the waste powder of marble is used in cement, utensils and iron burning industry, as the quarts has it's unique property of not melting on high temperature."

About the shifting of marble industries from residential areas into CEPZ Zone, Mr. Naushad said that govt. did not provide good facilities in Mohmand Marble city, due to which the people are not establishing industries there. He said that the Mohmand Marble City is very much faraway, so the transportation charges increases and the customers don't come there, besides this the govt. had promised about the subsidized rates of electricity, but the owners said that neither they got subsidy nor they have been provided good facilities of infrastructure and water there.

37, Iftikhar owner of Abdullah Marble factory says

that we bring marble stones from Ziyarat, Gumbatay, Khanqaa, Koh e mor, torakhwar, speenkay tangay, Yara kheel, Ghanam Sha, daweezai and shen kamar areas. But the most famous marbles are found in Ziyarat, gumbatay and Khanqaa. In Mohmand district there are plenty amount of chromite, nephrite, quartz, iron ore and so many other precious stones and minerals. There are many types of marbles found here like white, gray, black, red and dark blue, but the most famous marble of Mohmand district are white, gray and red. Precious supreme white, 300-600. Mr. iftikhar added that in 1980 the first marble were found in Gumbati area in Pandialai Tehsil of Mohmand District, followed by ziyarat and other areas. He said that the mineral department has not been extended their services to merged districts (Ex-FATA), so for electricity purpose, the new businessman have to register his factory with TESCO (Tribal Electric Supply Company).

iftikhar said "In order to establish a new factory, the estimated cost is from ten to fifteen million Pakistani rupees, the estimated income is from 2 to five lakh per month, depending upon market rates, electricity and labor." Mohmand's Goods Transport Association president Haji Arif Ullah said that the government is taking different types of taxes from transporters, but on the other hand we are not facilitated. He added that around all the roads from mines to the destination (industries) are damaged, due to which the transporter community are facing sever issues, due to damaged

roads the truck drivers are forced to change tyres of their heavy vehicles every month, which costs from 3 to 6 lakh, besides this petrol and diesel prices are getting high after every month, which results increase in transportation charges, but the owners of marble industries complaints after getting high transportation charges.

Haji Arif Ullah said that after consultation with district administration, local elders, owners of marble industries and drivers, we have chanted a mechanism for fixing transportation charges, after ten rupees increase in petroleum products, we increase one rupee per ton in transportation charges. Chairman Mohmand's Goods transport association, Haji Zait Ullah, 43 said that government should solve the roads issue and in case of any emergency the govt. should provide compensation to the dead and injured drivers and damaged vehicles, because in case of any accident and emergency, we do not have any sort of funds. He added that when an emergency occurs, we collect funds from truck drivers for the injured and for the families of dead drivers.

A 32 years old Driver Arshad Khan belonging to tehsil haleemzai said that we use to bring marbles from ziyarat and khanqaa areas to Subhan khwar, Peshawar, Mohmand marble city, mardan and jahangeray.

About the load he said that truck having single axel brings 30-35 tons while double having trucks brings 40-50 tons of marble, usually we do a single trip in 2-3 days. Mr. Arshad complaints that the damage roads and taxes

from government and said that due to price hike and increase in inflation rate our income is badly affected, now we just earn 15 thousand per trip, and if we count the tyres, mobile oil, mechanics and other charges, our income is considerably very low.

There are more than 500 factories in just Mohmand district and usually more than 20 labors are working in a single factory, it means more than ten thousand people are related directly to marble business. Besides this, the truck drivers, mechanics, marble dealers and in thousands other peoples are indirectly related to marble industry in Mohmand district.

As the FATA merger have taken place, so like other govt. the mineral department have also extend their services to merge districts and is trying to solve the issues of mine owners and transporters. But due to use of conventional mining methods, damaged roads, taxes and duties, increase inflation rats, petroleum products price hike and very limited facilities from government side, the marble industry in Mohmand tribal district is facing sever issues, if these issues are solved, the govt. will not only earn a huge amount of revenue, but it will also help in thousand people to get their jobs and earn money for their children's, which will ultimately bring revenue and business to Mohmand district, as thousands of people are directly and indirectly related to marble industry.

**The Writer is Radio Producer and freelance Journalist, who tweets on @Muradonline123.**



## UN ocean treaty talks resume with goal to save biodiversity

UNITED NATIONS (AP): United Nations members gather Monday in New York to resume efforts to forge a long-awaited and elusive treaty to safeguard the world's marine biodiversity. Nearly two-thirds of the ocean lies outside national boundaries on the high seas where fragmented and unevenly enforced rules seek to minimize human impacts. The goal of the UN meetings, running through March 3, is to produce a unified agreement for the conservation and sustainable use of those vast marine ecosystems. The talks, formally called the Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, resume negotiations suspended last fall without agreement on a final treaty.

"The ocean is the life support system of our planet," said Boris Worm, a marine biologist at Canada's Dalhousie University. "For the longest time, we did not feel we had a large impact on the high seas. But that notion has changed with expansion of deep sea fishing, mining, plastic pollution, climate change," and other human disturbances, he said. The UN talks will focus on key questions, including: How should the boundaries of marine protected areas be drawn, and by whom? How should institutions assess the environmental impacts of commercial activities, such as shipping and mining? And who has the power to enforce rules? "This is our largest global commons," said Nichola Clark, an oceans expert who follows the negotiations for the nonpartisan Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C. "We are optimistic that this upcoming round of negotiations will be the one to get a treaty over the finish line."

The aim of the talks is not to actually designate marine protected areas, but to establish a mechanism for doing so. "The goal is to set up a new body that would accept submissions for specific marine protected areas," Clark said. Marine biologist Simon Ingram at the University of Plymouth in England says there's an urgent need for an accord. "It's a really pressing time for this - especially when

you have things like deep-sea mining that could be a real threat to biodiversity before we've even been able to survey and understand what lives on the ocean floor," Ingram said.

Experts say that a global oceans treaty is needed to actually enforce the UN Biodiversity Conference's recent pledge to protect 30% of the planet's oceans, as well as its land, for conservation. "We need a legally binding framework that can enable countries to work together to actually achieve these goals they've agreed to," said Jessica Battle, an expert on oceans governance at World Wide Fund for Nature US Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs Monica Medina said the treaty was a priority for the country. "This agreement seeks to create, for the first time, a coordinated approach to establishing marine protected areas on the high seas," she said. "It's time to finish the job."

Officials, environmentalists and representatives of global industries that depend on the sea are also watching negotiations closely. Gemma Nelson, a lawyer from Samoa who is currently an Ocean Voices fellow at the University of Edinburgh, said that small Pacific and Caribbean island countries were "especially vulnerable to global ocean issues," such as pollution and climate change, which generally they did not cause nor have the resources to easily address. "Getting the traditional knowledge of local people and communities recognized as valid" is also essential to protect both ecosystems and the ways of life of Indigenous groups, she said.

With nearly half the planet's surface covered by high seas, the talks are of great importance, said Gladys Martínez de Lemos, executive director of the nonprofit Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense focusing on environmental issues across Latin America. "The treaty should be strong and ambitious, having the authority to establish high and fully protected areas in the high seas," she said. "Half of the world is at stake these weeks at the United Nations."

## Israeli airstrikes kill five in Damascus

BEIRUT (AP): Israeli airstrikes targeted residential areas in Syria's capital Damascus early Sunday, killing at least five people and wounding 15, Syrian state news reported. The strikes come amid a wider shadow war between Israel and its archenemy Iran, a close ally of Syria's President Bashar Assad in the country's ongoing war. Loud explosions were heard over a central area of Damascus around 12:30 a.m. local time.

Syrian state media agency SANA reported that air defenses were "confronting hostile targets in the sky around Damascus." Citing a military source, it reported that five people had been killed, among them a soldier, and 15 civilians wounded. The news agency also said that the strikes destroyed several residential buildings and damaged areas connected to Damascus' famous medieval citadel and an applied arts institute housed there. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a U.K.-based war monitor, reported that 15 people, including a woman, were killed in strikes targeting sites connected with Iranian militias and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. The group said the strikes hit sites in the capital's Kafr Sousa neighborhood, including an Iranian school there, and outlying areas of the city.

There was no immediate statement from Israel on the attack. A spokesperson for the Israeli military declined to comment. Samer Abdo, an engineer living on an upscale residential street in Kafr Sousa that was struck by missiles, was picking through shattered glass and broken wood in his apartment Sunday morning. Abdo told The Associated Press that his family had woken up in terror to the building shaking. "We thought at first that it was an earthquake like the one that happened two weeks ago," he said. Mohamad Dulo, another resident of the neighborhood, said, "All the windows fell into the street, and people ran down to the streets as well."

## Taiwan's KMT hopes for elections boost

TAIPEI (Agencies): Taiwan's main opposition Kuomintang (KMT) has wrapped up a nine-day trip to China, including meetings with some of the Communist Party's highest-ranking officials, amid hopes its links with Beijing will help boost its chances in presidential elections that are due to be held next year. Known as the party with the best working relationship with Beijing, the KMT's close relationship is a sore spot among more nationalist-minded voters on the self-ruled island, but it is also a draw for the business community and older voters who still feel a strong cultural and political affinity for China.

The trip marks the second visit in 12 months by KMT Vice Chairman Andrew Hsia, who also visited China in August 2022 as tensions between Beijing and self-ruled Taiwan rose to their highest in 25 years. Held days after Beijing staged military exercises and fired missiles into the Taiwan Strait in protest at a visit by then United States Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi to the democratic island, Hsia's August trip was highly controversial.

So was this one, earning a rebuke from Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, the body that oversees Taipei's relations with Beijing. China claims the island as its own. Analysts say the KMT may be banking on voter fatigue for the drama of the past year, which also saw Beijing send a record number of flights into Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone - an area of land and sea monitored by the military - to intimidate Taiwan.

"The KMT, of course, is going to jump at the chance to demonstrate that they can cooperate with Beijing they can play nice together," said Kharis Templeman, a research fellow at the US Hoover Institution and a member of its Project on Taiwan in the Indo-Pacific Region.

## ‘Buried alive’: Syrians recount losing family in the earthquakes

ATARIB (Agencies): When the first earthquake struck on February 6, heavily pregnant Sakhaa al-Mousa was jolted awake in her apartment. Before the 24-year-old had time to fathom what was going on, the three-storey building she and her family were in caved, trapping them underneath.

"I started screaming, hoping that someone outside could hear me," she told Al Jazeera. "I could hear the rescuers but they couldn't hear me. So I grabbed a rock and started banging it on one of the walls above me." There was no sound coming from her husband or two young sons. "Being buried alive is such a frightening feeling," she said. "When the second quake happened, I thought to myself, 'There's no way I'll survive this. There's no way I'll see the light of day again.'" Al-Mousa was eventually pulled out after three and a half hours and taken to hospital. Her husband, children, and sister-in-law did not survive.

Four days later, she gave birth to a son and named him after his father, Omar. "I can't think about anything," she said, her voice trailing off. "I'm just relieved to have someone left for me in this world." Al-Mousa is one of many who lost entire families to the 7.8 and 7.6 magnitude quakes that struck Turkey and Syria. More than 46,000 people have been killed, with the death toll expected to climb as many people are still missing. Neither Turkey nor Syria have said how many people are still unaccounted for. The Syrian government and United Nations said more than 5,800 people died in this country alone.

In the rebel-held northwest, the devastation wrought by the quakes was compounded by the delay in humanitarian aid and the absence of international efforts in search-and-rescue operations. Instead, the Syria Civil Defence, also known as the White Helmets, was at the forefront of digging through rubble with limited resources, and on February 10 - four days after the quakes took place - announced in a press conference the end of their rescue efforts. "The absence of heavy equipment capable of dealing with natural disasters affected the ability of the teams to respond in a timely manner," said Munir al-Mustafa, the deputy director



of the White Helmets. "We don't have advanced thermal equipment capable of detecting those trapped under the rubble, as well as trained police dogs."

Al-Mustafa also pointed to the aftershocks, cold winter weather, and heavy rain in the first two days following the quakes, which impeded rescue operations and led to further concrete collapses. "Currently, we are continuing our work in removing rubble from roads and vital areas, and our teams are ready to follow up on any report of missing persons," he said. The White Helmets lost four members along with their families. According to al-Mustafa, 2,274 people died in the northwest region, with more than 12,400 others wounded.

"Our teams documented the collapse of more than 550 buildings, while more than 1,570 buildings were partially damaged and thousands of buildings and homes were cracked throughout the earthquake-hit areas," he said. The quakes have only compounded the psychological trauma of residents of the territory - which is home to more than four million Syrians, half of whom are internally displaced by Syria's 12-year war and have fled government-controlled areas. Healthcare experts have warned that earthquake survivors might develop longer-term mental health problems, such as depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and that mental health in the region is expected to further deteriorate in the wake of the disaster.

Two of Tariq al-Sayel's six children died after his apartment building fell in the town of Absinya. He also

lost 70 relatives on both sides of his family. "It's like losing a part of your body," the 37-year-old said. Back in Atarib, Mahmoud Omar al-Ormi recounted how he lost almost his entire family, with the deaths including his pregnant wife and four of his six children, who ranged from 18 months to 15 years old. "I told my wife Adeela - may God rest her soul - I wanted to go out and see what was happening," he said, describing the first moments of the quake. No sooner had he and his son Ahmad, 7, reached the front door, than their home collapsed, burying half of his body. Ahmad was the first to be rescued and Mahmoud was pulled out half an hour later. "I was bleeding from my head and my legs. I thought I was dying," he said. "When the rescuers pulled me out, I felt like I was reborn." The feeling did not last long as he waited for hours for any sign of life from his wife and five other children. After eight hours, just after noon on the same day, his two-year-old daughter Shareefa was pulled out, her face heavily bruised and her eyes swollen shut, but alive.

He waited until the next night before rescuers pulled out the lifeless bodies of his wife, his other two sons, Omar, 15, and Sha'ban, 14, and his daughters who were 13 years and 18 months old. "I spend my days walking in our neighbourhood, looking at the sheer scale of destruction," al-Ormi said. "I visit their graves every night and shout at my family to respond to me and cry when they don't. This is God's will and we have to accept it," he said, his voice breaking.

## NK warns of turning Pacific into ‘firing range’ after latest missile test

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korea fired two more ballistic missiles off its east coast on Monday, as the powerful sister of leader Kim Jong Un warned US forces to halt military drills, saying the reclusive nuclear state could turn the Pacific into a "firing range". The launches come just two days after North Korea fired an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) into the sea off Japan's west coast, prompting the United States to hold joint air exercises with South Korea and separately with Japan on Sunday.

North Korea's state media confirmed it fired two projectiles from a multiple rocket launcher, aiming at targets 395 km (245 miles) and 337 km (209 miles) away, respectively. "The 600mm multiple rocket launcher mobilised in the firing... is a means of tactical nuclear weapon," capable of "paralysing" an enemy airfield, state news agency KCNA said.

Japan's Defense Ministry said the two missiles, fired around 2200 GMT, reached a maximum altitude of about 100 km and 50 km, and fell outside Japan's EEZ. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio

Kishida said he had requested an emergency UN Security Council meeting over the launches, and Jiji news agency said the gathering was set for 2000 GMT Monday.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff strongly condemned the launches as a "grave provocation" that should be ceased immediately. Seoul's foreign ministry announced sanctions on four individuals and five entities linked to Pyongyang's weapons programmes on Monday over the latest ICBM and missile tests, in what it called its fastest-ever such response to the North's provocations. "Our government has made it clear that North Korea's provocations will definitely come at a price. Its repeated provocations will result in strengthening South Korea-US deterrence and tightening the global sanctions network," the ministry said in a statement.

The US Indo-Pacific Command said the latest launch did not pose an immediate threat but highlights the "destabilising impact" of North Korea's unlawful weapons programmes. UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric urged Pyongyang to "immediate-

ly desist from taking any further provocative actions" banned under Security Council resolutions, and resume denuclearisation dialogue. North Korean leader Kim's sister, Kim Yo Jong, warned against increased presence of US strategic military assets following the joint air drills with its Asian allies over the weekend.

"The frequency of using the Pacific as our firing range depends upon the US forces' action character," she said in a statement carried by KCNA. The United States and South Korea are set to hold simulated nuclear tabletop exercises aimed at improving operations of American nuclear assets this week, as well as annual springtime Freedom Shield field training in March. "Tension on the peninsula is likely to reach its peak in coming months as North Korea is accelerating its military actions with higher frequency, and her statement indicates that it would continue impromptu missile tests using the Pacific as its shooting range," said Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. Park Won-gon, a professor at

Ewha Womans University in Seoul, said Monday's missile launch and statement are in line with the North Korean foreign ministry's recent threat to take "unprecedentedly persistent, strong" responses to the allies' joint military drills.

"North Korea seems to be trying to reinforce its nuclear capability by raising issue over the drills," Park said. Monday's missile launch is the North's third known weapons test this year after it fired an unprecedented number of missiles last year, including ICBMs capable of striking anywhere in the United States. Kim Yo Jong also criticised some South Korean experts' assessment that the "sudden" ICBM test required nine hours of preparations, saying the launch time was finalised after US and South Korean scout planes involved in air patrols went away. "We have possessed satisfactory technology and capability and, now will focus on increasing the quantity of their force," she said. "We affirm once again that there is no change in our will to make the worst maniacs escalating the tensions pay the price for their action."

## Johnson wants to ‘bring down Sunak’: Osborne

LONDON (Agencies): Boris Johnson wants to "bring down Rishi Sunak", George Osborne has said after the former prime minister intervened over the current Brexit talks. The former chancellor's claims came after Mr Johnson warned Mr Sunak that ditching the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill in favour of a new deal would be a "great mistake".

Mr Osborne praised Mr Sunak for trying to resolve the ongoing Protocol stalemate but insisted he should tread carefully in his handling of the current political row. "He shouldn't make the same mistake that Theresa May made and that David Cameron and I made before, which is to think that Boris Johnson is interested in the issues," he told the Andrew Neil Show. "Boris Johnson is interested in becoming prime minister again. And as you saw with the Brexit referendum and as you saw with the Chequers agreement, if you remember that with Theresa May, if you wait for Boris Johnson to do the sort of grown-up, sensible thing, he's not going to do that if he thinks there's a political opportunity in causing trouble."

"And he wants to bring down Rishi Sunak and he

will use any instrument to do it. And if the Northern Ireland negotiations are that instrument, he will pick it up and hit Mr Sunak over the head with it." Mr Johnson's backing for Brexit was seen by many as crucial to the leave vote, which spelt the end of Mr Cameron's time in Downing Street and saw Mr Osborne tender his own resignation hours after his exit. Penny Mordaunt, the Commons leader, said his remarks were "not completely unhelpful" and recognised his contributions towards a better deal while he was still in office.

Ms Mordaunt told Sky News: "I think as I say, the Prime Minister, I think, will acknowledge that having the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill there, having the work that the former prime minister did has helped us get where we are. "But it's always been our preference to try and have a negotiated settlement, and that is what everyone is working to [do]. "The intervention by a source close to the previous prime minister is helpful to remind the EU of that Bill, and what this deal actually has to do." On Sunday night, "Spartan" Tory MPs who held out against Theresa May's Brexit deal joined Johnson

loyalists in throwing their support behind his position. One ally of Mr Johnson said the Protocol Bill was a "solid foundation" on which the current Government should build as the EU was not going to compromise on oversight by the European Court of Justice (ECJ). "The current administration is trying to whitewash the past and reinvent the wheel. It is very much based on the red lines that the DUP has put down. Those are non-negotiable," they said.

Sir James Duddridge, a former Brexit minister, said: "The Protocol Bill is there as a fallback and as a negotiating tool. It is still needed if we get a substandard deal that needs Labour votes. "For all his faults, I think people are looking at Boris now and thinking 'what the f--- did we do?' We had a vote winner who pushed Brexit through. Now we're 25 points behind in the polls." Peter Bone, the MP for Wellingborough, added: "I would absolutely urge Rishi, as the former prime minister said, to retain the Bill unless we achieve everything that Brexit set out to do. "If he comes back and pushes through a compromise, that will not carry the party."

## Top US diplomat visits Turkey quake zone

ISTANBUL (Agencies): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken took a helicopter tour of Hatay, one of the provinces worst affected by the February 6 earthquake in southern Turkey and northern Syria, and pledged a further \$100m in aid to help the region. The visit came as Turkey ended rescue efforts in all provinces except the two hardest hit by last week's massive quake that killed tens of thousands of people, the disaster agency said on Sunday.

"In many of our provinces, search and rescue efforts have been completed. They continue in Kahramanmaraş and Hatay provinces," the agency's chief Yunus Sezer told reporters in Ankara. There had been abundant media coverage of rescue teams finding survivors, but it has now slowed down with no survivors found in at least 24 hours. US President Joe Biden announced \$85m for Turkey and Syria days after the earthquake, which has killed more than 46,000 people in the two countries. The US has also sent a

search-and-rescue team, medical supplies and equipment.

"This is going to be a long-term effort," Blinken said on Sunday at Incirlik Air Base, a joint US-Turkish facility that has coordinated the distribution of disaster aid. "The search and rescue, unfortunately, is coming to an end. The recovery is on and then there will be a massive rebuilding operation." The additional aid includes \$50m in emergency refugee and migration funds and \$50m in humanitarian assistance, Blinken said. The secretary of state is making his first trip to NATO ally Turkey since he took office two years ago. Blinken arrived on Sunday after attending the Munich Security Conference in Germany.

Blinken flew over Turkey's devastated Hatay region from the air with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu. "When you see the extent of the damage, the number of buildings, the number of apartments, the number of homes that have been

destroyed, it's going to take a massive effort to rebuild," the top US diplomat said after the helicopter tour. "The most important thing right now is to get assistance to people who need it, to get them through the winter, and to get them back on their feet," Blinken said as troops nearby unloaded boxes of aid. "We'll stick with it until we get the job done."

Incirlik, home to the US Air Force's 39th Air Base Wing, has been a crucial logistics centre for aid distribution. Supplies from around the world have been flown into the base and sent by truck and helicopter to those in need, including in difficult-to-reach villages. Blinken is set to fly to Ankara, Turkey's capital, later for discussions with

Turkish officials on Monday, including an anticipated meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. As well as the effects of the earthquake, Blinken is expected to discuss Sweden and Finland's efforts to join NATO, which Turkey has delayed.

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## Economic depletion and administrators' Dogma

**T**HE International Monetary Fund (IMF) has urged Pakistan to end subsidies for the upper class and increase tax collection from high earners. According to IMF Managing Director, Pakistan does not require debt restructuring, but relatively strong measures to ensure the country's stability. The western economist suggested a two-point strategy for the Pakistani government which includes an increase in tax revenue both from the private and public sectors along with the provision of targeted subsidies only to vulnerable sections of the society while removing the privileged communities from the scheme.

Pakistan is passing through a crucial period in its history, and the weak economy has been diagnosed as the most urgent and challenging problem for the nation's survival. Recently, an IMF delegation visited Islamabad and held week-long talks with Pakistani authorities regarding economic management and revenue generation to steer the country out of the current financial crisis. The global lender handed over a long list of economic reforms and fiscal measures to generate revenue and pressed the government to shortcut its non-development expenditures, put a curb on subsidies in the energy sector, and reduce defense expenses to manage its costs within the attire.

Unfortunately, Pakistan has always faced a lack of resources because of a thin tax base, irrational tax policies, a persistent deficit in tax collection, corruption of tax officials, and a bulk of tax litigations pending court decisions that not only undermined tax collection efforts but provided a free heaven to tax evaders for an unspecified period. At the same time, limitless incentives and gigantic payment and allowances for serving and retired civil and military bureaucrats and public office holders, free air travel vouchers, free electricity units, free of cost petrol, and unlimited road mileage are those real transgressions that sunk the ship of already dwindling economy of the poor nation. Historically, Pakistan's tax system remained unjudicial and biased because of underutilization of the direct tax regime which facilitated tax evasion of the powerful elite class, business giants, real estate tycoons, and landlords while more than 60% of tax is being collected through indirect taxation, including GST, Petroleum levy and surcharges on utilities.

Presently, the IMF Managing Director has suggested the government rationalize its subsidy by allowing only vulnerable segments of society while the wealthier people must contribute to the economy as per the law. She also urged the government to expand its tax base through direct taxation on the privileged class and take the necessary steps to function as a stable country without reaching a point where it needs additional financing.

In fact, Pakistan fell prey to the duplicity of its administrators who always conceive discriminatory mechanics and safeguard the monetary interests of their clan, while completely ignoring the national cause, public suffering, and long-term devastations of their bigotry. The international community, global lenders, and friendly nations only offer us sane advice, after all, Pakistanis, themselves have to rescue their country from the current upheaval. No nation can prosper on foreign aid, grants, and loans thus strict fiscal management and stern accountability of public officeholders are mandatory for economic revival. As early as Pakistani leaders grasp this fact and start abandoning the policy of favoritism and bias, the nation will start rising to the sky otherwise our future will remain uncertain forever.

# Will the war in Ukraine end this year?

Leonid Ragozin

**I**t has been almost a year now since Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, sowing death and destruction across the country. The toll of the war is grim: thousands of Ukrainian civilians dead, tens of thousands of soldiers on both sides killed, millions displaced, whole Ukrainian towns and villages razed to the ground.

As we move into the second year, both sides are preparing large-scale offensives, with tens of thousands of new recruits and new sophisticated hardware being sent to the front line. A wide range of scenarios that are viable to a different extent may unfold this year. The only thing we can predict with a high degree of confidence is that we are going to see a bloodbath on a larger scale than last year.

In their public rhetoric, both Russia and Ukraine sound confident in their victory, but they seem to define it in different terms. The government in Kyiv has made it clear that its goal is the liberation of all Ukrainian territories Russia currently occupies, including the Crimean Peninsula. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy himself has said in a November interview for a Czech TV channel that once the Ukrainian army achieves victory, he will vacation in Crimea.

Some Ukrainian officials have gone even further, spelling out the goal of breaking the Russian Federation up. Earlier this month, the chief of Ukraine's National Security Council, Oleksiy Danilov, wrote in an op-ed published in the Ukrainian news outlet Ukrainska Pravda that Russia should be "decolonised", its statehood in the current form undone, and the independence move-

ments of various peoples within its borders encouraged. The Ukrainian army has been able to liberate some areas, but much of the territory occupied in the last 12 months remains under Russian control. Mobilisation is going on across the country, and the Ukrainian army is getting new training and weapons from the West.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's initially declared goals were to "liberate" Ukraine's Donbas

**With this mix of military successes and failures, the Kremlin has deliberately left its definition of "victory" in Ukraine quite vague. It is thus allowing itself a much wider range of acceptable outcomes on the battlefield. Meanwhile, the West, while united in its moral support for Ukraine, has also been ambiguous about how the war should end. The official rhetoric from Washington, Kyiv's biggest supporter, is that it will support the Ukrainian government and army "for as long as it takes" in order to secure a decisive victory over Russia. In Europe, some have been more cautious. French President Emmanuel Macron, for example, has said that Russia should be defeated, but not crushed.**

region and to "de-nazify" and "de-militarise" the country. The Russian army has failed to fully occupy the two Donbas regions, Donetsk and Luhansk, but it has seized large chunks of two other Ukrainian regions in the south, Zaporizhia and Kherson, thus securing a land bridge to Crimea. In October, Putin signed legislation formally annexing those regions to Russia. In the fall, the Russian authorities carried out a nationwide mobilisation campaign, adding some 300,000 troops to the country's regular forces. Some of them have already been deployed on the front lines, as part of the new Russian offensive, but most, it seems, remain in the reserves.

With this mix of military successes and failures, the

army "for as long as it takes" in order to secure a decisive victory over Russia. In Europe, some have been more cautious. French President Emmanuel Macron, for example, has said that Russia should be defeated, but not crushed. Ukraine has received close to \$40bn in military aid from the West, around \$30bn of it from the United States alone. Last month, NATO countries just crossed one more of the self-imposed "red lines" by allowing the supplies of modern German and US tanks to Ukraine, though in limited numbers.

Unofficially, though, as a recent Washington Post article suggests, the Ukrainian government is being warned that this year it may have the last chance to change facts

expect that Russia will retain control over some Ukrainian territory.

There are far too many unknowns to make any confident predictions of where Ukraine and Russia will find themselves after another year of carnage. But there are some scenarios that appear more likely. An overwhelming Ukrainian victory, as envisaged in Kyiv, would be a triumph of justice. But it is also a Russian roulette scenario, because Putin's defeat, especially the liberation of Crimea, may very well prompt him to use nuclear weapons. The fate of humanity, in this case, will be in the hands of one troubled man who has already done the unthinkable by unleashing a large-scale war in Europe.

Russian victory, on the

other hand, will mean a decisive defeat of the West and the world order upended by an aggressive autocracy. But Russia is unlikely to achieve that given its less-than-impressive battlefield performance so far. Between these two extremes lies a whole range of more realistic scenarios, based on a new equilibrium that will emerge after this year's season of Russian offensives and Ukrainian counteroffensives.

Russia is likely to retain the threat of domestic backlash, all the way to an armed coup by radical military elements and far-right militants. These fears, however, derive largely from the bellicose wartime rhetoric by radical lobbyists and opinion polls conducted at a time when people, especially those more inclined to compromise, have a very strong incentive not to be honest about their preferences. Unless their subject is Russia's full capitulation, any viable peace negotiations will involve Ukraine ceding territory. Depending on the country's battlefield performance, this could be Crimea alone; Crimea and parts of Donbas that Russia effectively controlled prior to the start of the full-out aggression last year; or these territories along with those that Russia seized in the last 12 months or may seize in future. Only under the first scenario will Ukraine be able to claim that it has achieved victory, as in improving its positions compared to those envisaged in the Minsk agreements.

What lies ahead this year feels very dark. Even brushing aside the very real nuclear threat, it is hard to avoid the nagging feeling that tens of thousands will die in order to prove that this is a stalemate which is best resolved at the negotiating table.

Aljazeera

## Turkiye's problems multiply in earthquake's aftermath

Yasar Yakis

**A** fortnight after the major earthquake that plunged Turkiye into disaster, the government continues to face some potentially insurmountable problems. The first problem is that it has not yet been able to properly streamline its aid activities. The government praises itself only with miraculous cases of survival as we enter the third week since the catastrophe.

There is little excuse for the collapse of public buildings such as hospitals or schools that were built after the most recent major earthquake in 1999. New norms were introduced after that earthquake and the controls were made stricter, but these measures proved to be insufficient. The municipal authorities that approved the conformity to the rules of such buildings have to be held responsible for their mistakes. A new draft law designed to declare yet another grace period for

noncompliant buildings was on the agenda of the government and was going to be debated in the coming days had Mother Nature not intervened.

Both the Turkish people and the international community have been mobilized to help the survivors, but a deep divide is growing in the country between Turkiye's state organs and voluntary aid organizations. The government has tried to monopolize the aid work and restrict the work of private rescue teams, which were performing fairly well. Some of them have proven their efficiency, but the government does not want them to perform better than itself. Nationalist Movement Party leader Devlet Bahçeli, who is the government's unofficial partner, furiously scolded all private rescue teams and called them imposters.

Little attention was paid to the recruitment of personnel for the government agencies that were going to

assume responsibility in the field of aid works, but their efficiency has proven to be limited. Furthermore, the government monopolized the opening of bank accounts for the benefit of survivors. This has restricted the contributions made by individuals. The state of emergency declared by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will, of course, restrict the opposition parties' election campaigns. However, the government's mismanagement of post-earthquake activities may counterbalance the negative impacts of any restrictions that the opposition parties might face.

The second problem is the possibility of a postponement of the general election that was provisionally scheduled for May 14. Presidential adviser Bulent Arinc came up with a proposal to postpone the forthcoming vote, even though the Turkish Constitution does not allow

such a move except in the case of war. Arinc opined that the constitution was not a sacred text and that the Supreme Electoral Council could rule to hold the elections on another date.

Erdogan knows that the earthquake has complicated his plans for the election campaign. He said he needed a full year to make Turkiye stand up again. Arinc's view that the constitution was not a sacred document may reflect Erdogan's wish to straighten the situation as much as possible or at least to dissipate the prevailing distressing situation before the election. The third problem that Turkiye is faced with is the ethnic or cultural identity of Antakya. This province became part of Turkiye in 1939. After the collapse of the Ottoman state, the League of Nations placed Syria under the French mandate. France decided to rule

Syria as six semi-autonomous republics. They were the republics of Damascus, Greater Lebanon, Alawites, Jebel Druze, Aleppo and Antakya.

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, then-president of the Republic of Turkiye, urged that a referendum be held to determine the future status of Antakya. Syria claimed that the referendum that was held under League of Nations supervision was not transparent and that the Turkish soldiers that were brought to Antakya before the referendum should not have been allowed to vote. The referendum was held and the League of Nations decided that Antakya had to be transferred to Turkiye. Furthermore, this was an international transaction between Turkiye and France before Syria became an independent state.

Syria has never recognized Antakya's annexation to Turkiye. In maps printed in Syria, this province is

still shown as a Syrian province, but no other nation recognizes it as such. Now, with millions of Syrians having moved to Turkiye as a result of the crisis of the last decade, the ethnic composition of Antakya has been dramatically altered. With this month's devastating earthquake having affected several Turkish provinces, it is unclear what sort of ethnic composition will emerge in Antakya after the dust settles. Syrian citizens have already initiated a campaign of graffiti on the walls in downtown Antakya, claiming that the province belongs to them. This may turn into a new time bomb that causes strains between Ankara and Damascus.

In a catastrophe of this size, mistakes may be made by all sides, but this should not penalize either the government or the well-performing private aid associations that have proved to be reliable actors.

## The desperate Tories have one idea left: Target the migrants, ramp up the fear

Nesrine Malik

**A** chilling preview of a new turmoil is unfolding. "Migrant hunts" at hotels housing asylum seekers, protests including the hard right or arranged by its members, most recently this weekend in Rotherham, have doubled over the past year. The signs are that it will only get worse, as the Conservative party, having run out of credibility and ideas, looks set to spin the wheel and put everything on culture war.

Last week, Iain Anderson, a senior Tory business leader, quit the party as he had learned in discussions with party insiders that Rishi Sunak plans to "ramp up the culture wars" in his 2024 election strategy. In the same week, the party's new deputy chair, Lee Anderson, said that the next election will probably be "a mix of culture wars and trans debate".

A vulgar departure from the dog-whistle approach of the past there from Anderson, but clarifying nonetheless. It was "Brexit, Boris and Corbyn" that won it for us in 2019, he went on to helpfully explain. We managed to hoodwink voters last time, he basically stopped short of saying, so now we have to find new ways to do it. We have already had a trailer of these

new ways. During his party leadership campaign, Sunak robotically repeated vague claims about the left coming for "our women", and has since made "small boats" central to his pledges in government. With a bustled flush on the economy and political stability, and no hook on which to hang a positive, flourishing vision of the future, the Conservatives' policy offering has been whittled down to the only thing they have left - fear.

Will it work? Well, yes and no. In terms of securing them another shot at government, it's probably too late for the Tories to turn it around using only the threat of men in women's changing rooms and the "invasion" of a few thousand asylum seekers. But that's not a reason to see these plays as harmless, last-ditch efforts that will evaporate when they are no longer in government.

The Tories tilt the ground eternally in favour of populist politicians, whether they are in government or not, and keep vulnerable minorities exposed to hate speech and sporadic violence. Think of culture war as a foot in the political door, permanently wedged, preventing it from swinging shut once and for all on the right's prospects. So yes, it will work, if it means people can take stock of how

little they have and be manipulated into blaming an immigrant housed temporarily who has even less. Expect all manner of bogeymen from the government in the next few months, but the main focus will be on migrants, always public enemy number one. Their vilification has a long bipartisan history that predates the Tories, driven by the tabloids and a cast of far-right politicians and parties such as Ukip and the BNP.

But there is a more recent history, roughly traceable to Boris Johnson's demise, where tougher rhetoric and policies have escalated. Suella Braverman embodies this new thuggish approach, as does Anderson: a B-team of heavies brought in when the more slick and smart are too squeamish to do the job. If you can no longer cheerfully promise sunlit uplands under Johnson, you can then claim that you cannot deliver on those promises as your hands are tied because immigrants are aided by human rights conventions and lefties. If you can't fix your failures, weaponise them. So we end up hearing a lot less about how the government can make your life better, and a lot more about the number of arrivals, small boats, hotels dedicated to their housing

and the "alleged" behaviour of asylum seekers harassing young girls, which to this day has not been proved.

The result is an explosive combination of anger and a target with a bulls-eye clearly painted on its back. The threat of the migrant, a drain on public funds and on the prow for white schoolgirls, is most resonant, as we have seen in the attack on a hotel housing asylum seekers earlier this month in Knowsley, in predominantly white areas where a sort of hysteria has built up - a swirl of racism, misinformation and deprivation.

You hear the stats on small boats on a regular basis. So here are some others about the conditions of some of the places those migrants are sent to, and then blamed for. In 2017, Knowsley became the first local authority in England to stop offering students A-level education, and it still offers only limited provision. It has among the highest rates of school absenteeism in England. The youngest person arrested after the riot outside the asylum seekers' hotel this month was 13.

It's not just about poverty and unemployment. It's also about torpor and inactivity. And the devil makes work for that. Over the past

decade, Knowsley council has lost 45% of its government funding, cut by £485 per person - more than double the average across England of £188. Already in one of the most deprived areas in the country, the council has been hit harder by austerity than any other local authority in the country, and has been almost entirely overlooked by any levelling up plans.

The result, most vivid in Kirkby, the site of the riots, is multigenerational unemployment, a town centre desperate for rejuvenation and ultimately a heady microclimate of racism, isolation and urban mythologising about invading monsters.

Upstream from this scene, there is a more couth version of this hysteria feeding the one on the ground, broadcast throughout the land by newspapers and ghouls such as Nigel Farage, who always has a berth, whether it's on phone-in radio or GB News, to frame immigrants as a central source of the country's problems. These genteel city folk would never do anything as vulgar as set fire to a police van, but they will hold the line that doing such a thing is not a ludicrous far-right position, but the expression of people's legitimate concerns, not about living standards, of course, but entirely

unproven allegations of sexual violence. The stirrers' pay-off isn't a jail cell for vandalism, but a handsome payment and a following.

Combine this with a desperate government, a country in the grip of a cost of living crisis, Brexit's unfulfilled promise and hard-right parties hoping to make hay of it all, and you have fertile ground for culture war seeds to take root. They may not flourish fully in the form of another Tory win next year, but they don't have to for their legacy to be potent and widespread. And as long as Labour has no counter-offensive, either in terms of serious investment in struggling areas, or in terms of culture by taking on deeply entrenched anti-immigration sentiment, then it too will remain vulnerable to attack from a culture war industry that will only redouble in opposition, stalking a country where hate speech and violence tear at our social fabric. The Tories may go, but they will spread as much of the poison as possible before they do. The lesson we must learn before it settles in the water for another generation is that after every riot, protest and violent outbreak, the right question to ask isn't how has it come to this, but how could it not?

The Guardian

# NATO's proxy war highlights urgent need for a multipolar future

A year ago, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin met in Beijing at start of the Winter Olympics, issuing a joint statement that called on the West to abandon the ideologized approaches of the Cold War. The statement expressed their shared opposition to the further expansion of NATO and emphasized the need for long-term legally binding security guarantees in Europe. President Xi said the two sides have taken an active part in the reform and development of the global governance system, followed true multilateralism. A year later, with NATO's horrifying proxy war against Russia dragging on, the people of the world are living, and dying, with the consequences of the US and its allies' stubborn refusal to join the path of multipolarity.

With the benefit of hindsight, the Ukraine crisis has acquired a certain tragic inevitability. Russia had made its red lines perfectly clear over the course of many years: that Ukraine must never become part of NATO; that NATO's expansion must end; that Ukraine must never be allowed to be used as a launching pad for war on Russia; and that the national rights of the Russian-speaking peoples of eastern Ukraine must be respected. As John Wojcik wrote in the left-wing US journal People's World in January 2022, what happens in Ukraine is of critical importance to

the survival of Russia. "From Napoleon to the Kaiser to Hitler, Russia has been invaded too many times from Europe, and it is understandably determined to maintain a militarily non-aligned buffer zone on its border."

It was within the West's power to prevent the current war, and it remains within the West's power to put a stop to it now. Unfortunately the leading Western power, the US, has only a marginal interest in helping to bring about peace in Europe. If the US wanted peace, it could have supported Ukraine in adopting a path of military neutrality and building friendly and mutually-beneficial relations with both East and West. But the US prioritizes hegemony over peace, and has therefore constantly meddled in Ukraine with a view to exploiting its people and geography to project imperial power against Russia. Guardian journalist Martin Kettle said the quiet part out loud recently, observing that "sending tanks to Ukraine makes one thing clear: this is now a western war against Russia." The West is pursuing a policy of gradual, continuous escalation in Ukraine - recycling a strategy that it used against the Soviets in Afghanistan four decades ago. Its end-game is to significantly weaken Russia, cripple the Russian economy, undermine public support for the Putin government, and fertilize the ground for the emergence of a new

Carlos Martinez

government in Moscow willing to follow Washington's instructions.

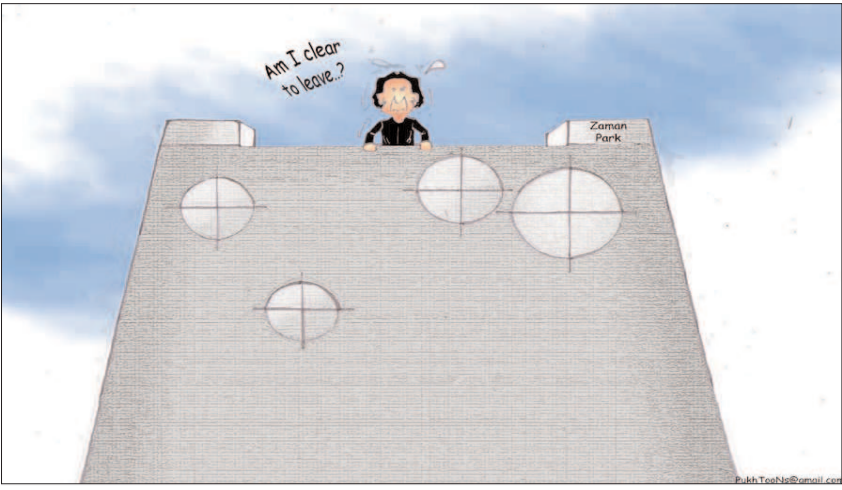
Such a policy is not pursued out of any specific hatred of Russia, but as part of a broader global campaign to assert US hegemony and break the trajectory toward a multipolar system of international relations. At the same time as attacking Russia, the US is also escalating its long-term campaign to contain and encircle China. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated in a recent visit to South Korea that "China poses a challenge to our values, to our interests and to our security." One has to wonder whether by "our values and interests" he means hegemony, war-mongering, plutocracy, profiteering, and domination of the world's land, resources and markets.

These desperate attempts to roll back the multipolar process are not destined to bear fruit. Even among the countries of Western Europe - with which the US shares a political ideology, a set of cultural values and an enduring commitment to white supremacy - there is diminishing enthusiasm for a reckless new Cold War, which is already contributing to serious economic difficulties in Britain, Germany and elsewhere. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has reluctantly agreed to allow German Leopard 2 tanks to be delivered to Ukraine, but only after sustained pressure. In the Global South, such

pressure has increasingly little impact. Soon after capitulating on the tanks issue, Scholz travelled to Brazil to visit the newly-inaugurated President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Asked whether Brazil would provide weapons to Ukraine, Lula stated firmly that "our war is against poverty, not Russia."

Lula made an important suggestion: that China, Brazil, India and Indonesia - "a club of countries that want to build peace on the planet" - could take the lead in mediating a diplomatic solution to the Ukraine conflict. He added that "our friends the Chinese play a very important role." The idea of China and other responsible countries of the Global South taking a lead on mediation is gaining traction. Professor Jeffrey Sachs recently wrote an article in the Economist that "neutral nations including Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa" could have an important role in facilitating a negotiated end to the conflict and becoming "the co-guarantors to begin a new era of peace and rebuilding." People who have critical thinking skills recognize that the US and NATO are incapable of, and unwilling to, clear up the mess they created. Herein lies the profound irony. The US is waging war on multipolarity, but a major effect of this war is to highlight to the peoples of the world the indispensable and urgent need for a multipolar future.

Global Times



## Russia's planned coup in Moldova

Olga Lautman

UKRAINE President Volodymyr Zelensky's announcement last week that Ukrainian intelligence had intercepted a Russian plan to topple the pro-Western government in neighboring Moldova reminded the world that whatever Russia's failings as a military power might be, it continues to lead the field in hybrid warfare and influence operations.

As Moldova was plunged into a political crisis following Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilita's resignation and the collapse of her government, Moldovan President Maia Sandu revealed further details of the alleged plot, which she said entailed using foreign actors "with military background, camouflaged in civilian clothes, to undertake violent actions, attacks on state institutions and taking hostages." Russia's plot to violently overthrow the Moldovan leadership echoes its illegal annexation of Crimea and occupation of eastern Ukraine in 2014, when the so-called "little green men" - a mixture of Russian special forces, intel operatives, and mercenaries - violently seized Ukrainian government buildings in an operation all too familiar to Russia.

While the Kremlin has of course denied Moldova's allegations, the planned coup is a case of Moscow making good on threats made publicly by its own officials last spring. In late 2021, as Russia was making final preparations for its invasion of Ukraine, the Kremlin set its sights on Moldova, issuing continuous threats and unleashing a torrent of disinformation and propaganda. The trigger was Moldova's pro-Kremlin president Igor Dodon losing his re-election bid to the pro-Western Sandu in 2020. The threats escalated further following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine with some Russian government figures calling for the "denazification" of Moldova to protect the country's Russian speakers.

At the center of all this is Transnistria (Pridnestrovie), an internationally recognized part of Moldova that broke away from Chisinau in 1990. For decades, some 1,500 Russian troops have

been stationed in the region, sparking concerns among Ukrainian officials last year that Russia could use Transnistria to launch a new front in southern Ukraine. While making various threats against Moldova last spring, Moscow briefly considered recognizing the independence of Transnistria, and while it ultimately didn't take that step, it has used its military presence in the region to exert pressure on the Moldovan government and to run destabilizing operations in the country. The situation is very similar to Russia's occupation of eastern Ukraine's Donbas region, and it was no surprise that shortly after Putin signed his decree in February recognizing Donbas as a part of Russia, the pro-Kremlin leadership in Transnistria requested the same recognition. Insisting that Transnistria considered itself part of Russia, pro-Kremlin voices accused Sandu and "her Romanian curators" of seeking to unleash a war in the region. Igor Girkin (aka Strelkov), a key intelligence operative in Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine, even claimed Romanian troops were donning Moldovan military uniforms in a bid to start a war. That was followed by a series of false flag terrorist attacks inside Transnistria.

While the disinformation operations calmed down over the summer as Russia suffered heavy losses in Ukraine, the plan to destabilize Moldova remained in place. As the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine approaches, last week's revelations only increase the chances of the war in Ukraine spilling over into its neighbors. In that sense, Moldova is particularly at risk, due to it not being a member of NATO. While the events of the past year have exposed the weakness of Russia's military amid rampant corruption, Moscow does continue to excel at conducting malign operations, and its hybrid approach to warfare allows it to engage in multiple theatres and engineer chaos in many regions, despite being tied up with the war in Ukraine. Russia's readiness

to interfere in another country's domestic affairs is yet another example of why it cannot be allowed to win in Ukraine. Moldova may have survived the collapse of its government, which has already been replaced by a new pro-Western administration, but that won't stop Russia from plotting operations against Moldova in the future.

The planned Russian coup in Moldova reveals that despite being made a global pariah and subjected to harsh international sanctions for the past year, Russia still feels no need to rein in its behavior. Some experts continue to claim that any harsher response to Russia's actions would serve only to escalate the situation, but this latest attempt to subvert democracy shows that despite walking a fine line, Russia's egregious behavior continues and is itself escalatory. This is hardly Russia's first coup attempt, either, with its agents in recent years attempting to assassinate Montenegro's prime minister, interfere with the Catalanian referendum to weaken Spain, influence the outcome of Scotland's independence referendum, invade Georgia, and perhaps even support a plot to violently overthrow the German government. Above all, of course, Russia illegally annexed Crimea and invaded Ukraine.

Russia's brutal assault on Chechnya in the early 2000s, in which it terrorized the civilian population in Grozny, should have led to its international isolation. But instead, Putin and his regime were allowed to grow stronger, leading to the atrocities unfolding today in Ukraine. The Kremlin's revanchist and imperialist ambitions must be quashed and the West must keep arming Ukraine with the weapons it needs for victory as only Russia's total defeat in the conflict will right the course. The diplomatic path was always going to be futile with Vladimir Putin and too much time has already been wasted. There is now no more room for error, however. Should Ukraine fall, Moldova will be the next sovereign state to face Russia's brutal wrath, and it won't be the last.

The Moscow Times

## China succeeding in diplomatic push to win over Europe

CALL it a comeback: Despite its agnosticism about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China is making diplomatic inroads in Europe from Berlin to Paris to Rome. It could not have been easier for Chinese leader Xi Jinping. All the Communist Party general secretary had to do was muzzle his "wolf-warrior" diplomats, whose overt jingoistic zeal had run its course, scrap the draconian "zero-COVID" policy and announce China was open for business again.

Though China's truculence under Xi's leadership has worn on Europe, a cold war between the two sides has been and will remain unlikely. After all, Brussels and Beijing do not compete ideologically or militarily like the US and China. Even the less-dire concept of decoupling has never resonated in Europe, which bristles at American-style confrontation with the largest importer of its goods.

"China cannot be out, China must be in. This is the difference of view we have between the US and Europe," French finance minister Bruno Le Maire said at Davos last month. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had a slightly different take. Europe should "focus on de-risking rather than decoupling," she said. For Germany, the de-risking bar has been set low. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited China in November with a heavyweight business delegation in tow, telegraphing to Xi that Berlin remains focused on commercial ties.

Scholz argued that he had secured a diplomatic win because Xi expressed his opposition to the use of nuclear weapons in the Russia-Ukraine war. In reality, China was the biggest winner. Xi managed to both please Scholz and avoid directly criticizing his close ally, Vladimir Putin. By calling on the international community to "reject the threat of nuclear weapons and advocate against a nuclear war to prevent a crisis on the

Eurasian continent," Xi reminded Putin not to cross the Rubicon - which would harm China's interests - while reserving judgment about Moscow's responsibility for the wider conflict. During his Beijing visit, the first by a European leader since Xi's return to the world stage, Scholz told Chinese Premier Li Keqiang the two countries "were no friends of decoupling." Data from Germany's statistics office corroborate that claim: Trade between China and Germany expanded 21% annually in 2022 to 298 billion (\$320 billion). Germany remains dependent on China for rare-earth metals used in the semiconductors, batteries and magnets of electric cars, an industry on which it has bet heavily.

German businesses, meanwhile, invested a record 10 billion in China in the first half of 2022. This money talks more clearly than German politicians calling for reducing their country's dependency on China. French President Emmanuel Macron could be the second European leader to meet Xi after Scholz. Macron reportedly plans to visit China by April and discuss energy, trade and the Russia-Ukraine War. One can only hope the French president will have more success convincing Xi to mediate an end to the conflict than he did trying to persuade Putin not to instigate it. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni could beat Macron to the punch. She has accepted an invitation to China that Xi extended to her when they met in Bali at APEC last November. Her agenda will be mostly commercial - she wants to boost Italian exports to China, Italy's largest trading partner in Asia - while Xi's will be more political. The Chinese leader told her at APEC that he hopes Rome will encourage the EU to pursue an "independent and positive" China policy.

While Meloni has previously been critical of China, voiced support for

Matthew Fulco

Taiwan and vowed not to renew Italy's membership in Beijing's embattled Belt and Road Initiative, she has moderated her tone since being elected as prime minister. In Central and Eastern Europe, China faces a less receptive audience. States that suffered behind the Iron Curtain, which have more skin in the game of the Russia-Ukraine war than Europe's wealthy West, are aghast at Beijing's refusal to condemn Moscow's wanton aggression. Unencumbered by economic dependency on China, they are moving closer to the United States and in some cases Taiwan as well. China has tried to make an example out of Lithuania, killing the monkey to scare the chickens, as the Communist Party would say. To punish Lithuania for its overtures to Taiwan, which include allowing a de facto embassy with the name "Taiwanese Representative Office" to open in the capital of Vilnius, China has downgraded diplomatic ties and banned most imports from the tiny Baltic country.

Lithuania can shrug off Beijing's pressure because their economic relationship is negligible. Vilnius has more to gain from greater trade with the US and Taiwan. To that end, it signed a \$600 million export credit agreement with Washington in late 2021. In early 2022, Taiwan announced a \$1 billion credit program that will fund joint projects with Lithuanian companies in six business categories. At the same time, China's bullying of Lithuania has failed to sow disunity in the EU. Brussels has instead launched a World Trade Organization case against China and provided a 130 million support package for Vilnius. The Czech Republic looks like it will be the next domino to fall. Czech President-elect Petr Pavel spoke with Taiwan's leader, Tsai Ing-wen, by telephone in January, prompting a harsh rebuke from China. "He has persisted in

stepping on China's red line, seriously interfering in China's domestic affairs and hurting the feelings of the Chinese people," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said in a statement.

Of the call, Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala said in a statement. "As a sovereign country we decide ourselves who we have calls with and who we will meet." China has yet to sanction Prague, though these are early days. This time Beijing may tread carefully though, cognizant that such bellicosity could backfire and destabilize its ties with the EU. For now, China is relying on coercive diplomacy.

Fu Cong, China's EU ambassador, recently warned the bloc its growing engagement with Taiwan constituted a violation of the "One China" principle and is a "red line" for Beijing. Fu told the EU not to sign an investment agreement with Taiwan. The complexity of the endeavor, which would require unanimous approval from the bloc's 27 members, means Beijing will get its way. Individual EU states will be harder for China to control, especially those most threatened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. For these nations, standing up to authoritarian expansionism is a matter of survival - unlike Beijing's deeply emotional but decidedly nonexistential obsession with Taiwan. By aligning with Moscow, China has made clear it stands with despotism. While the Beijing-Moscow axis does not sit well with Western Europe, the EU's largest economies feel they must prioritize a stable relationship with Beijing to protect their commercial interests and they still hold out hope that China will help bring an end to the Russia-Ukraine war acceptable to Kiev and the West. That was always wishful thinking. At this point it seems closer to fantasy - especially after Fu told the EU that the "security concerns of both sides" in the war should be addressed.

The Japan Times

## Break up Putin-Xi 'no limits' partnership

Frida Ghitis

It was an image that could have portended the start of a new era. Sporting a self-satisfied grin, Russian President Vladimir Putin stood alongside a confident Chinese President Xi Jinping in February of last year. Putin was still denying plans to invade Ukraine, which he would do just after the end of the Beijing Winter Olympics.

In a show of unity, the leaders of the two nuclear powers vowed to have a relationship with "no limits." It looked like a pivotal moment in a global realignment of power. A year later, Putin's push for a quick victory in Ukraine, one that would solidify Russia's place as a top global player, looks like a disaster, and the alliance appears much less valuable to Xi. And yet, China and Russia remain close, the world's two leading autocracies determined to challenge the West and undercut the notion that genuine democracy is the most desirable system of government - lest it come for their jobs.

Both leaders have been courting autocratic regimes. Russia is seeking armaments for its floundering war in Ukraine, and China is hard at work trying to become the center of a new alliance to counter the West. The project has faltered; it is far from a resounding success. But it is very much a work in progress. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has added momentum to the forces trying to reshape the world and thrown a light on the path forward for US foreign policy. In addition to fortifying NATO and strengthening alliances, which President Joe Biden's administration has accomplished with great success, the US must aim to forestall the creation of a credible, unified force of aggressive antidemocratic regimes.

That means making sure that

Russia doesn't win in Ukraine, but also prying apart Moscow and Beijing (echoing then-President Richard Nixon in the 1970s) and countering China's efforts to forge stronger bonds with Iran. A bloc of aggressively anti-Western autocracies is precisely what Xi and Putin were launching that day in February. Beijing and Moscow sought to replace the rule of law with "the rule of the strongest," warned European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. But the rule of the strongest doesn't work when you can't win, which is how Russia's plans started to unravel, and China had to rethink its commitment.

Xi's "no-limits" friendship did not pan out quite as Putin might have expected. Publicly, China still refuses to call the Russian military campaign an invasion - and Beijing has never condemned Russia's unprovoked attack of its neighbor. But China has not armed Russian forces, and has at times issued veiled warnings against Russia's threat of using nuclear weapons. But even after expressing "questions and concerns" about the war, Xi has reaffirmed the strategic bonds. After a video meeting in December, Putin gushed, "We share the same views on the...transformation of the global geopolitical landscape." Xi, according to state media, said the two countries should "strengthen strategic coordination." Is Xi in or out with Putin? Xi seems to want it both ways. He wants the relationship with a country that has invaded its neighbor without provocation, but he's trying to present himself as a responsible global leader; an alternative to the democratic Western model for other countries to follow.

Xi's desire to emerge as the de

facto leader of a major strategic bloc, but one with the prestige of a statesman, creates an opportunity for the West to manage the relationship in a way that achieves President Biden's efforts to compete vigorously while avoiding a war with China. It is an objective he reiterated on Thursday while talking about the Chinese balloon that traversed the US earlier this month. If Putin's conflict with Ukraine had turned into a swift Russian victory, the alliance of autocracies would have made huge strides. Moscow's stumbling has slowed its progress. As Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman noted, Russia could become an albatross around Beijing's neck. Without Chinese military backing, Putin has looked to other regimes for assistance.

According to US intelligence, Russia has bought artillery shells from North Korea, another notorious dictatorship, which denies its involvement in a war whose morality is beyond the pale. But it is Iran that has apparently provided more significant support. Iranian drones have been one of the weapons of choice as Russia kills Ukrainian civilians and destroys Ukraine's infrastructure. Tehran first denied it was arming Russia, saying it "has not and will not" provide weapons to Russia.

Those adamant denials changed later, with Iran claiming it sold weapons before the war started, but those were not being used in Ukraine. Now, newly-declassified documents show the drones in Ukraine are identical to those Iran has used in the Middle East. Iran, whose repressive, interventionist regime has also turned it, like Russia, into a pariah to much of the

world, now finds itself being courted by both Moscow and Beijing. This week, Ebrahim Raisi became the first Iranian president to visit China in 20 years. The trip, at Xi's invitation, ostensibly aims to implement an agreement for a 25-year strategic cooperation pact the two reached at a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2021. The Beijing-Tehran ties have raised alarms among both Democrats and Republicans in Congress, who fear China's support could help Tehran evade sanctions related to its nuclear and conventional weapons programs, support for terrorism and human rights abuses. Sitting with Raisi, Xi declared that China will strengthen cooperation with Iran, "no matter how international and regional situations change." Still, recall the "no limits" pledge to Russia. Xi's vows can prove more conditional than they sound. Beijing's relationship with Tehran is complicated. In December, when Xi visited Iran-foe Saudi Arabia, a joint statement after meeting with Saudi officials noted Iran's "destabilizing regional activities" and "support for terrorist and sectarian groups," infuriating Iran.

Clearly, there's an internal contradiction in Xi's dual goals. If you want to elevate your standing to that of a respected global leader, it's hard to create an alliance of rule-breaking autocrats and assorted dictators, and then expect other countries to join enthusiastically. Much has changed since that day in Beijing, when Xi and Putin smiled for the cameras, expecting a new era to begin. The war didn't turn out as expected, but it did make it clear that democracies need to push back against belligerent antidemocratic regimes and keep them from joining forces.

CNN

IN the past few weeks, an unmanned civilian Chinese airship - and the US handling of the matter - brought new challenges to the relationship between China and the United States, testing the two countries' ability to properly address an unexpected incident.

The airship, which was used for meteorological research, unintentionally entered US airspace because of the westerlies and its limited self-steering capability. China has made these details available to the United States after earnest verification and in the shortest possible time.

We have asked that the situation be handled in a calm, professional and quiet manner. The United States labeled the airship as China's "spy balloon" of the People's Liberation Army, and shot it down, though it posed no real security threat. The United States also alleged that China has a high-altitude surveillance balloon program targeting the world, and illegally imposed sanctions on six Chinese companies and institutions.

The overreaction by America - and its moves to heighten the issue - have exacerbated the situation.

Xu Xueyan

This isolated incident has caused new wounds in China-US relations. The bilateral relationship is the world's most important and complex.

Relations between the two nations have never been smooth sailing but have included a process of overcoming problems whenever they occur. Many of the issues between the two countries originate from strategic misperception and misjudgment. The difficulty caused by the airship's accidental entrance in US airspace is yet another example.

But problems are not to be feared; what matters is good faith and the ability to resolve them. The United States should reach out to resolve them. This bilateral relationship requires a "whole-process" approach and attention to the bigger picture. What, then, is that bigger picture? It is the fact that the two countries have many more common interests than differences; it is the common understanding that a sound and stable China-US relationship is fundamentally good for the two countries and people worldwide. When the China-US relationship enters a difficult

patch, we must show the courage and wisdom to respect facts and return to reason. Sensational and politically driven moves harm everyone. By handling this balloon incident properly, China and the US would prove to their people, and the world, that they can respect each other and act responsibly to manage differences and avoid confrontation.

China stands for more dialogue between the two countries at all levels. This has been an important understanding reached between President Xi Jinping and President Biden at their Bali meeting three months ago. It falls on both sides to implement it. If we condense the past experiences of our bilateral relations, they point to this: China and the United States both gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation. We sincerely hope that the United States will work with China and not allow a wandering balloon to lead the bilateral relationship astray. We look forward to concrete steps to prevent the situation from going further down the wrong path, so that the China-US relationship can return to a track of sound and stable development.

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# PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 444 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Monday, losing 444.97 points, a negative change of 1.08 percent, closing at 40,673.64 points against 41,118.61 points the previous day.

A total of 92,717,662 shares were traded during the day as compared to 110,366,624 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs. 4.461 billion against Rs. 4.677 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 313 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 65 of them recorded gains and 225 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 23 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading

companies were WorldCall Telecom with 6,395,078 shares at Rs 1.16 per share; Oil and Gas Dev. with 5,383,683 shares at Rs.89.72 per share, and TRG Pak Ltd with 4,393,644 shares at Rs.112.59 per share.

Premium Tex witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.36.46 per share price, closing at Rs.546.46, whereas the runner-up was Pak Tobacco with a Rs.28.63 rise in its per share price to Rs.778.73.

Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.689.25 per share closing at Rs.8,500,750; followed by Bata (Pak) with Rs.149.24 decline to close at Rs.1,840.75.

**Rupee recovers 93 paise against dollar**

Pakistan rupee appreciated by 93 paise against the US dollar in the interbank

trading on Monday and closed at Rs 261.88, against the previous day's closing of Rs 262.81.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 264.9 and Rs 267.9 respectively. The price of Euro increased by 37 paise and closed at Rs 280.18 against the last day's closing of Rs 279.81.

The Japanese Yen gained one paise to close at Rs1.95, whereas a decrease of Rs 2.16 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 315.50 as compared to its last closing of Rs 313.34.

The exchange rates of Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal decreased by 25 paise each to close at Rs 71.30

and Rs 69.82 respectively.

**Gold prices increase by Rs 500 to Rs 196,500 per tola**

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 500 on Monday and was traded at Rs 196,500 against sale at Rs. 196,000, the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 429 to Rs 168,467 against Rs 168,038, whereas that of 10 grams of 22 karat went up to Rs 154,427 from Rs 154,035, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs 2130 and Rs1,826.13 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$1 to \$1,844 from US\$1,843, the association reported.



ISLAMABAD: British Acting High Commissioner Andrew Dalglish meeting with Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Finance Division.

## PSDF, PTEGP join hands

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Skill Development Fund (PSDF) and Punjab Tourism for Economic Growth Project (PTEGP) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to train 10,000 individuals in the hospitality sector.

Through this partnership, the skills of workers in Punjab's tourism industry would be developed and upgraded. Both sides would also work together to promote this partnership among key stakeholders in the tourism industry.

PSDF COO (Chief Operating Officer) Ali Akbar Bosan and PTEGP Project Director Muhammad Waqas Malik signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides here at PSDF Headquarters on Monday. Secretary Tourism Ehsan Bhutta was also present.

Under the MoU, the PSDF would take the lead in identifying the professional areas and mobilize its extensive network of training service providers (TSPs) to implement skill trainings.

The Fund COO Ali Akbar Bosan said that the partnership aimed to activate three main elements needed to successfully expand Punjab's tourist economy i.e. increasing private sector participation; improving infrastructure services; and polishing the skills of tourism sector workers.

Ali Akbar Bosan said, "PSDF as a skills expert is in tune with the training and knowledge that is required for the industry so it can shape competent workers and they in turn can deliver quality service and performance to take Punjab's tourism economy to the next level."

## Dar for expanding PaK-UK relations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar said here on Monday that Pakistan had long historic ties with the United Kingdom and relations between the two countries needed to be further expanded for the mutual benefit of the countries.

The minister was talking to British Acting High Commissioner, Andrew Dalglish who called him here, according to a press statement issued by the finance ministry.

They exchanged views on matters of common interest including promoting mutual trade and investment between the two countries, the statement added.

He briefed the envoy about economic challenges coupled with devastating floods and said that the government aimed to bring about economic and fiscal stability leading to econom-

ic recovery and growth.

He also appreciated the goodwill and cooperation extended by the British Acting High Commissioner.

On the occasion, the British Acting High Commissioner commended the practical and pragmatic measures being undertaken by the government and extended full support of the British government for the government and people of Pakistan in mitigating the socio-economic challenges.

He briefed the envoy about economic challenges coupled with devastating floods and said that the government aimed to bring about economic and fiscal stability leading to econom-

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Two ships namely, MSC Monica III and CMA CGM Malisande, carrying containers berthed at Qasim International Containers Terminal on Sunday.

Meanwhile, three more ships, Ithomi, Hua Wei 8 and Hafnia Hudson carrying general cargo, palm oil and mogas also arrived at the outer anchorage of the port during the last 24 hours.

A total of 04 ships were

engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them an oil tanker 'Stena Impeccable' left the Port on Monday morning, while two more ships, MSC Monica III and Dato Fortune, are expected to sail later today.

A cargo volume of 49,937 tonnes, comprising 9,445 tonnes of imports cargo and 40,492 tonnes of export cargo, including containerized cargo carried

in 2,053 containers (137 TEUs Imports and 1,916 TEUs export) was handled at the port during the last 24 hours.

There are 08 ships at the outer anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, 02 ships, Sea Power and CMA CGM Malisande and 02 more ships, MSC Mumbai and Lisa, carrying wheat and containers are expected to take berths at FAP and QICT today as well.

## BIEK arrange one day symposium

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Board of Intermediate Education Karachi has taken the initiative in respect of E-Marking and SLO based assessment and arrange a one day symposium with the most senior professors and assessors at Government Sir Syed Girls College Karachi with the collaboration of AFAQ.

In this one day symposium there are hundreds of professors of physics, chemistry, botany zoology, computer science and other subject expert participated and encouraged the efforts of Board of Intermediate education Karachi and paying regards to Dr. Saeeduddin Chairman Board of Intermediate Education Karachi for his vision and quality efforts.

The purpose of the Symposium is to given the information and knowledge to professors about SLO based examination and E-marking features is and how it beneficial and helpful to the students for their career and future.

All the professors' shows prime interest in this symposium and encourage



the efforts of Chairman BIEK to introducing latest methodology of examination and also introducing technology of E-Marking.

Board of Intermediate Education Karachi is very much interested to conduct these sort of workshops/symposiums for students and professors every month and would like the increase the level of Quality Education make more trans-

parent marking or assessment through technological era.

Dr. Saeeduddin Chairman BIEK hopes that this sort of workshops make some positive impacts on the society and will increase the quality of assessment and tilt the approach of students to understand the subject and its knowledge sets conceptually which is the demand and requirement of market today.

## Bestway Cement inaugurates Line II of 7200 TPD at Hattar

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Bestway Cement Limited, Pakistan's 2nd largest cement manufacturer achieved another milestone. The Company commenced production and dispatches of cement at its brownfield Hattar Plant.

A simple ceremony was held at the plant premises to celebrate the occasion which was attended by the Chairman, Bestway Group, Sir Mohammed Anwar Pervez OBE HPK, the Group's CEO, Lord Zameer M. Choudrey CBE SI Pk, Bestway's senior officials and delegates from the plant suppliers, Sinoma.

Sir Mohammad Anwar Pervez OBE HPK unveiled the commemorative plaque to mark the commencement of cement production at Line II of Hattar plant.

Speaking on the occasion, Bestway Group's CEO, Lord Choudrey, said "Hattar plant is Bestway's home. This is where our incredible journey in cement business started 28 years ago. I'm absolutely delighted that we have put our second state-of-the-art and most environmentally friendly brownfield production line at Hattar into production in a record time of 15 months despite various hurdles and supply chain disruptions caused by Covid and the overall economic challenges



being faced by the country. The plant also has its own Waste Heat Recovery Power Plant of 9 MWs. Bestway's production capacity has grown from 1 million tonnes per annum in 1998 to more than 15 million tonnes, which speaks volumes of its progress. I congratulate the entire Bestway team as this remarkable success would not have been possible without their hard work and commitment to excellence, especially our senior team most of whom have been with the Company since our journey began".

He went on to reiterate Bestway Group's unrelenting commitment towards economic and social

development of Pakistan and highlighted that Bestway Cement was one of the largest taxpayers in the country having contributed more than Rs. 245 billion to the exchequer in direct and indirect taxes since its inception. He noted that Company was providing direct employment to nearly 5,000 families and generated indirect employment for another almost 50,000 families.

Shedding light on Bestway's CSR activities, he informed the audience that Bestway was one of the top ten CSR spenders in Pakistan. The Group's charitable arm, Bestway Foundation, had spent more than Rs. 1 billion in just last 3 years on various

social causes, particularly education. In addition to providing substantial financial assistance to some of the best educational and health care institutions around the country, the Foundation is running two schools in Chakwal and Farooqia and a girls' college where free and quality education is provided free of cost; work on two more schools has already started and very soon another two schools will be constructed in Hattar and Mianwali. The Bestway also runs free medical centres at all of its production facilities which provide free basic healthcare facilities to more than 20,000 patients annually.

## Asian markets rise but rate concerns cast shadow

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets mostly rose on Monday but traders remained on edge as they considered the prospect of more US interest rate hikes aimed at bringing down stubbornly high inflation.

Equities have struggled to build on January's rally, with recent data showing that the Federal Reserve still had plenty of work to do to get prices under control.

Investors are now awaiting the release of minutes from the central bank's most recent policy meeting, hoping to gauge officials' views on their next steps.

Sentiment was given a jolt last week by comments from some members who said they were open to a 50-basis-point hike at the next gathering.

Several others have already warned that borrowing costs would likely have to go higher and stay there for longer to tame inflation, which has eased but remains elevated.

That has renewed concerns that the world's top economy could tip into recession, with commentators warning earnings will also take a hit.

Asian markets fluctuated following a mixed day on Wall Street on Friday.

Shanghai led gains, jumping more than two percent as banking giant Goldman Sachs said it saw mainland Chinese stocks surging this year as the country reopens from zero-Covid and economic activity kicks on.

"The growth impulse should be heavily tilted towards the consumer economy, where (the) services sector is still operating significantly below the 2019 pre-pandemic levels," strategists at the bank said.

Hong Kong, Tokyo, Seoul, Sydney, Bangkok and Taipei rose though Mumbai, Singapore, Manila, Jakarta and

Wellington fell.

Analysts warned that while traders expect further rate hikes, there could be more bad news down the line.

National Australia Bank's Tapas Strickland said: "The equity market so far seems sanguine about the rates outlook, seemingly taking more signal from the better than expected macro data, than from what that then means for rates and getting inflation down."

And Michael Wilson at Morgan Stanley said companies faced an earnings recession.

"The bear market rally

that began in October from reasonable prices and low expectations has morphed into a speculative frenzy based on a Fed pause/pivot that isn't coming," he wrote in a note.

The likelihood of more rate hikes provided further support to the dollar, which held Friday's gains against its major peers, sitting around highs not seen since December.

While oil edged up Monday following hefty losses last week, the stronger dollar kept a lid on prices, with concerns about the impact of a possible recession on demand adding to downward pressure.

## Chambers committee to help evolve economic policy framework

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Investment and Skill Development SM Tanveer said on Monday that the Punjab Chambers of Commerce Coordination Committee (PCCCC) would help evolve better economic policy framework.

He was speaking at Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) here. Provincial Caretaker Minister for Local Government and Community Development Ibrahim Murad, LCCI President Kashif Anwar, Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry, Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT) Chairman Jalal Hassan Khan also spoke, while LCCI Executive Committee members were

present.

The caretaker minister said that apart from this, the summary of Industrial Police Liaison Committee (IPLC) had been sent to the caretaker chief minister Punjab. "It is hoped that it will be approved soon, which will make it possible to end the problems of theft and law and order in industrial estates," he hoped.

He said that after the approval of IMF loan, payments would also be received from many friendly countries. He said that the industrial estates, in which the plots had been sold out, and the industrial units had not been established, would also be worked out with the help of Lahore Chamber. One of the reasons for the lack of industrialisation was the increase in cost of doing

business. He said that issues of WASA charges, SME loans and other such issues would be taken up with the authorities concerned.

He said that a Desk of Industries Department should be established at the Lahore Chamber, whose terms of reference (ToRs) should be fixed as soon as possible so that the problems of industries and related departments could be resolved through Lahore Chamber. He said that the Lahore Chamber should give training to all chambers.

Provincial Caretaker Minister for LG&CD Ibrahim Murad said that the local government was the main functionary of the government. It looked after the matters like encroachment, building approval,

commercialization, TMEs and parking. "Whatever problems may arise in these departments, the local government offices will always be there to solve them," he added.

He said that 130 markets for cattle purchase and sale had been outsourced by the local government across Punjab. These markets generated an annual revenue of Rs 3.7 billion against the expenditures of Rs 500 million. "It has investment potential. Anyone who is interested can benefit. Similarly, parking companies are also owned by local governments," he disclosed.

He said that development fund of the local government was Rs 40 billion. The local government used its own funds to build a road up to five kilometers.

Apart from this, there was also an investment of one billion dollars for international projects. "We wish to increase the economy of Lahore from \$85 billion to \$400 billion," he vowed.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that serious economic challenges, which the country was going through at the moment, were having a direct impact on the business activities and the business situation in the country had become very bad. "In order to overcome these economic problems, we have to pay immediate attention towards the promotion of import substitution and at the same time we have to take steps to increase the exports to the desired targets."

He said that the country was facing foreign

exchange crisis due to trade deficit, as a result of which banks were having problems in opening LCs. More than 10,000 import containers were still stuck at the port, on which the business community was facing detention, demurrage and port storage charges with every passing day. He said that many of the industries had shut down due to non-availability of imported goods or raw materials and the entire supply chain had been affected and the remaining industries were barely functioning.

The LCCI president said that industries had to import a lot of raw materials, essential components and various machineries which were not available in the country, on which they had to pay 100 per cent cash margin, regulato-

ry duties, customs duties and additional customs duties, which needed to be eliminated.

Apart from this, the issues of refunds and multiple audits were pending along with reducing the rate of withholding tax for businesses.

Kashif Anwar appreciate the performance of Environment Protection Department of Punjab. He, however, added that shutting down of industries to control smog was not the solution to the problem. Other factors should also be controlled. Dumping sites in the city also created pollution. Before taking any action against the business community, prior notice must be sent and Chambers of Commerce must be kept in loop.

"We are an import-based

economy, our industry is highly dependent on raw material imports," he said and added that cotton, which was an important raw material of textile industry, produced 9.1 million bales of cotton in 2019-20 which had reduced to 8.3 million bales in 2021-22. He said that LCCI had always insisted on increasing the tax base. "We have suggested the government to immediately announce the Declaration Scheme so that Undeclared Foreign Reserves can become part of our economy."

The LCCI president said that water tariff for industrial and commercial use in Lahore by WASA was Rs 100,000 per cusec, which was many times higher than other cities of Punjab. A uniform tariff should be fixed for all cities.



In brief

Cummins flies home

SYDNEY (AFP): Australia captain Pat Cummins left the tour of India on Monday to return home because of a family illness, but will return in time for next week's third Test. "Pat Cummins has flown home for personal reasons due to a serious family illness," said a Cricket Australia statement. "He will return to India later this week to rejoin preparations for the third Test in Indore. We ask media to respect his privacy." India hold an unassailable 2-0 lead in the four-match series after Australia lost the second Test in Delhi by six wickets on Sunday. Cricket Australia announced Monday that pace bowler Josh Hazlewood had been ruled out of the rest of the tour with a persistent Achilles tendon injury and would return home. A spokesman denied Australian media reports that injured opening batsman David Warner would immediately return home after fracturing his elbow and being concussed in the first innings at Delhi. "Just to be clear, David Warner is not leaving the tour at this stage," the spokesman said. "Any squad changes will be announced once medical staff and selectors finalise them." Australia coach Andrew McDonald had better news Monday about Cameron Green and Mitchell Starc. McDonald declared all-rounder Green 100 per cent fit for the third Test and said that Starc was also in line to play. Both have been recovering from serious finger injuries and Green was close to being available for the Delhi Test.

IBA says boycotted world championships

DELHI (Agencies): The International Olympic Committee's qualifying process for boxing at next year's Paris Games is unacceptable and must recognise world championships that some countries are boycotting, the governing IBA said on Monday. The Russian-led International Boxing Association has been sidelined by the IOC from the Paris process due to governance and other issues after being stripped of involvement in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Boxing is not on the initial programme for Los Angeles 2028, pending reforms demanded by the IOC who warned in December that it might also have to consider cancelling the Paris programme. Eight nations including major power the United States have so far said they will boycott this year's women's and men's world championships in New Delhi and Tashkent, Uzbekistan, respectively. The move comes after IBA decided last November to allow boxers from Russia and Belarus to compete with national flags and anthems, despite the war in Ukraine and against IOC guidance. The IBA announced on Monday what it called it's own Olympic qualification system. "To exclude world champions from the upcoming women's and men's world boxing championships... from qualifying for Paris 2024 is not acceptable and against the principles of sport and boxing," it said. The IBA said it would accept no qualification process for Paris 2024 other than the world championships and "a final last chance to qualify open event taking place in May 2024". A qualifying system approved by the IOC last September established direct qualification through regional multi-sport competitions – the Pan-American Games, European Games, Pacific Games, Asian Games and an African event to be confirmed.



KARACHI: James Neesham's 23-ball 37 got Zalmi closer to the line, Peshawar Zalmi vs Quetta Gladiators, PSL.

# Djokovic equals Steffi Graf's record for most weeks as world number 1

LONDON (Agencies): Novak Djokovic has equalled Steffi Graf's record for most weeks as world number one after starting his 377th week at the top of the men's rankings. The 35-year-old Serb has held the record for the most weeks as men's world number one since March 2021. On Monday, he moved level with Germany's Graf, who first rose to the top of the women's rankings in 1987.

Djokovic first became world number one in 2011 and like Graf, is a 22-time Grand Slam champion. After first becoming world number one, Graf remained at the top of the rankings for 186 consecutive weeks, a women's record that was later tied by Serena Williams in 2016. Djokovic's longest continuous run at the top was 122 weeks between July 2014 and November 2016. For that record, he trails

Roger Federer (237 weeks), Jimmy Connors (160) and Ivan Lendl (157). Djokovic returned to the world number one position for the first time in six months by winning the Australian Open in January. He is currently on 7,070 points, 590 more than Spain's Carlos Alcaraz. The men's world rankings were introduced in 1973, while the women's rankings were introduced two years later.

## Innings gave me a 'kick up the backside' - Root

LONDON (Agencies): Joe Root says his second-innings half-century in England's first-Test defeat of New Zealand has given him a "kick up the backside". The former captain has gone seven Tests without making a hundred, his longest spell without a ton in two years. He looked fluent in his 57 made from 62 balls in Mount Maunganui, as England won by 267 runs. "I've not performed for a little while, so I had the bit between my teeth in the second innings," said Root. "It's given me a little sharper, a kick up the backside, that this is how I need to play my cricket, how I can be consistently useful in this group." From the beginning of 2021 to the middle of last summer, Root was in form unmatched by any other batter on the planet, scoring 11 hundreds in 24 Tests and averaging 61. His batting form remained strong despite the unravelling of his captaincy, with England winning only one of his last 17 Tests in charge. Root was replaced by Ben Stokes in May last year and his form initially remained strong, with three hundreds in four Tests after giving up the captaincy. But as England have gone from strength to strength under Stokes - the win at the Bay Oval was their 10th in 11 matches - Root's form has regressed. The 32-year-old believes it will "take some time" for him to fully adjust to England's ultra-aggressive style under Stokes. "There was the initial relief of coming out of the captaincy and now I'm just trying to find out what my role is within this team," said Root. "I've maybe got a bit caught up in it, but I'm not too far away from what's given me success. I didn't feel I tried to force it in the second innings and when I'm playing well that's one of my strengths: I can score freely and I can rotate the strike. "I felt like I found a really good tempo in how I wanted to bat. "Under the leadership of Stokes and Brendon McCullum, England's swashbuckling batting has seen Root regularly reverse-scoop pace bowlers.

## NBA All-Star Game Team Giannis beats Team LeBron as Jayson Tatum scores record 55 points

SALT LAKE CITY (Agencies): Jayson Tatum scored an All-Star Game record 55 points to lead Team Giannis to a 184-175 victory over Team LeBron in the NBA's annual showcase. Boston Celtics forward Tatum was named most valuable player (MVP) as he broke the previous record of 52 points, set by Anthony Davis in 2017. Opposition captain LeBron James missed the second half after injuring the little finger of his right hand. "It means the world," Tatum, now a four-time All-Star, said of his record. "You think of all the legends and great players that have played this game. "In all honesty, records are made to be broken. I'll hold it as long as I can but I'm certain somebody will come along in a couple years and try to break it." Tatum's Celtics teammate Jaylen Brown led Team LeBron with 35 points and a game-high 14 rebounds, while James exited on 13 points after hitting his finger against the rim while trying to block a shot. Los Angeles Lakers star



James now shares the All-Star selections record of 19 with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, but defeat in Salt Lake City on Sunday was his first of six All-Star games as captain. Winning captain Giannis Antetokounmpo scored the first points of the night with a dunk after 15 seconds, before sitting out the rest of the game having sprained his right wrist in the Milwaukee Bucks' final regular-season game.

With Team Giannis leading 158-141 at the end of the third quarter, a target score for victory of 182 was set - this 24 points higher than the winning side's score at that stage, an addition representing Kobe Bryant's shirt number during much of his career with the Los Angeles Lakers. And it was Damian Lillard of the Portland Trail Blazers drained the decisive three-pointer to secure the victory.

# Neesham, Powell power Zalmi to edge Gladiators

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): All-rounders James Neesham and Rovman Powell played sensible knocks in the run chase to steer Peshawar Zalmi to a convincing four-wicket victory over Quetta Gladiators in the ninth match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season eight. Set to chase 155, Zalmi amassed the target in the 19th over with four wickets to spare at the back of a crucial partnership between Neesham and Powell. Earlier, the Zalmi got off to a poor start to the pursuit as the side lost three wickets for 47 runs in the fifth over with in-form batters Mohammad Haris, Saim Ayub and Tom Kohler-Cadmore perishing cheaply. Zalmi then endured a huge blow to their pursuit as they lost their skipper Babar Azam in the eighth over and consequently slipped to 67/4. Babar could score 19 off 18 deliveries. Following the setback, Neesham and Powell anchored the run chase with a gritty 46-run partnership before Naseem Shah castled the latter to glimmer a ray of hope for the Gladiators. Powell scored a brisk 23-

ball 36 and smashed three boundaries and two sixes. Following Powell's departure, Neesham joined hands with Dasun Shanaka and steered his side closer to victory before falling victim to Qais Ahmed in the 15th over. He top-scored for the Zalmi with 38 off 23 deliveries with the help of four boundaries and three sixes. Neesham's dismissal triggered a late twist in the run chase but Shanaka and Wahab Riaz held their nerves calm to steer the side to their second triumph of the season. Shanaka scored an unbeaten 16 while Wahab scored 10 not out in 12 deliveries. Mohammad Hasnain led the bowling attack for the Gladiators with 3/13 in his four overs while Naseem, Nawaz and Qais made one scalp each. Put into bat first, the Gladiators raised 154/4 despite a dismal start at the back of a magnificent half-century by Iftikhar. Gladiators openers Jason Roy and Martin Gupthill started cautiously against a disciplined bowling attack of Zalmi as they could score 28 runs in the power-play before the latter lost

his wicket in a desperate attempt to go big. Gupthill could score 12 off 16. Following his dismissal, leg-spinner Usman Qadir struck twice in his consecutive overs; removing Roy (14) and Mohammad Nawaz (2) as the Gladiators slipped to 37/3 in the ninth over. Following the slump, skipper Sarfaraz Ahmed and Iftikhar anchored the innings with a gritty 74-run partnership for the fourth wicket and broke the shackles. Meanwhile, Arshad Iqbal castled Sarfaraz in the 17th over to dent the Gladiators' march to a big total. The skipper could score 39 off 30 deliveries and hit five boundaries. Iftikhar, however, held his ground firm and kept charging on the Zalmi bowlers in the death overs and received significant support from all-rounder Odean Smith, who struck a blistering 12-ball 25. Iftikhar top-scored for the Gladiators with 50 off 34 deliveries, laced with two boundaries and four sixes. Qadir led the bowling attack for Zalmi with 2/26 while Arshad and James Neesham could make one scalp.

# 2nd President of Pakistan Polo Cup gets under way on Tuesday

LAHORE (APP): The 2nd President of Pakistan Polo Cup 2023 will get under way on Tuesday, Feb 21, here at the Jinnah Polo Fields. According to President of Jinnah Polo Fields Lt Col Shoaib Aftab (ret'd), the top eight teams are included in this two-week high-goal tournament, in which two foreign players are also participating in each team. He said that the teams have been divided into two pools. Pool A includes

Remounts, BN Polo, HN Polo and Master Paints/Newage Cables while Pool B consists of Diamond Paints, FG Polo Team, Master Paints and DS Polo. Tomorrow (Tuesday), Remounts will face BN Polo at 2:30 pm while HN Polo will take on Master Paints/Newage Cables at 3:30 pm. The competition will continue for two weeks, and the final will be held on Sunday (March 5). In Pool A, Team Remounts includes Ahmed

Zubair Butt, Imran Shahid, Jota Chavanne, Manuel Sundblad while Swr Naehm and Maj Naehm are reserve players. Roberto Iturrioz, Baber Naseem, Hamza Mawaz Khan and Juan Maria Ruiz Guinazu are the part of BN Polo, Haider Naseem, Raja Jalal Arsalan, Raja Samiullah and Santi Losa are in HN Polo while Master Paints/Newage Cables team comprises Farooq Amin Sufi, Raja Temur Nadeem, Juan Cruz Greguoli and Simon Prado.

# GCU wins All Pakistan Inter-Varsity Gymnastics Champions 2023

LAHORE (APP): The All Pakistan Inter-Varsity Gymnastics Championship 2023 concluded on a high note with the GC University Lahore clinching the championship trophy here on Monday. More than eleven universities participated in the tournament held under the auspices of Higher Education Commission at GCU Sports Hall. GC University Lahore Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Asghar Zaidi, Director of Sports Wasim Akhtar, and officials of Higher Education Commission, including Muhammad Asif, attended the ceremony. The GCU team emerged as the winners of the event with Punjab University and University of Central

Punjab securing joint second place and University of Management Technology (UMT) achieving the third position. The teams competed in a variety of disciplines, including floor exercises, balance beam, vault, and uneven bars. Speaking at the closing ceremony, Professor Dr. Asghar Zaidi congratulated the winning team and thanked all the participants for making the championship a success. He emphasized the importance of sports in developing the physical and mental capabilities of the youth and expressed his hope that students from all universities can use GC University's gymnastic training facilities to represent Pakistan better

in the future. Muhammad Asif, an official of the Higher Education Commission, lauded the contribution of GC University Lahore to the field of sports and acknowledged the many sports stars that the university has produced over the years. Director of Sports Wasim Akhtar reaffirmed GC University's commitment to promoting sports and pledged to continue supporting athletes in the future. The All Pakistan Inter Varsity Gymnastics Championship 2023 showcased the talent of some of Pakistan's most promising young athletes and served as a reminder of the importance of sports in building a healthy and prosperous nation.

# 9th J.A. Zaman Memorial Open Golf all set for six days of competition

LAHORE (APP): The landmark 9th J.A.Zaman Memorial Open Golf Championship will go under way from Tuesday, Feb 21, at the Lahore Gymkhana Golf Club. This was stated by Sarmad Nadeem of Lahore Gymkhana Golf Club at a media conference, attended and addressed by Hamid Zaman, head of Zaman Family, Bilal Zaman, Taha Mehmood, Captain Golf and Ayesha Hamid, Lady Captain of Gymkhana Golf Club. Hamid Zaman, speaking on the occasion, said the golfing activity which is a PGA and PGF-sanctioned tournament has evolved to become one of the biggest golf tournaments nationwide with total prize money of Rs. 6.0 million. The tournament attracts the top golfing talent from across the country and is one of the most anticipated match ups of the golfing calendar in Pakistan. The salient features of this year's edition include: Top 100 ranked golf professionals of Pakistan will compete in the Main Draw from the 23rd to 26th of February making it one of the most

competitive fields in golf across the country. The championship includes nationally recognized golf amateur players who compete for glory and honors in victory. Total Prize Money of Rs. 6.0 million and a chance to win a 1,300 CC Honda City on a Hole-in-One makes the match one of the top purses in Pakistan golf. 6 categories of players including juniors, ladies, senior professionals and amateurs, and veteran golfers all participate in the tournament. Record number of entries highlighting the anticipation and excitement the championship brings forth with more than 500+ participants. Bilal Zaman said that The tournament is being held in the memory of late J.A.Zaman; an iconic symbol who was a man of enormous dignity. He left behind an indelible impact of his entrepreneurial abilities and his passion for golf in particular. J.A.Zaman's family, which is the principal sponsor of this championship, is pleased to make possible, with the gracious cooperation of the Lahore Gymkhana Golf Committee, such a prestigious event where, no doubt, only the best of

the sport will be showcased. Playing Arena & The Players: Regarding the playing arena Sarmad Nadeem said that Lahore Gymkhana Golf Course is one of the oldest golf courses in Pakistan tracing its origin to the 19th Century. It is an 18 holes championship course, with a par 72 spread over 65 acres. It is a tree lined course demanding excellence and accuracy from start to finish. Khawaja Pervaiz Saeed highlighted that star players of the national golf circuit like Shabbir Iqbal, M.Matloob, Ahmed Baig, Hamza Amin, Muhammed Munir, Waheed Baloch, Minhaj Maqsood, Muhammad Alam and Muhammad Shahzad will be competing against one another to see who comes out on top. Shabbir Iqbal is ranked #1 in Pakistan, while Ahmed Baig is a rising star full of bristling energy. The final round will take place on Sunday, 26th February 2023 at the Lahore Gymkhana Golf Course, followed by the prize distribution will be held at Golf Course Lawns at 330 pm. The Zaman Family will be hosts at the prize distribution ceremony.

# Lewandowski helps Barcelona go eight points clear



BARCELONA (Agencies): Barcelona re-established their eight-point lead at the top of La Liga thanks to a routine win over struggling Cadiz. Sergi Roberto gave Barca the lead late in the first half from a rebound after Robert Lewandowski had a header cleared off the

line. Three minutes later Lewandowski drilled in a fine drive from the edge of the box after being picked out by Roberto. It was both players' first league goal at the Nou Camp since 23 October's 4-0 win over Athletic Bilbao. Xavi's side had chances to increase their lead further

with Lewandowski hitting the crossbar. The Poland striker has scored 15 goals in his first 19 La Liga appearances - with only Cristiano Ronaldo, in 17 games in 2009-10, reaching that total in fewer matches since the turn of the century. Barcelona, whose nearest title rivals Real Madrid beat Osasuna 2-0 on Saturday, have won their past seven La Liga games and are unbeaten in 13. Their remarkable defensive record continues too with a 17th clean sheet of the league season, a record after 22 La Liga games (passing Deportivo de La Coruna's 16 in 1993-94). Cadiz, who had two Roger goals disallowed, remain two points above the relegation zone.



## In brief

### IRSA releases 107,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 107,100 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 63,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1472.08 feet and was 74.08 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 18,700 cusecs, while the outflow as 50,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1118.10 feet, which was 68.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded 17,400 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 57,800, 46,000, 28,300 and 5,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 14,800 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 4,300 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

### ICT admin to set-up 12 Ramadan bazaars

ISLAMABAD (APP): District administration Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) is finalizing arrangements to set up 12 Ramadan bazaars for an uninterrupted supply of household items and edibles for the citizens at reasonable prices in the holy month of Ramadan. While chairing a meeting, Deputy Commissioner ICT Irfan Nawaz Memon said that all-out efforts would be made to provide relief to the people during Ramadan. He directed officials to ensure availability of all essential commodities on affordable rates during the holy month. Memon said that fair-price shops would also be set up, administration would keep an eye to control adulteration, profiteering and back marketing of essential commodities, he added. Additional Deputy Commissioner Shahryar Arif, officials of Municipal Administration (DMA), Assistant Commissioners and other stakeholders attended the meeting.

### Rain, hailstorm turns weather cold

ISLAMABAD (APP): Light rain accompanied with hailstorm lashed different parts of the federal capital on Monday and turned the weather cold. The rain and hailstorm started at day time and continued for a while bringing the temperatures down by a few notches. The cold weather after rain reminded the people not to plan packing their warm stuff, blankets and quilts due to unpredictable weather conditions. Along with rain, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has warned of unusually hot and dry weather to persist in the southern regions of the country. According to the synoptic situation, a shallow westerly wave was affecting upper parts of the country and may persist till next 24 hours. On Monday, mainly dry weather is expected in most parts of the country, while cold in upper parts. While light rain-wind/thunderstorm/snowfall is expected at isolated places in Chitral, Dir, Kohistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir. During the last 24 hours, mainly dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country, while cold/partly cloudy in upper parts. However, rain-wind/thunderstorm occurred in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Potohar region.



ISLAMABAD: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Country Representative in Pakistan Dr. Luay Shabaneh called on Federal Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada.

## Mushaal blasts world's callous approach towards smoldering Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson of Peace and Culture Organization, Mushaal Hussein Mullick lashed out at the international community and UN for adopting a "deaf and dumb approach" towards shouldering Kashmir, which, she said, they can't even hear the heartbreaking pleas of Kashmiri little daughters demanding release of their fathers illegally detained in Indian jails for years.

In a statement on Monday, she said that several families from Baramulla district along with their children protested at Srinagar's press colony against the delay in trials of their kin held in several jails for many years. She said that the innocent daughters of incarcerated Kashmiri fathers were demanding release on a fast-track basis with eyes full of tears since they are cognisant of the brutal treatment being meted out by the fascist Indian government against their fathers.

The Hurriyat leader stated that the notorious Indian government was brazenly violating the fundamental rights of Kashmiri people and unleashed state terrorism in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) but the so-called civilized world "sewed their lips" on

the world's worst human rights abuses in the occupied valley. Mushaal said that a little girl, who did not see her father for the past five years, was crying seeking to meet her jailed father. The chairperson urged that world powers and human rights organisations should listen to the pleas of the innocent souls who wanted the release of their fathers incarcerated in Indian jails in fake politically-motivated cases.

She said that like other Kashmiri daughters, Raziya Sultana had not seen her father for almost 9 years and demanded several times to the UN bodies to ensure her father's release and her meeting but neither the world nor the notorious Modi government paid any attention to her repeated requests. Mushaal urged the world community and UN bodies to ensure the release of the Kashmiri political prisoners including Yasin Malik instantly because they all were put in jails, not for any crime, but only to defuse the flames of the Kashmir freedom struggle. She said that the Kashmir dispute was an international dispute, not an internal matter of India, which was recognized by UN resolutions; hence it should be dealt with and resolved in its historical perspective.

The Hurriyat leader stated that The Guardian also exposed the ugly face of India for not releasing the Bucher Papers on IIOJK, wherein General Roy Bucher advised Nehru to take the Kashmir issue to the UN for a peaceful settlement, but in time the annexation was usurped.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Bucher Papers on Kashmir contained correspondence between Jawaharlal Nehru and General Roy Bucher on Kashmir and the ceasefire.

She said that the promise of independent statehood to Kashmiris was violated and now the fascist Modi government tried to prevent the breach of the promise made to Kashmiris from coming to light. Mushaal went on to say that in 1952, Nehru made a statement in Indian Lok Sabha that Kashmiris were free to decide about their future, and India would not impose its will on Kashmiris at the gunpoint. However, she said that the fascist Indian government did not make the Bucher Papers public because of its possible political and external implications for India, demanding the report should be made public so that the world should know about the reality of the Kashmir dispute.

## ANF seizes over 1679 kg drugs; arrests 34

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan seized 1679.947 kg drugs and 586,800 liters hydrochloric Acid (HCL) worth US\$ 57.941 million internationally, arrested 34 persons including three women, impounded 13 vehicles while conducting 38 counter narcotics operations throughout the country during last week, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday.

He informed that the seized drugs comprised 97.351 kg heroin, 1404.696 kg hashish, 22,600 kg opium, 154.150 kg methamphetamine (Ice), one kg crystal and 0.150 kg weed.

ANF Balochistan recovered 902 kg drugs and 586,800 liters hydrochloric acid (HCL) in nine operations and impounded a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised 70 kg heroin, 682 kg hashish and 150 kg methamphetamine (Ice). ANF Punjab recovered 13,393 kg drugs in three operations while arrested three persons involved in drugs smuggling and impounded a vehicle.

The seized drugs comprised 9,593 kg heroin, 1,800 kg hashish and two kg methamphetamine (Ice).

ANF KPK recovered 621.059 kg drugs in seven operations while arrested

five persons involved in drugs smuggling and impounded two vehicles.

The seized drugs comprised 621.059 kg hashish. ANF Sindh recovered 19,918 kg drugs in six operations while arrested 11 persons including a woman involved in drugs smuggling and impounded four vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 0.868 kg heroin, 16 kg hashish, 1,900 kg methamphetamine (Ice), 0.150 kg weed and one kg crystal. ANF North recovered 123,577 kg drugs in 13 operations, arrested 15 persons including two women in drugs smuggling and impounded five vehicles.

## Admin foils 10 bids to smuggle 4595 wheat bags

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police here on Monday foiled 10 bids to smuggle 4595 wheat and flour bags.

According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities of the food department along with Potohar Division police conducted raids in different areas and rounded up 10 drivers namely Akram, Irfan, Bilal, Ahsan, Irfan, Sabaz Ali, Islam, Saminullah, Shakeel and Shah Nawaz and recovered 3395 flour and 1200 wheat bags. He informed that the accused were trying to illegally ship out wheat flour bags out of the Rawalpindi division. The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi were strictly monitoring all the exit points of Rawalpindi district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids, he added.

He said, 25 bids were foiled during the last three days and teams recovered 15,430 wheat, flour and fine flour (maida) bags from the possession of the arrested accused.

## Shazia calls for steps to ensure transgenders' inclusion in mainstream

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme, Shazia Marri Monday called for taking steps to ensure transgenders' inclusion in the mainstream. She was addressing a conference arranged by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), via Zoom-link in Islamabad today.

The conference was arranged under the title "Financial Inclusion among Transgender Community in Pakistan."

She said financial empowerment of the transgender community, awareness for them among the masses, and acceptance in society are the issues being faced by vulnerable and marginalized segments, particularly the transgender community of Pakistan.

Shazia Marri lauded the socio-economic contribution of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in upbringing this marginalized and vulnerable society of Pakistan and awareness of their rights.

She also commended the role played by transgender community leaders Ms. Bindiya Rana and Ms. Reem Sharif in highlighting the issues being faced by their community.

She called upon Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, to arrange more seminars on the topic in order to highlight the issue.

While talking about the role of society, she said, it is our duty to sensitize people about the hardships being faced by the transgender community in Pakistan. They have come a long way in their struggle, she continued.

She, however, noted with concern that there are

still areas in Pakistan where atrocities are being meted out to the transgender community. She expressed her utmost desire to see the transgender community's inclusion in the mainstream.

Shazia Marri apprised the participants that Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has started financial assistance to transgenders through cash disbursement under Benazir Kafaalat.

Transgender persons are now eligible for Rs. 7000 quarterly cash assistance, she continued and urged the community to take benefit from the scheme and visit the nearest BISP Tehsil office, along with CNIC, for registration. She highlighted the Hybrid Social Protection Scheme of BISP and said that BISP has proved itself as a successful model in uplifting the socio-economic conditions of women in Pakistan.

## Golden jubilee celebrations of Senate to be commemorated with simplicity

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high level committee on Monday decided to commemorate the golden jubilee celebrations of the upper house of the parliament with simplicity due to the current economic crunch. Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani presided over the meeting of the committee tasked to finalize Senate Golden Jubilee celebrations.

The committee reviewed the progress towards the events and made sure that the celebrations would remain simple.

The Senate Golden Jubilee Celebrations would be a momentous event that highlights the Senate's significant achievements over the past 50 years.

It is an opportunity to reflect on the institution's rich history and to look forward to the future with renewed enthusiasm and hope. A special Senate session has already been summoned from March 15 to

17, 2023. It will be attended by the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan.

The session will also be graced by former senators, governors, and chief ministers of the provinces. Former senators and foreign dignitaries will address the special Senate Session.

The future road map of the Senate for the next 50 years will be shared, outlining the vision and goals for the country's legislative body. In addition, a commemorative stamp and coin will be issued to mark the occasion, and a special anthem commemorating the Golden Jubilee of the Senate will be released. It has also been decided to release a short documentary about the Senate of Pakistan. Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, personally visited the venue and corridors of Parliament House building to review the arrangements.

## IG presents report on Kallar Kahar tragedy to minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of National Highways and Motorway Police Khalid Mahmood on Monday presented a report to Federal Minister for Communications Asad Mehmood regarding the tragic incident that occurred in Kallar Kahar, which claimed the lives of 14 individuals and left dozens more injured. The reason for the accident was the brake failure of a bus that collided with three other vehicles in Kallar Kahar. The deceased included women and children, while 11 individuals suffered serious injuries and 31 others sustained minor injuries.

Upon receiving the report, the minister, on the instructions of the prime minister, ordered that the injured be provided with the best medical aid available. IG Khalid Mahmood, personally supervised the rescue operation. The injured were transported to Trauma Center Kallar Kahar by FWO and Rescue 1122 ambulances, while the bus involved in the accident was handed over to the police concerned for further legal action.

## HEC to launch induction for 5th batch of Allama Iqbal Scholarships on Feb 24

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC), Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed on Monday announced the launching of induction for the 5th batch of Allama Iqbal Scholarships for Sri Lanka Students in February 24 during the Pakistan Higher Education Expo in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan students aspiring to study in Pakistan under this scholarship programme will be able to apply online, he underlined during a welcome ceremony held in honour of the Sri Lankan students studying in Pakistani universities under Allama Iqbal Scholarships.

He said that 350 fully-

funded scholarships have already been awarded to Sri Lankan students who are studying in top Pakistani universities. Addressing the students, Tessori shed light on the importance of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. He urged the universities to extend maximum facilities to international students. He advised the students to learn about the Pakistani languages and culture and take back good memories of Pakistan with them. The Consul General of Sri Lanka to Pakistan thanked the Government of Pakistan for extending strong support to Sri Lankan students.

He said that 350 fully-



ISLAMABAD: Students from Cadet College Mastung (Balochistan), visiting Senate Museum at Parliament House.

#### Book exhibition held

KABUL (Agencies): To promote the culture of reading books and replace urban places with a better environment the Kabul Municipality held a book exhibition in Pul-e-Sokhta in Kabul where the site was used by drug addicts for decades. There has been a positive change in the location and many youths are interested in spending their time reading books in this urban place, said an official of Kabul Municipality, Rafiullah Ahmadzai.

## The Frontier Post

Rajab 29, 1444 — Tuesday, February 21, 2023

#### Severe cold took two lives

GHOR (Agencies): Two children died due to the cold weather. These seven- and nine-year-old children died in Firuzkoh city, due to rains and cold weather. According to reports, despite the cold weather and snow-fall, these children wanted to go from one village to another village, said Ghor governor's spokesman Sheikh Abdul Wahid Hamas. The incident take place while the people of Ghor are experiencing the coldest winter this year.

# Afghan govt to turn former military bases into economic zones

KABUL (Khaama Press): The acting deputy Prime minister for economic affairs, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, said in a statement on Sunday that the Taliban government will proceed with plans to convert former foreign military bases into special economic zones in the country. "It was decided that the Ministry of Industry and Commerce should progressively take control of the remaining military bases of the foreign forces to convert them into special economic zones," Mullah

Baradar said.

He added that the project would begin from the capital city Kabul and the northern Balkh province and expands to other parts of the country.

In August 2021, the United States and its allies withdrew their troops from Afghanistan, leaving the military bases in place.

After the foreign troop's withdrawal, the Taliban-led government took control of power in the country. Still, the international community has not recognized the Taliban government.

This led to the deepening economic and humanitarian crisis in the country.

Recently, China has shown interest in taking the initiative and investing in the country. On the other hand, China wants to connect Afghanistan via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPAC), which is part of the One Belt One Road Initiative (BRI).

Therefore, the de facto government in Afghanistan would like to take this initiative to strengthen regional cooperation and the region's economy.

Meanwhile, there have been several significant challenges to implementing economic projects in the country. Among them, security and stability are the most critical challenges for the current regime in the country.

On the other hand, the international community has their conditions to recognize the Taliban government; including inclusive government, respecting women's rights, and women's education and work are the most important things yet to be realized.

## IEA leader warns of enemy propaganda

KABUL (TOLONews): The leader of the Islamic Emirate in a meeting with religious clerics, provincial governors, and other military officials said that the enemy has failed in the military field, but in the propaganda field, they are still trying to make people distrust the Islamic system.

Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, said that Mawlawi Hebatullah Akhundzada in the meeting emphasized that officials and the nation should be alert against the conspiracies and goals of the enemy.

"The Islamic Emirate talked of challenges facing the Islamic Emirate by those who want to destroy our system," said Zabiullah Mujahid.

Meanwhile, political analysts said that officials of the Islamic Emirate should take these recommendations seriously.

"Officials should take care of their work and avoid (favoring) relationships in hiring employees," said Aziz Miraj, a political analyst.

Officials and religious leaders of the province shared their problems with the leader of the Islamic Emirate.

## Aid distribution starts in Kunra

KUNAR (Agencies): Local officials of Kunar says that humanitarian aid distribution process to 650 families started Monday in Kunar.

The aids will be distributed to needy families for six months by the OCHA program in Ghaziabad district, said an official at the Kunar Natural Disasters Management department.

Each family will receive 150kg of flour, 13kg of lentils, and 12 liters of nutritious oil for children, and salt for at least six months.

Meanwhile, Haji Mohammad Anwar Charity Foundation distributed food and non-food items to 750 displaced families in Abu Djanee camp in Kunar.

The World Food Programme (WFP) distributed cash aid to 2,150 needy families in Ahmadabad district of Paktia.

Each family received 4,300 Afghanis and the series of distribution of these humanitarian aid will continue for two months.

## Transfusion procedure successfully done on a baby

BALKH (Agencies): For the first time, 20 double-volume exchange transfusion procedures were successfully performed on a baby in Balkh in Abu Ali Sina Hospital.

For the first time the medical specialists in the northern region of the country have performed these procedures, said the Ministry of Public Health.

The Double Volume Exchange Transfusion is usually done to remove bilirubin and antibodies, increase blood circulation, replace 85% of blood, and prevent hemolytic diseases (a type of anemia caused by hemolysis) in babies.

# Donor organizations suspend fund for 40 COVID-19 hospitals



KABUL (TOLONews): Donor organizations have suspended the budget for at least 40 COVID-19 hospitals in the country over the past 18 months after political developments in the country, the acting minister of public health, Qalandar Ebad, said in an interview with TOLONews.

He said the suspension of the budget and restrictions on health projects have affected health services in the country.

"If we look at agreements, we have contracts with different international organizations until 2024 but there were 40 COVID-19 hospitals in Afghanistan

that the budget has been suspended for them," he added.

Meanwhile, officials from Afghan-Japan Hospital, which mainly provides health services to COVID-19 patients, said they have not been paid for the past five months.

"All staff members of this hospital have not been paid and no one is taking responsibility for this," said Shirin Agha Naseri, a doctor.

"We have not been paid for the past five months but now all staff members have signed a contract based on which they will be paid by WHO," said Inamullah

Rahmati, a doctor.

The acting minister of public health said that they have talked with Pakistani officials about the budget of three hospitals, adding that the Islamic Emirate will find a solution for it if Pakistani did not provide the support.

"If this problem is not resolved, we are considering adding the fund for the three hospitals to the annual budget," said Abbas.

According to him, 40% of health services were provided in the country ahead of the Islamic Emirate, but now, health services are provided throughout the country.

# 100b Afs collected from customs in current year

KABUL (Agencies): The country's Finance Ministry says that in the last 11 months of the current fiscal year, 100 billion Afghanis in revenue has been collected from the country's customs.

The revenue collected is unprecedented in the terms of taxes collection in Afghanistan's customs, said the Ministry adding that in the previous regime, it was 72 billion Afghanis, based on last reports.

Although the customs tariff for food has been reduced by 68% there is still one month left before the end of the fiscal year, the customs revenue has reached 100 billion Afghanis, said the Ministry.

Appointing of professional and committed employees in customs, zero corruption, and complete transparency in affairs termed behind the success in revenue collection by the

Ministry.

According to the Ministry, all the country's customs offices operate twenty-four a day to speed up the trend of commercial goods and to prevent any delays.

The Ministry in its statement reaffirms providing standard facilities to businessmen so that the national customs revenues will be transferred to the government treasury with more transparency.

# Restoration work on Amu Darya starts in Kunduz



KABUL (Agencies): The restoration work on the Amu Darya (River) to recover the damages started on Monday.

The Minister of Energy and Water said at the opening ceremony of this project, that within the framework of this project, two parts of the river will be

maintained, the first of which will be the reconstruction of the areas that are in danger.

The head of the Amu Darya, Engineer Rafiullah Mujtabi said that the reconstruction of the project previously started in Balkh, Jawzjan, and Takhar, and today it was officially start-

ed in Kunduz

Meanwhile, the residents of the Imam Sahib district expressed their happiness about the start of this project.

It must be said that by conducting this project, thousands of acres of land and their houses will be saved from the dangers of flooding and destruction.

## Authorities close shops for taking foreign currency



URUZGAN (TOLONews): Shops in Uruzgan province were closed by Islamic Emirate forces due to their usage of Pakistani rupees.

Officials of the commit-

tee for Afghani Promotion said that the usage of foreign currency has been banned in this province and will deal legally with violators.

"We will keep this process going until people in this province use afghanis completely," said Yosif, a member of the committee for Afghani

Promotion.

Meanwhile, some residents in the province welcomed the decision and called for the lack of Afghan banknotes in the markets to be addressed.

"People come to our shop and use rupees for their daily shopping, if we ask for Afghani they go to another shop," said Ihsanullah, a shopkeeper.

"People even don't know the afghani, they don't know the difference between 20 afghani and 100 Afghani," said Rahmatullah, a shopkeeper.

"We call on the government to not force people into this, and they will know our national Identity slowly," said Sher Mohammad, another resident.

Uruzgan has used Pakistani rupees for many years, but recent efforts to popularize Afghan currency have increased.

# Ten female FMs condemn restrictions on Afghan women

KABUL (TOLONews): Ten female foreign ministers who attended the 59th Munich Security Conference in a statement condemned the imposition of restrictions on women and girls in Afghanistan.

The statement was issued by the foreign ministers of Slovenia, Germany, Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Belgium, Andorra, Albania, Mongolia and Libya.

"We strongly condemn the Taliban's push to exclude women from all public life: women are kept from strolling in parks, are

not seen on TV screens anymore, are deprived of their right to attend schools and universities, and are now also kept from working in humanitarian assistance," the statement reads.

But the IE's spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said the rights of all women are observed within an Islamic framework. "The rights of women have not been violated in the Islamic community. Their rights have been addressed. The life of women is secured and protected. Their problems are solved by the court.

Regarding their activities, there is a need for an environment within Sharia laws and work on it is underway," he said.

The statement added that the restrictions on women will "restore the basis to deliver the help that the women, children and men of Afghanistan so urgently need." "With these restrictions, Afghanistan has been isolated in a world with is like a village now," said, Suraya Paikan, a women's rights activist.

"In consultation with the nation, the issue should be

solved soon so that it can find national and international legitimacy and also gains support," said Roh Gul Afghan, a women's rights activist. The three-day Munich Security Conference was held in Germany where many world leaders participated.

There was no representative of the Islamic Emirate at the conference. Mabouba Saraj, an Afghan women's rights activist and Husna Jalil, former deputy minister of interior remotely attended a debate on Afghanistan at the conference.

# Media faces economic challenges

B A D A K H S H A N (TOLONews): Officials of private media outlets in Badakhshan said that after the political changes in the country, they face economic challenges and could not pay their staff salaries.

"After the political changes in the country, the

media security situation is good but the media is faced with economic challenges and are not able to pay staff salaries," said Abdul Basir Hagjo, head of a media outlet in Badakhshan.

"Before we had some commercial income and could pay salaries," said

Najla Sherzai, head of another local media outlet.

Meanwhile, some employees in the private media said that it has been one year that they worked without any salary or little income. "How long have we been working here, we work voluntarily, because

we have not been given a salary," said Hasiba, a media employee.

Meanwhile, local officials in Badakhshan province talked about the efforts aimed at addressing the economic challenges of private media in the province.

"We shared the challenges with officials, and the officials assured us they will build a plan for media income for the next year," said Mazuldden Ahmadi, head of culture and information in Badakhshan. Currently, three media and 11 audio media operate in Badakhshan, of which two media are run by women.

## Kabul Police arrests 3 drug dealers

KABUL (Agencies): Police arrested 3 people on charges of dealing drugs.

The counter-narcotics police of Kabul Police have arrested three people dealing drugs in the last 24 hours, said a statement.

The police recovered 8kg of drugs from the detainees, further said the source.

The detainees are under police investigation and their dossier will be sent to judicial bodies for further investigations, the source added.

# Most fish farms built in past decade in Balkh province closed

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): More than 46 fish farms were built in northern Balkh province during the past decade, but currently only 15 of them are functioning and the rest have been closed.

The reasons behind the closure of the majority of fish farms include high prices of fish feed, drought and government apathy.

Dost Mohammad, a fish farm owner in Samarqandian area of Balkh province, told Pajhwok Afghan News that when he first established his farm

four years ago the then government provided 800 baby fishes to him and then he was forgotten.

He said during the past four years he earned no profit from the farm and still he could not afford to buy feed for the fishes.

Dost Mohammad asked the government to support fish farmers so that they could supply quality fish meat to the market.

Sher Ahmad, another fish farmer, told Pajhwok many fish farms were operational in Balkh in the past, but most of them were

closed due to increased because of fish feed and government's apathy.

Mohammad Hashim, another farm owner, expressed similar views and said if the government did not extend its support, the remaining fish farms will also be closed.

He said: "Fish feed is expensive, we have no income from our farm, why should we suffer losses, we need to close the farm".

Balkh Agriculture and Livestock Department officials admit the problems being faced by fish farmers.

Mohammad Waki Niazi, farming specialist at the department confirmed to Pajhwok that 46 fish farms had been created in Balkh province during the past decade.

But 31 of the farms were closed due to high feed prices, drought and a kind of disease, he added.

However, he said they were trying to solve the problems of fish farmers in cooperation with aid agencies. Besides Balkh, many fish farms have been closed in Kandahar and Nangarhar provinces.



KUNDUZ (Agencies): Dozens of drug addicts after receiving medical treatment returned to their homes in Kunduz. The drug addicts were under treatment for two months in the addicts' camp in the province of Kunduz.

The provincial head of the drug addicts camp of the Kunduz Police, Mawlawi Mohammad Yunus said that currently, two hundred drug addicts are under treatment in the 80-bed hospital, adding that five hundred

drug addicts have received medical in this treatment center so far.

Meanwhile, the Kunduz police have intensified their efforts to gather drug addicts and transport them to the hospital for treatment.

# NA unanimously approves much-needed mini-budget

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The National Assembly Monday unanimously approved the government's much-needed Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2023 or 'mini-budget' — a move mandatory for seeking \$1.1 billion tranche of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan.

The mini-budget's approval comes as the government continues its talks with the IMF, the international lender, while adhering to its conditions to help cushion Pakistan's dwindling economy. The bill increases sales tax from 17 to 25 percent on imports ranging from cars and household appliances to chocolates and cosmetics. A general sales tax was raised from 17% to 18%.

People will also have to pay more for business-class air travel, wedding halls, mobile phones, and sunglasses. "The prime minister will also unveil (further) austerity measures in the next few days," Finance Minister Ishaq Dar told the lower house of parliament as the bill was passed, adding "we will have to take difficult decisions". He also added that a few amendments have been made to the bill and assured the members that the coalition government will meet its annual tax target for the FBR.

Excise duty on business class ticket fares for those flying to South America has been fixed at Rs250,000, while duty on business and first class fares for those travelling to Africa and Middle East has been fixed at Rs75,000, Dar said. The senator stated that the excise duty on tickets to European countries is fixed at Rs150,000, while those travelling to Australia, New Zealand and countries in the Asia Pacific on business and first class flights will pay

Rs150,000.

The minister accepted that the people are reeling with sky-high inflation, but also questioned whether the increase was the result of the decisions taken in the last four months — the time since he's taken over the reins of Pakistan's economy. The senator blamed the previous Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-led administration for ruining the country's economic state highlighting the way it backtracked from the IMF agreement. "The previous government violated the economic discipline."

Dar stated that the government is taking all possible steps to ensure economic stability. "We held negotiations with the IMF for 10 days and convinced them to agree on taxes worth Rs170 billion," he added. Before the mini-budget's approval, Dar — while speaking on the floor of the National Assembly — said the government appreciated recommendations by lawmakers for the bill and thanked the house for participating in debate regarding the bill. He also said the government considered recommendations shared by the parliamentarians.

The finance czar further added the government introduced the mini-budget following the IMF's conditions. "We also don't like imposing taxes. We tried keeping a minimum rate of additional taxes." Earlier on Monday, State Minister for Finance Aisha Ghaus Pasha said the Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2023 was likely to be approved today by the NA. The minister added that the government decided to get the mini-budget approved by the lower house today. It should be noted that it was already approved in the Senate by a thin margin.

"Virtual discussions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are ongoing and talks will also take place today," the minister said while speaking to journalists in Islamabad. Pasha hoped for a staff-level agreement to materialise with the IMF soon. "Matters with the IMF are progressing in a positive direction. A further delay in the agreement is unlikely." Dar tabled the bill in the National Assembly and Senate on February 15 with budget proposals presented seeking to fulfil the prerequisites for unlocking the crucial \$1.1 billion IMF loan tranche which will help cushion the country's dwindling economy.

A session of the lower house, to debate over the finance bill, was held on Friday (February 17); however, it was adjourned without voting after a brief debate on the budget proposals. "The NA session has been adjourned to meet again on Monday, the 20th February 2023 at 5:00 pm," it was announced on the official Twitter handle of the lower house.

Dar, while speaking to reporters after the session, said that he expects the bill to be passed in both houses by Monday or Tuesday as Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani has "given us till Friday". Pakistan is in dire need of funds as it battles a wrenching economic crisis as the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)-held foreign exchange reserves barely cover one month of imports. Dar told parliament when tabling the bill this month that the luxury tax would generate an additional Rs170 billion (\$650 million). "These are the items which are widely used by the rich class," he said, adding it would "put minimum burden on the common man".

## Imran writes letter to CJP over audio leaks

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan has penned a detailed letter to all judges of the Supreme Court, including the Chief Justice of Pakistan on the issue of audio and video leaks. PTI Chairman Imran Khan on Monday wrote a letter to Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial and other Supreme Court judges, and sought "enforcement" of the fundamental rights of the public — including the Constitution's Article 14 (fundamental right to privacy) — in connection with a series of private telephonic conversations of political leaders that have surfaced online over the past few months.

The letter comes days after a phone call of PTI Central Punjab president Dr Yasmin Rashid with the former CCPO Ghulam Mehmood Dogar was released on social media. According to media reports, in a detailed letter, former prime minister Imran Khan has requested the Supreme Court to immediately hear the constitutional petition filed in October last year for hearing and steps should be taken for protection under Article 14. In his letter, Imran Khan also put the eight most important questions before the Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umar Ata Bandial and other judges.

Chairman PTI written that 'suspicious, unverified' audios and videos have been going on for the past several months. These alleged audios and videos are based on conversations between current and former politicians and ordinary people. Mr Khan urged the judiciary to take notice of the development, saying taping conversation was a violation of basic rights.

He said that the Prime Minister's House is undoubtedly the most sensitive house of the state. Matters of national sensitivity are discussed in the Prime Minister's House. The former prime minister said that many former government figures and ordinary people, including him, have been victims of these 'fake leaks'. "Unverified, unauthenticated, edited and tampered leaks" were used to target and silence criticism in the following months. Imran Khan further said that Article 4 of the Constitution gives every person the right to be protected by the law and to be treated according to the law. They are being violated with unjustifiable brazenness.

## PPP writes letter to ECP

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan People's Party on Monday expressed its concerns over delay in the mayor's election in Karachi. Senator Taj Haider, who has been in charge of the central election cell of the PPP, in a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner, has expressed People's Party's concern over delay in the mayor's election in the largest city of Pakistan.

"It is not justified to halt 250 members of the city council from electing mayor due to deferred election on 11 seats," Taj Haider argued in the letter to CEC. He demanded of the ECP to hold the mayor's election without any delay. Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman had earlier demanded the ECP to announce the schedule for elections on the remaining 11 union committees (UCs) in Karachi.



KYIV: Joe Biden shaking hands before a meeting, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine.

# Govt deny provision of funds: ECP informs PHC

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has adjourned hearing in petitions seeking holding of election within 90 days till tomorrow (on Wednesday) filed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), on Monday.

During hearing Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javeed, Imran Khan lawyer Qazi Muhammad Anwar, counsel for PTI's members Shumail Ahmad Butt and Moazzam Butt Advocates While Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) lawyer Mohsin Kamran appeared before court.

Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Amir Javeed presented a notification before the court and said that a cabinet meeting has been called on Tuesday that would review the conduct of election on provincial assembly seats. He informed the court that during Tuesday's meeting, the cabinet would take some important decisions and the situation would be made clear.

Advocate General urged the court that till the outcome of the cabinet meeting, the hearing may be postponed. The Advocate General further informed the court that Governor Hajji Ghulam Ali has submitted his written response in this regard. In Tuesday's meeting, the AG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said all the stakeholders would be invited to take their point of view on the election.

However, PTI's counsel Shumail

Ahmad Butt Advocate argued that Constitution didn't provide opportunities to Governor for consultation but placing responsibility for scheduling elections within 90 days. Justice Arshad Ali observed that federal government may act accordingly in provision of security due to deteriorating conditions of law and order situations. He inquired from PTI's counsel that President can may play role to bring together all stakeholders in such circumstances?

PTI's counsel Shumail Butt advocate argued ECP has turnaround President of Pakistan letter in this regard and demanding Rs60 billion for holding elections. He argued that during 2018 election Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police standing personnel was 75 thousand which now increased upto one lakh and 30 thousand and ECP claims shortage of security personnel.

PHC has inquired from ECP's lawyer Mohsin Kamran regarding denial from provision of fund to the commission. ECP lawyer informed that government has denied from provision of funds and security agencies from provision of security. Justice Ishtiaq remarked that the security agencies and all other departments concerned were bound to cooperate with the Election Commission in holding free and fair elections on provincial assembly seats. The divisional of PHC comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibraim and Justice Syed Arshad Ali adjourned the hearing till tomorrow 22nd February (Wednesday).

# New leadership has put 'full stop' on Imran's policy: FM

KARACHI (Agencies): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said on Sunday that new military and civilian leadership has put a "full stop" on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's policy of "appeasing" terrorists.

Speaking during an interview with the US TV channel CNBC International, Bilawal said that former premier "had negotiated with the terrorists unconditionally". The foreign minister reiterated Pakistan's commitment to counter-terrorism and stated: "We will fight terrorism on our soil. Unless the threats from Afghanistan are not eliminated, the security threat to Pakistan will persist."

With reference to the history of military rule, Bilawal was of the view that "Pakistan's history is not concealed from anyone. For more than half of its past, it has been under military rule." Currently,

Pakistan is going through a transitioning phase, he remarked. Imran Khan was removed through a vote of no-confidence, Bilawal said while underlining the ouster of the recent government, it was for the first time in history that parliament has removed a prime minister through a democratic way. And in this process, neither judiciary nor the military has played its role in the matter, he added.

The foreign minister said that former army chief Gen (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa had admitted in the public — while in office — regarding the intervention of the military in politics throughout history. "If the military says it wants to change its controversial conduct constitutionally, it should be welcomed", Bilawal said.

The PPP chairman told CNBC that "our opposition thinks that the military should play its role in politics. "They want the mili-

tary to help them bring them back to power." "I would encourage Imran Khan to take the democratic course. If he brings a change in his political conduct then he will have a future in politics. Unfortunately, Imran Khan does not seem to alter his course," the foreign minister stated.

While responding to a question regarding the statement about Pakistan's bankruptcy made by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, Bilawal said: "He was talking in a political context at a political gathering and he was referring to the harsh economic times rather than speaking technically. He was talking in the overall context of the country." On the recent floods in the country, Bilawal said that five million acres of standing crops were destroyed, which had caused a loss of a huge chunk of Pakistan's GDP leaving the country in extreme difficulty.

## Alvi: Women role in economic activities vital

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Monday called upon chambers of commerce and industry to include women at all levels of economic activity as part of efforts to boost the nation's economy. Speaking at a ceremony organized by Rawalpindi Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries here, he said he was continuously urging chambers of commerce to create opportunities for women to run businesses and become leaders in industry.

Women should be encouraged to play their part in all aspects of social, political and economic endeavours, he said adding women should be helped to move to upper echelons of the decision making bodies including Parliament and business organizations. Before the industrial revolution, he said small and medium businesses were the foundation of a human society, adding after the advent of electricity and steam engine the large industry was established.

He said in the western world majority of the businesses were small and medium sized while in Pakistan the percentage was 70 percent of the economy. Economies like China moved ahead economically on the basis of their cottage industry which was the mainstay of their supply chains for all kinds of goods, he maintained.

He also cited the example of India, where in the city of Jaipur, 35,000 women worked in the diamond cutting industry and were able to process and refine the diamonds after short duration training. The President emphasized the need to develop skill sets of people especially of those who were deprived of education. By developing different skill sets, people would be able to earn their living and take part in the economic development of the country, he noted.

## Provincial assemblies' election Tarar: President has no jurisdiction to announce date

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar Monday said President Dr Arif Alvi could announce the date for the election of the National Assembly and not that of the provincial assemblies after their dissolution.

He had no constitutional jurisdiction to announce the date for the elections of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies, and thus he had violated the Constitution, the minister said while speaking in the National Assembly. He said Article 48 (5) of the Constitution allowed the president to announce the date for the election of the National Assembly after it was dissolved by him.

Article 48 (5) says: "Where the president dissolves the National Assembly, notwithstanding anything contained in clause (1), he shall appoint a date, not later than ninety days from the date of the dissolution, for the holding of a general election to the Assembly and appoint a care-taker cabinet." Azam Tarar said, "Article 105 (3) allows the governor to announce the date for holding the election to respective provincial assembly if he has dissolved that assembly."

The Article 105 (3) says: "Where the governor dissolves the provincial assembly, notwithstanding anything contained in clause (1), he shall appoint a date, not later than ninety days from the date of dissolution, for the holding of a general election to the assembly and (b) appoint a care-taker cabinet." The minister said the Punjab Assembly was not dissolved by the governor, rather it stood dissolved after 48 hours of the advice given by the chief minister. The governor had refused to sign the advice.

Moreover, the president could not fix the election date as the matter was sub-judice, he maintained. As per Article 218 (3), he said, it was the responsibility of the Election Commission of Pakistan to conduct the elections. Article 218 (3) reads: "It shall be the duty of the Election Commission to organize and conduct the election and to make such arrangements as are necessary to ensure that the election is conducted honestly, justly, fairly and in accordance with law, and that corrupt practices are guarded against."

The minister said those talking about upholding the Constitution had themselves violated the Constitution in the past also. The National Assembly was dissolved within three minutes by the president after the ruling of the former deputy speaker, which was later set aside by the apex court, he added. He recalled that the president had even refused to administer the oath to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Earlier speaking in the House, Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif said, "The president's announcement of the election date for the provincial assemblies is unconstitutional, and the law will take its course in this regard." He alleged that President Alvi was "toeing his party's line". According to the Constitution, the president could announce the election date for the National Assembly not that for the provincial assemblies, he added.

National Democratic Movement's Mohsin Dawar lamented that such a situation would not have arisen had the incumbent government had taken those taking unconstitutional measures during the no-confidence motion, to the task. Pakistan Peoples Party's Syed Agha Rafiullah said the president had overstepped his constitutional domain. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's Chaudhry Muhammad Barjees Tahir proposed the House to pass a resolution against presidential move. Meanwhile, taking part in the budget debate, Jamaat-e-Islami's Abdul Akbar Chitrali said the increase in the general sales tax rate would push more people below the poverty line.

He said Pakistan could only be put on the road to progress and prosperity if it came out of the International Monetary Fund's debt trap. He urged all the political leadership to deposit at least 50 percent of their wealth in the national exchequer to steer the country out of prevailing economic crisis. Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal's Syed Mehmood Shah urged the chair to give his ruling for extending the duration of electricity supply from two hours to six hours for the farmers of Balochistan. He pointed out that Urea and other agri inputs were being exported to neighboring country illegally. PTI's Nasir Khan Musazai said the supplementary budget would rise inflation in the country. Sardar Riaz Mehmood Khan Mazari and Nuzhat Pathan of the PTI also spoke on the budget.

**Announcing elections date ECP's mandate:** Adviser to the Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira on Monday said only the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has the constitutional authority to announce the date of the elections.

Talking to a private media channel, he said the ECP announces date by coordinating with the concerned province on matters such as the availability of missionaries, the provision of funds, and staff. On the question of holding elections, Kaira said the Pakistan Peoples Party was in favour of every decision that would be taken in accordance with the constitution and law.

# Jail filling movement of PTI should start from seniors: Memon

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, while commenting on PTI's Jail filling movement, has said: every good work starts with the elders and seniors, and added President Arif Alvi should present himself for arrest first in the jail filling movement. He expressed these views while answering the questions of journalists on Jail filling movement of PTI at a press conference held at Sindh Archives on Monday.

He said that President's House is being used and President Arif Alvi is working as a member of PTI's Tiger Force. He said that President Arif Alvi pardoned the capital sentences of terrorists involved in serious crimes by using his presidential powers. The provincial minister said that every sane person could guess the consequences when terrorists were released in that way. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that President Arif Alvi's son is involved in the campaign against the country on social media.

He said that Imran Khan has become a blue eyed who being facilitate unprecedentedly. Even dons could not get this kind of favours through out the world. He added that courts are

waiting for Imran Khan for appearance. The provincial minister asked who paved the way for terrorists to operate in the country. Which government had released them? He said that he was in power in Khyber Pakhtoonkhaw when the Army Public School tragedy happened. He remarked who was in power when terrorists beating drums had attacked Bannu Jail and freed their accomplices involved in serious crimes.

The Sindh government has decided to launch massive action against the unregistered, applied for registration, vehicle with out number plates, fake number plates, tinted glass vehicles and vehicles running on open letters and owners of such vehicles have been given a week's time, other wise from February 28, all such vehicles will be confiscated. Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon along with Excise and Taxation Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla and Chief Minister Sindh's Adviser on Law Barrister Murtaza Wahab announced following the meeting chaired by Chief Minister Sindh.

The minister said that this non-stop campaign will be started after a week and nobody will be given any relax-

ation. He said that no showroom owner have authority to sale any unregistered vehicle. Whoever sells an unregistered vehicle and if such vehicle is used in any crime, the showroom owner will also be held liable for the crime. He said that after the attack on the Karachi Police Office on Friday, the Sindh government has taken important decisions and it has been decided to make SOPs for tackling such emergency situation in future. He said that such emergency situation, the traffic will be managed in that area. The traffic police will play its role in this, but the public and all other stakeholders are also requested to cooperate fully in this regard. He said that in such a situation, the public will be informed through broadcasting organizations, FM radio and social media, to keep their vehicles in one lane and one lane to be completely kept empty and open for police, law enforcement agencies, ambulances, fire brigades and other related agencies to reach the scene. He said that as soon as the incident happened on Friday, the ambulance service of private welfare organizations parked their vehicles in front. He said that we appreciate their spirit. But if 10 vehicles are required while

100 of vehicles are moved ahead. It will block the way and create difficulty for police and law enforcement agencies to proceed and perform their work. He said that now the SOP has been made that after consulting the Deputy Commissioner and SSP of relevant area, the vehicles will be allowed to go ahead in such a situation. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Chief Secretary Sindh will convene a meeting with all private ambulance organizations in this regard. He said that media vehicles also reached the spot to air breaking news. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that breaking news is not important in such a situation. He pointed out that some channels aired that ten terrorists are inside the compound which diverted the attention of police and security agencies. He said that on such an occasion the media needs to work with more responsibly and attentively and should proceed with consultation of administration. In this regard, he said that PEMRA will also be consulted. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that after one week no one will be allowed to display weapons, those displaying weapons will be arrested and FIR will be registered against them. He said that no one

will be spared in the campaign no matter how influential he is. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that no concession will be given to government ministers, advisors, members of assemblies and opposition party members. He clarified that only police, rangers and other law enforcement personnel will be allowed to carry weapons in uniform, no official without uniform will be allowed to carry weapons. He said that even guards of private security agency will not have the authority to display weapons in uniform. If a person is found to be involved in the display of weapons, he will face the law. He said that the media should support the government in this campaign and if anyone displays weapons anywhere, it should be pointed out. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that citizens should keep an eye in their neighborhoods and report suspicious activities to Helpline 15. He said that if someone is renting a house, shop and car, he should share the information with area police station which mandatory for everyone under law.

The provincial minister said that private vehicles resembling police and security agencies will also be confiscated. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that

all these laws are already in enforcement, they will be strictly implemented. Adviser to Chief Minister Sindh on Law Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that constitution is a social contract between the state and the people.

Like the government, the people also have the responsibility to play their role in implementing them. He said that all these laws exist, they are not implemented. He said that the government faced lots of hindrances in responding to Friday terrorist attack on Karachi Police Office. He added that Rapid response is required in such an emergency situation. He said that the first injured in this incident was a volunteer of a welfare organization who was rushed to the hospital. He said that no one should come forward in such a situation without the permission of district administration so that the security agencies can work in better way. He said that during the operation against the terrorists, it was being told on the TV channels that the snipers had reached the particular building and this information could be misused by the terrorist. The facilitator of terrorists who are sitting far away can give these messages to terrorists through mobile phones.