

Police arrest 4 terrorists

PESHAWAR (APP):Swabi Police arrested four terrorists and recovered weapons of different bores from their possession to save districts from destruction. Addressing a joint press conference, Regional Police Officer (RPO) Mardan Mohammad Ali Khan and District Police Officer (DPO) Swabi, Captain (Retd) Najmul Hussnain told media on Sunday.

@thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX

No. 21

Regd. No. 241

Rajab 14 1444 -- MONDAY, FEBRUARY 06 2023

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

Price. 20

# PM for further unity to infuse vigour, strength to Kashmir cause

MUZAFFARABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday stressed upon forging of unity and solidarity by shunning all the political differences which would further infuse vigour and strength to the Kashmir cause.

Addressing a special session of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly (AJKL) on the occasion of 'Kashmir Solidarity Day', the prime minister said the Founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had declared Kashmir as 'a jugular vein of Pakistan'.

The prime minister said that divisions were apparent in the society which were regrettable, but in Muzaffarabad, AJK and Pakistan, all the political parties, their leadership and the assembly members were in unison which

reflected the national unity, harmony and solidarity that certainly perturbed India.

"When a society moves with unity, its goals are achieved, giving it further power and strength," he observed. The prime minister said that the entire 220 million Pakistani nation and the Kashmiris, on the day, gave a clear message of national unity.

In Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), for the last 75 years, he said, the blood of innocent Kashmiris was spilled mercilessly. The prime minister referred to one of the gory incidents in IIOJK in which a little kid was seen sitting on the chest of his slain grandfather with melancholic looks.

The whole world witnessed the heart-wrenching spectacle, he said, adding thousands of Kashmiri

Muslims had been subjected to cruelties and brutalities unleashed by Indian occupation forces while thousands were martyred.

He recalled that in 2019, Prime Minister Modi had deprived the IIOJK of its special status, turning the whole occupied valley into an open jail. The prime minister said that the barbaric and inhuman treatment of Kashmiri people would not last for long, as the mothers, sons and children had given huge sacrifices with valour which would see the light of the day.

The prime minister referred to events in Sudan, North Ireland and East Timor which had been divided on a religious and political basis. In Bosnia, the world's conscience woke up when thousands were killed. Mass graves were unearthed which spoke volume of cruelties.

On one hand, these scenes moved the world while on the other hand, efforts were being made to equate the aggressor with the victims in IIOJK, the prime minister regretted.

Despite all this, the prime minister said the Pakistani people and all the political governments always raised their voice for the Kashmir cause and wholeheartedly supported it as Kashmir was their jugular vein.

He said in 1954, Nehru had made a commitment in Lok Sabha to give Kashmiri people their right to self-determination, but later, it proved as falsehood. The prime minister assured the Kashmiri people that they would always stand in solidarity with them in their struggle for freedom from the illegal Indian occupation. (Continued on Back Page)

## Maryam vows to not spare Imran for 'harming country'

MULTAN (NNI): Asserting it would not be enough to call Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan a 'blunder', Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President and chief organizer Maryam Nawaz said on Sunday that this confession by General (r) Qamar Javed Bajwa was not enough.

Maryam Nawaz, while addressing PML-N Workers Convention in Multan today, said there was a need to, what she called, obliterate a 'stain' on the country's politics and throw him (Imran) out of the political arena.

Maryam told the gathering that she and the entire PML-N leadership were in great pain over inflation in the country. "But everybody knows who is responsible for these skyrocketing prices," she said, adding, "History is a witness to the fact that whenever Nawaz Sharif came to power, he provided relief to masses."

"The prices of items of food items such as flour, ghee and sugar did not increase last time the PML-N was in power, between 2013-2018," she claimed, adding, "It was due to the deal Imran had struck with the IMF that the present government had to raise the prices."

Surprisingly in the same breath, however, Maryam said she would not blame the past government for the current economic situation of the country. "We will pull the country out of the crisis," she expressed the resolve. She claimed that mega development projects had been introduced in Pakistan and inflation went down during the government of former premier Nawaz Sharif. Maryam claimed that the prices of electricity, oil and sugar were not increased during Nawaz Sharif-led government.

She claimed that the flour price was maintained at Rs35 per kilogram during the four-year tenure of Nawaz Sharif. The PML-N VP said that the prices would not rise if the ruler knew the nation's difficulties.

The PML-N stalwart said that Imran destroyed the country during four years of his stint as the country's prime minister. She said that the experiment done by a 'gang of five' proved counterproductive. Maryam said for the first time, the PTI had become a politically 'orphan', and now it had no idea what to do. "It is groping in darkness these days," she said while referring to the retirement of General Faiz Hameed.

Nawaz Sharif, she added, returned

to Pakistan clutching my hand. "But did you see a tear in his eyes? His daughter was arrested right in front of his eyes; did you see a tear in his eyes? I remained in solitary confinement. But did I weep?" she questioned, and ridiculed PTI leaders for raising hue and cry over what she called 'five days of imprisonment'.

PML-N senior vice president said she was proud that her father had spent his time in prison like a 'brave man', and never ever he begged anyone for mercy despite the fact that he was sick.

She said today is Kashmir Solidarity Day and Kashmir will become part of Pakistan one day. She saluted the Kashmiris and their martyrs for the struggle for self-determination. Criticising the PTI's Jail Bharo movement, she said that the former premier kept running the 'Jaib Bharo [Fill the pocket]' movement but now he is ordering his workers to start to fill the jail movement. She said that the PTI chief should be ashamed of selling Toshakhana wristwatches. Maryam slammed Imran Khan for ordering the political workers to fill the jails but he is hiding in Zaman Park's bunker and stood women outside his residence to avoid arrest.

## Kashmir dispute remains key pillar of Pakistan's foreign policy: FM Bilawal

KARACHI (PPI): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has called upon India to end its gross human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and reverse its unilateral and illegal actions of 5 August 2019 including demographic changes.

In his message on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, the

Foreign Minister said India must repeal draconian laws, allow UN-mandated investigations into cases of extrajudicial killings and implement relevant UN Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir.

He said Jammu and Kashmir dispute will remain a key pillar of Pakistan's foreign policy.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar says Pakistan is committed to its unwavering political, moral and diplomatic support to the just struggle of our Kashmiri brethren for their right of self-determination.

In a tweet today, he said right of self-determination for Kashmiris is enshrined in the UN Charter and UN resolutions.

### No amount of atrocities can suppress spirit of Kashmiris: ISPR

RAWALPINDI (PPI): The Pakistan Army pays tribute to the indigenous freedom struggle of brave Kashmiris for their right to self-determination as per the United Nations resolutions and aspirations of people of Kashmir saying no amount of human rights violations and atrocities can suppress the spirit of Kashmiris for freedom, reported on Sunday.

ISPR DG Major General Ahmad Sharif Chaudhry released the message of the leadership of Armed Forces on Kashmir Solidarity Day on the Twitter handle.

He wrote: "CJCS, Services Chiefs & AFs of Pakistan pay tribute to the indigenous freedom struggle of brave Kashmiris for their right to self-determination as per UN resolutions & aspirations of people of Kashmir."

No amount of HRV / atrocities can suppress the spirit of Kashmiris for freedom."

## Iran protests: Protesters among prisoners pardoned by leader

TEHRAN (BBC): Iran's supreme leader has pardoned "tens of thousands" of prisoners, including many linked to anti-government protests.

State media reports the pardons by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei came with conditions.

The pardons come on the eve of the anniversary of the Islamic revolution in 1979.

Demonstrations erupted last September following the death in custody of a woman held by Iran's morality police.

Mahsa Amini, 22, was arrested for allegedly wearing her hijab, or headscarf, "improperly" - in violation of Iran's strict dress code for women.

Authorities have portrayed the protests - which are still continuing - as foreign-backed "riots" and at times have responded with lethal force.

Human rights groups say more than 500 demonstrators have been killed,

including 70 minors, and around 20,000 have been arrested. Iran's state media says Ayatollah Khamenei's latest pardons came after a letter from the head of the judiciary framed many of those detained as young people who'd been led astray by foreign influence and propaganda.

The letter claims that a number of protesters had expressed regret and asked for forgiveness.

But those charged with more serious offences - such as spying for foreign agents, murder or destruction of state property - will not be pardoned.

The measure will also not extend to any dual nationals currently being detained.

Under Article 110 of the Iranian constitution, the country's supreme leader has the authority to issue pardons at the recommendation of the judiciary.

Sadeq Rahimi, the deputy judiciary chief, explained that those

inmates who are qualified to be pardoned must pledge in writing that they regret what they have done otherwise, they will not be freed.

According to a report by the judiciary-affiliated news agency, Mizan, Mr Rahimi said that "for the first time ever" defendants who have not received any final verdict will be also pardoned.

Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights estimates that at least 100 people in detention are facing death sentences. It says that all defendants have been "deprived of the right to access their own lawyer, due process and fair trials".

Four have already been executed for crimes connected to the protests. In January two men were hanged for killing a member of Iran's security forces.

The pair launched an appeal before their deaths, saying they had been tortured.



MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of AJ&K Sardar Tanvir Ilyas, Speaker AJ&K legislative Assembly Chaudhary Anwar Ul Haq and senior Federal Ministers in a group photo at Kashmir Monument, Muzaffarabad.

## Pervez Musharraf passes away in Dubai

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Former president retired General Pervez Musharraf passed away in Dubai on Sunday due to a prolonged rare disease amyloidosis. He was 79.

Pakistan Consulate in Dubai and his family confirmed the death of the former military ruler at American Hospital Dubai. His family has filed an application in Pakistani Consulate in Dubai for shifting the body of Musharraf. Musharraf had been suffering from amyloidosis, a rare disease caused by a build-up of an abnormal protein called amyloid in organs and tissues throughout the body. The former general was admitted to the American Hospital Dubai for treatment. He was also admitted to Dubai hospitals more than once in the past. In a statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) expressed heartfelt condolences over the sad demise of former army chief. "May Allah bless the departed soul and give strength to bereaved family," the military's media wing said. In a series of tweets, Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani expressed deep sorrow over the former president's death.

The former army chief held a number of appointments in the artillery, the infantry, and commando units and also taught at the Staff College in Quetta and in the War Wing of the National Defence College. He fought in Pakistan's 1965 and 1971 wars with India. The then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif appointed Gen Musharraf head of the armed forces in October 1998.

On October 12, 1999, while Musharraf was out of the country, Sharif dismissed him and tried to prevent the plane carrying Musharraf home from landing at the Karachi airport. The armed forces, however,



took control of the airport and other government installations and deposed Sharif, paving the way for Musharraf to become head of a military government. Although he was generally considered to hold moderate views and promised an eventual return to civilian rule, Musharraf suspended the constitution and dissolved parliament. He formed the National Security Council, made up of civilian and military appointees, to run Pakistan in the interim.

Following a movement led by the political parties, Musharraf resigned as the president on August 18, 2008. On March 30, 2014, Musharraf was indicted for suspending the Constitution on November 3, 2007. On December 17, 2019, a special court handed Musharraf death sentence in the high treason case against him. The former military ruler left the country in March 2016 for Dubai to seek medical treatment and didn't return to Pakistan since.

**President, PM express condolences over death of Pervez Musharraf:** President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed

their condolences over death of former president Gen. (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf. The president also expressed condolence with the bereaved family, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

The president and prime minister also prayed for the high ranks of the departed soul and for the bereaved family to bear the loss with fortitude.

The former president passed away in Dubai on Sunday morning where he was hospitalized due to a rare disease called amyloidosis.

**Air Chief grieved over demise of Gen (Retd) Pervez Musharraf:** Chief of the Air Staff Pakistan Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu has expressed deep grief and sorrow over the sad demise of former President General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf.

In a condolence message on Sunday, the Air Chief expressed heartfelt condolence over death of former Army Chief and President who passed away in American Hospital at Dubai. Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu prayed for the departed soul to rest in eternal peace and courage for the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss with fortitude.

**Nawaz Sharif condoles Pervez Musharraf's death:** Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif condoled on Sunday the death of former president Gen (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf. Mr Sharif took to Twitter to express his condolences on the death of Mr Musharraf. Meanwhile, President Dr Arif Alvi also expressed his condolences on Mr Musharraf's death. He also prayed for the high ranks of the departed soul and for the bereaved family to bear the loss with fortitude.

## 'Jail Bharo' movement PTI finalises lists of workers

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has finalised lists of the workers, who will voluntarily surrender for the 'Jail Bharo' movement

announced by former prime minister Imran Khan.

PTI has kicked off preparations for the 'Jail Bharo' movement and the regional and district level bodies have been assigned targets, the sources said.

On the call of Imran Khan, 500 workers will surrender from every

provincial constituency of the country. The sources said the PTI has devised a three-phase strategy for the 'Jail Bharo' movement.

In the first phase, central leaders and the parliament members will surrender and in the second phase, 500 workers will surrender from every provincial constituency. In the final phase, the general public and PTI voters will surrender themselves for the 'Jail Bharo' movement. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)

## 5 wounded in explosion

QUETTA (Monitoring Desk): At least five people were injured in an explosion near the Quetta Police Lines area on Sunday, rescue officials said. Edhi worker Zeeshan Ahmed, who is leading the rescue operation on the site said that the injured persons have been moved to the Civil Hospital, Quetta. He said police and emergency teams have arrived at the site and the area has been cordoned off.

Police haven't issued any statement and the nature of the blast is not clear at the moment.

The outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement released on Sunday. It stated that security officials were targeted in the blast.

The explosion comes days after a ghastly suicide blast in Peshawar Police Lines area took nearly 80 lives, mostly policemen.

Pakistan has been hit by a wave of terrorism, mostly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but also in Balochistan and the Punjab town of Mianwali, which borders KP. A terror attack also reached as far as the peripheries of Islamabad.

The TTP, which has ideological linkages with the Afghan Taliban, executed more than 100 attacks last year, most of which happened after August when the group's peace talks with the Pakistan government began to falter. The ceasefire was formally ended last year on Nov 28 by the TTP.

## Ukraine braced for renewed Russian offensive

KIYV (BBC): Ukraine's defence minister says the country is anticipating a new Russian offensive later this month.

At a news conference, Oleksiy Reznikov said not all Western weaponry will have arrived by then, but Ukraine had enough reserves to hold off Russian forces. He added that Ukraine had negotiated the supply of new long-range missiles.

President Volodymyr Zelensky has said his troops are facing heavy fighting in Bakhmut, Vuhledar and Lyman in Ukraine's east.

Mr Reznikov said Russia did not have all of its

resources ready to launch an offensive, but may do so anyway as a symbolic gesture, given the one-year anniversary of Moscow's full-scale invasion on 24 February. He said Russia is expected to prioritise taking the whole of the eastern Donbas as well as launching offensives in the south and east of Ukraine to create a land corridor across all the areas it currently occupies. The defence minister also confirmed that troops will start training on German-made Leopard tanks from Monday.

Mr Reznikov said Ukraine's new long-range missiles will have a range

of 90-mile (150km) but they will not be used against Russian territory - only against Russian units in occupied areas of Ukraine. "I am sure that we will win this war," said Mr Reznikov, but he added that without the delivery of Western fighter jets, "it will cost us more lives".

Despite the flow of Western weapons to Ukraine, Russia has made gains around the Bakhmut area in recent days, as Russia's army throws more and more soldiers into combat. Russia's paramilitary mercenary group Wagner have led much of the fighting in the area.

## Giyanchand takes notice alleged abduction incident of Sapna Bajeer

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs Giyanchand Essarani has taken notice of alleged abduction incident of Sapna Bajeer in Mirpur Khas. Mr. Essarani contacted IG Sindh Ghulam Nabi Memon over phone and directed him to take steps for early recovery of the girl.

The provincial minister said that Sapna Bajeer was seen going along with Rahul Meghwar in the CCTV footage went gone viral on social media. Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs Giyanchand Essarani asked the IG Sindh to register an FIR of the incident and gear up the efforts to recover Sapna Bajeer.

IG Sindh Police Ghulam Nabi Memon assured the provincial minister that the police will take all possible steps for the early recovery of the allegedly kidnapped girl adding that a special police team is being formed to recover the girl.

## Man kills three in-laws, commits suicide in Lahore

LAHORE (INP): A man killed three in-laws over domestic disputes and committed suicide here on Sunday, police said.

The incident took place near Itihad Park in Shahdara area of Lahore where accused Waqas shot dead his mother-in-law Shagufta Bibi 50, sister-in-law Niaya 25 and brother-in-law Noman 30.

The culprit committed suicide with the same weapon after committing triple murder.

The bodies were shifted to hospital for postmortem and police after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

## COURT NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF IFTEKHAR AHMED CIVIL JUDGE VII KOHAT. Suit no.91/FC, Date of hearing: 20-02-2023, Titled:- Shazia Bibi Vs Muzaffar Khan(etc) Notice against:- (1) Muzaffar Khan S/o Muhammad Ali Khan R/o Nai Abadi Faiz Abad Saryan District Islamabad(3)Hazar Abbas S/o Abdul Qayum R/o Shair Kot Ghari Allah Yar Khan Kohat presently R/o (now in Abroad) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a family suit of Dower(etc) of against you defendants in which date of hearing 20-02-2023 is fixed for your appearance. Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you defendants is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 20-02-2023. Otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on 28-01-2023 (Court of C.J VII, Kohat)

## COURT NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF IFTEKHAR AHMED CIVIL JUDGE VII KOHAT. Suit no.40/FC, Date of hearing: 17-02-2023, Titled:- Khalida Vs Inayatullah Khan (etc) Notice against:- (1) Inayatullah Khan S/o K a m p a n y Khan(2)Kampany Khan S/o Jalal Khan R/o Shadi Khel Tehsil & District Kohat presently R/o (now in Kohati Mohallah Masan Road Near Tax Chowk Kimari Karchi) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a family suit of Dower(etc) of against you defendants in which date of hearing 17-02-2023 is fixed for your appearance. Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you defendants is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 17-02-2023. Otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on 23-01-2023 (Court of C.J VII, Kohat)

# Sharjeel Inam expresss solidarity with Kashmiris

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Information, Transport and Mass Transit Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon in his message on Kashmir Solidarity Day said that February 5 is a day to renew our pledge for support of Kashmiris' eternal struggle for freedom against Indian tyranny .

He said that Kashmiris are not alone in their struggle for freedom from Indian rule, we all are standing with them. The minister added that Kashmiris have kept the Kashmir issue alive with their unmatched sacrifices. He said that no oppression and suppression by India could end the spirit of resistance of people of Kashmir. Mr. Memon said that the Modi government has turned the occupied valley into the largest prison in the world by abolition of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. ' 900000 Indian troops had made the lives of people miserable in

Kashmir valley,' he added .

Sindh Information Minister said that Modi had a long standing dream and agenda, which he had followed to appease RSS and Hindu extremists .

The minister added that Pakistani nation has a principled and historical stand on the issue of Kashmir, on which the Pakistani nation and the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir have stood since Quaid-e-Azam till today. He said that Kashmir issue has always remained top point of the manifesto of the Pakistan People's Party and added that PPP always had given moral and diplomatic support to its Kashmiri brothers and sisters in their struggle. He said that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has exposed the ugly face of Narendra Modi before the international community. He pleaded that Pakistan People's Party will continue to support by Kashmiris until the independence of Occupied Kashmir according to the resolutions of the United Nations.

## ‘Kashmir Solidarity Rally’ held

KARACHI (APP): A Kashmir Solidarity Day rally was held to observe the ‘Kashmir Solidarity Day’ in the metropolis here on Sunday.

The ‘Kashmir Solidarity Day’ rally was taken out from People's Chowrangi to the Mausoleum of the father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah.

Kashmir Day is observed to show Pakistan's support in favour of Kashmiri brothers and sisters and their struggle for right to self-determination.

A large number of students, teachers, Kashmiri older persons, and people from different walks of life participated in the rally. Sindh Minister for Local Government (LG) Syed Nasir Hussain Shah specially participated in the rally in support of the struggle of Kashmiris living in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh Ghulam Nabi Memon, Commissioner

Karachi Mohammed Iqbal Memon, and others also participated in the rally.

While addressing the rally, Minister Nasir Shah said that Kashmiris should be given their right to self-determination as per United Nations (UN)'s resolution.

He said that the struggle of Kashmiris had been continuing for seven decades.

Nasir Shah said that the IIOJK had become the biggest prison of the world.

He said that the Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had raised issue of IIOJK across the world.

He further said that Bilawal showed the real face of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's to the world.

The Minister also condemned every form and activities of terrorism.

He paid tributes to the martyred Kashmiri brothers and sisters and chanted slogans that IIOJK would become part of Pakistan.

## Registration process of transgenders in Benazir Kafalat continues

ISLAMABAD (APP): The process for registration of the transgender population in the Benazir Kafalat program being executed under the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) was continued across the country. The decision of including the transgender community in the Benazir Kafalat program has been taken for the first time in the history in view of the social and economic hardships faced by the transgender community.

According to the National Socio-Economic Register (NSER) survey carried out by BISP, the total number of transgen-

der persons is 53,800.

Despite the limited number, the community is denied of their basic rights and has been facing various challenges. The transgender community is constrained to rely on begging as their main source of livelihood or they get associated with a profession that is scorned upon.

Bajo and Sumera, who are transgenders, said that some people close their doors when we come around in the streets and others push us away.

Talking to APP, they said that, “people ask why we do not work since we look healthy and fit. Who will give us jobs?”.

## Maryam pays tributes to Kashmiris’ struggle

LAHORE (APP): Senior Vice President and Chief Organiser Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Maryam Nawaz expressing solidarity with Kashmiris of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) paid tributes to spirit of its people for continuing struggle for the right to self determination.

In her message on the Kashmir Solidarity Day on Sunday, she said despite illegal occupation of Indian forces, hearts of the Kashmiri people were with Pakistan. The Kashmiris wanted implementation on the United Nation Security

Council's resolutions besides continuing their struggle for their rights as per the UN resolutions, she added.

Maryam Nawaz said Indian government had been deviating from the UN resolutions but could never suppress voice and struggle of the Kashmiris. Men, women, children and youth of the occupied valley had rendered supreme sacrifices of their lives for their independence from Indian illegal occupation. Pakistan would continue its moral, political and diplomatic support to people of held Kashmir till the right to self determination, she said.

## Public Notice

The following locker holders holding lockers have failed to pay the rent due against their lockers to Bank Alfalah Limited, Jamrud Road Branch, Peshawar notwithstanding several reminders. They are hereby informed in their own interest to pay the overdue locker rent within 15 days from the date of this Notice, otherwise the lockers shall be broken/opened and articles, if any, found in the lockers will be kept/stored in sealed packet in the general vault of the Bank at the sole risk and responsibility of the locker holders and under lien of the Bank for the overdue rent, charges and expenses.

S. No.	Name of the Locker Holder	Locker No.	Date Since Rent Overdue
1	Khan Malik/Abdul Wali Khan	0001	28-May-16
2	Muhammad Azam	0005	31-Aug-20
3	Amjad Ali	0009	29-Sep-20
4	Muhammad Shahryar Shah	0018	9-Mar-17
5	Adil Khan	0028	26-Nov-16
6	Imran Enterprises	0032	7-Mar-19
7	Habib Ullah	0038	11-Mar-18
8	Irum Gul	0049	24-Dec-18
9	Rafi Ullah	0055	16-Feb-18
10	Said Muhammad	0057	27-Jun-19
11	Muhammad Arshad	0060	27-Oct-19
12	Tabana Saeed	0065	26-Apr-20
13	Jahangeer & Sons	0085	31-Mar-18
14	Shehzada Naif	0086	10-Mar-18
15	Rabia Arshad	0091	12-Oct-20
16	Muhammad Ibrahim Dalili	0095	27-Jan-20

Branch Manager  
Bank Alfalah Limited  
Jamrud Road Branch,  
Peshawar



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman addressing the ceremony on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day.

## 13-member Italian delegation meets CM Naqvi

LAHORE (NNI): A 13-member delegation of Italy's Organisation of Development Cooperation, led by its Director Mr Luca Maestripieri, met with Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi in Lahore on Sunday.

The discussion was held on collaboration between Pakistan and Italy in the vocational training and the agricultural sector.

Italian assistance for

the elimination of smog from Lahore also came under discussion at the meeting.

Similarly, both sides discussed cooperation for the renewal of GSP+ status. Speaking on occasion, CM Naqvi said that Pakistan would welcome Italian assistance for the elimination of smog from Lahore.

The chief minister further said that the country was indebted to Italy for giving it access to the

European markets. “We will welcome Italy’s support for improvement in agriculture and other sectors,” he said, adding, “The training of Toyota instructors in Italy will bring vocational education in Punjab in harmony with the modern requirements.” The Italian delegation head, on the occasion, said they were pleased to visit Lahore. “The culture and hospitality of the city’s people are impressive,” he said.

## Foolproof security for rallies, events

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Additional IG Bilal Siddique Kamyana on Sunday said the department had chalked out a comprehensive security plan to ensure foolproof security of rallies and programmes regarding the Kashmir Solidarity Day.

He said that more than 2,000 officials, including SPs, SDPOs, inspectors, and anti riot force personnel, were performing duty on different events in the city. He directed officials to remain highly alert and provide maximum security to participants of all events to be held in the city.

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

PAKISTAN PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Phone/Fax: 091-9211471, 091-9211471 Email: ccd1pwdpsh@gmail.com

INVITATION OF BIDS

(Single Stage Two Envelopes)

Sealed tender/bids on the basis of “Single Stage Two envelopes Procedure” are hereby invited for execution of the following works from eligible contractors/firms duly enlisted/register with Pakistan Engineering council (PEC) in relevant specialization technical category and financial limit Category C-5 & above is required on percentage rates basis on Pak. PWD Schedule of Rates 2022, who process valid renewal with PEC, having renewal upto 30/06/2023.

S#	Title of Work	NIT Amount	Earnest Money	Tender Cost
DISTRICT BUNER				
1.	Construction of Black Top Main Road Totahall From Jrandto Stop to Kass Koronna District Buner	Rs.18,649,100/-	4% of bid amount	Rs. 5000/-
2.	Construction of Black Top Main Road Nagral to Langawo Road District Buner	Rs.25,001,498/-	4% of bid amount	Rs. 5000/-
3.	Construction of Black Top Main Road at Korea to Khanano Dherai District Buner	Rs.32,818,470/-	4% of bid amount	Rs. 5000/-
4.	Construction of Black Top Main Road at Bagh District Buner	Rs.16,663,437/-	4% of bid amount	Rs. 5000/-
5.	Construction of PCC Link Road at Mkahranal District Buner	Rs.7,785,784/-	4% of bid amount	Rs. 5000/-
6.	Construction of PCC Link Road at Chinglai Sarwai and Ghurghoshto District Buner	Rs.16,125,579/-	4% of bid amount	Rs. 5000/-
7.	Construction of PCC Link Road at Charoarai to Mandawo Channel District Buner	Rs.8,076,640/-	4% of bid amount	Rs. 5000/-
8.	Construction of PCC Link Road and Jeepeble Tracks at UC Nawagai	Rs.13,601,933/-	4% of bid amount	Rs. 5000/-
9.	DWSS boring/Installation offhand pumps/pressure pumps and irrigation tube well at PK-35	Rs.11,826,432/-	4% of bid amount	Rs. 5000/-
10.	DWSS Boring/Installation of hand pumps/pressure pumps kawga District Buner	Rs.	4% of bid amount	Rs. 5000/-

Terms and Condition for Bidding

01.

The constructors/firms/companies who will receive bidding documents are required to submit their bid in two separate sealed envelopes, i.e., one envelop containing technical information/data and documents of the contractor/firm required for post qualification, clearly marked as “Technical Bid”, while the second envelop containing bid price clearly marked as “Financial Bid”.

02.

The application must be accompanied with bid security in shape of CDR/deposit at call from any Scheduled Bank of Pakistan, in favour of Executive Engineer, Central Civil Division-II, Pak.PWD, Peshawar, clearly mentioning the name of firm, whereas the difference of the tendered amount must be accompanied with Financial Bid with its sealed envelop.

03.

Bidders may purchase the Bidding Documents from the office of Executive Engineer, Central Civil Division-II, Pak. PWD Peshawar at cost of Rs. 5,000/- (Non refundable upto 24/02/2023 during office hours.

04.

Envelopes of Technical Bid & Financial Bid shall be submitted in the office of the Executive Engineer, Central Civil Division-II, Pak. PWD Shami Road Peshawar on 27/02/2023 by 12.30 PM. The envelope containing Technical Bid shall be opened on same day at 01.00 P.M in the presence of Bidders representatives who opt to be present, Bids received after the prescribed date and time shall not be accepted.

05.

Bidders will be Technically Qualified on the basis of information provided with the Bids as per the criteria prescribed in the Bidding Documents. Once a Technical Bid received and opened in this office, no addition/subtraction/alteration of any sort of document will be acceptable.

06.

Pay Order/Demand draft will not be acceptable.

07.

All CDR once received will be credit into the Government Account and will be re-funded through Government Cheque.

08.

No tender will be entertained without bid security @ 4% of the bid amount if not found will be declared as non responsive.

09.

Every firm/contractor must provide the affidavit on stamp paper regarding the non litigation with the department.

10.

Under Rule 33(1) of PPRA Rules 2004, the under singed reserves the right to accept/reject any or all bids/ proposals at any time prior to acceptance of a bid or proposal.

11.

The documents provided by the bidders will be verified and in case found ambiguous/fake one, the firm will face immediate/appropriate penal action as per rules and law.

12.

METHOD OF PROCUREMENT

>

As per PPRA rule 36(b), open competitive Bidding with “Single Stage Two Envelop” Procedure- One envelop containing Technical Proposal and the other Financial Proposal and both sealed in separate envelopes.

>

After conducting evaluation of Technical Bids, qualified firms shall be informed accordingly for opening of their Financial Bids whereas bids of unqualified firms shall be returned unopened.

>

Non-compliance of Instructions to bidders in the Tender Documents will lead to disqualification / non-responsiveness of the bid/firm.

Nazir Ahmad, Executive Engineer

PID(P) 041/2023

Central Civil Division No-II, Pakistan Public Works Department

Shami Road Peshawar



PESHAWAR: Care-taker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan addressing an event organized to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day.

## NA by-election: Condenses reached in PML-N KP meeting to submit nominations papers

PESHAWAR (APP): Engr. Amir Muqam, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President and the Prime Minister's Adviser here Sunday chaired meeting of leaders and members of the party at provincial secretariat where the participants reached consensus to submit nominations for the upcoming by-elections on the seats of National

Assembly. Amir Muqam said that they will move forward as per the decisions the party leadership. The advisor held a detailed discussion with the participants on the restructuring of the party's "Tanzeem" and the current political situation in the country was also discussed at length. Engr. Amir Muqam said

that the leadership from all districts must ensure reinvigorating the Union Council and Village Council in each district. Kashmir Solidarity Day was also celebrated in the meeting and unflinching solidarity was expressed with the Kashmiri brethren. All the participants, including the advisor, strongly condemned the police lines blast at Peshawar and

prayed for high ranks of the martyrs. Under the chairmanship of Engr. Amir Muqam, the strategy to make the party's senior vice President Maryam Nawaz's visits to Abbottabad and Peshawar successful was discussed and laid down. Representatives from all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were present at the meeting.

## KP govt finalizes process for hiring CEO for KPT&GC



PESHAWAR (APP): The process for hiring Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Transmission and Grid Company (KPT&GC), the power distribution company of the province has been finalized.

The provincial government has allocated Rs.96 million for the establishment of the new company in connection with the appointment of emergency staff for the company and the selection of the office building will be done soon.

In this regard, a meeting of the sixth board of directors of KPT&GC was held under the chairmanship of Chairman Board/Secretary Energy and Power Nisar Ahmad Khan, said an official handout issued here on Sunday.

representatives of finance department, member, CPO P&D Arbab Faiz Mohammad, chief planning officer energy department Ayaz Khan, deputy secretary E&P Ijaz Khan participated. The chair was briefed about the progress regarding the establishment of the company and problems faced with the federal agencies NEPRA and NTDC regarding the establishment of the company was discussed. Important decisions were made regarding the inclusion of electricity in the new system. Furthermore, it was also approved to issue an early notification by the department regarding the establishment of the company and the creation of its administrative structure with the support of the World Bank. Moreover, the finance department was also stressed to release the

approved funds to run the affairs of the company quickly. In the meeting, instructions were also issued to the authorities for the purchase of furniture and other equipment for the office of the new chief executive. Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Energy & Power, Nisar Ahmed expressed that the establishment of power distribution will be proved as a milestone towards the improvement of the electricity system of the province. He reiterated his determination that KP Transmission and Grid Company will soon make a new history by transmitting cheap electricity generated from the completed projects of PEDO through its system, which will create a new history for the province and its people as honor for us, he added.

## Two-day literary festival concluded

PESHAWAR (APP): The first season of the Peshawar Literary Festival (PLF), highlighting the importance of literature in lasting peace, non-violence and self identity, concluded here on Sunday. The two-day festival was organised by the students with the support of the United States Embassy and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Directorate of Youth

Affairs here at a local hotel. The second day of the festival begun with theatre, Urdu and Pashto writings and journalistic writing workshops sessions which were attended by hundreds of students and people from different walks of life. Workshop were conducted by renowned Journalist Wusatullah

Khan, Ahad Ali Siddiqui, Dr Abaseen Yousafzai and others. Moreover, renowned scholars, writers, poets and journalists and students of schools, colleges and universities attended the festival. On the first day of the festival, children's literary activities, writing workshops, and Pashto poetic gatherings were also held. Renowned columnist, and

educationist Dr Pervez Hoodbhoy, writer Saadullah Jan Burq, Gul e Nokhez Akhtar, Dr Nasir Jamal Khattak Vice Chancellor of Swabi University, Dr Shabbana Gul, Zubair Torwali and others shared their views with the students and also demanded of the government to revamp the curriculum according to modern age.

# India fails to suppress independence movement in IIOJ&K despite state terrorism, humans rights abuses

PESHAWAR (APP): Breaking all records of war crimes and human rights abuses, the Indian occupied forces have unleashed terrorism, gender violence and collective punishment as a weapon of war against the oppressed Kashmiris in a bid to suppress their legitimate freedom movement in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K). After illegally revoking the special status of the IIOJ&K on August 5, 2019, the fascist Modi government has broken all records of humans rights' violations, terrorism, war crimes and deprived Kashmiris from all kinds of liberties including freedom of speech, media, internet, jobs, land and properties in the held Kashmir that was virtually turned into a military jail by nearly 900,000 occupied forces with no regards for humans rights, international laws and UN charter. Muhammad Hussain Khateeb, Member All Parties Hurriyat Conference (Gillani Group) told APP that the September 2021's Pakistani dossier

has badly exposed India's involvement in the war crimes, human rights abuses, genocide and torture of innocent Kashmiris in the held valley. Since 1989, he said over 96,000 cases of extra judicial killings, 162,000 cases of arbitrary arrests and torture, 25,000 pellet guns injuries, 11,250 women raped, 23,000 women widowed and over 108,000 children orphaned by the Indian army. He said about 8,652 unmarked graves has been identified in 89 villages of six districts in the occupied valley and bodies of 37 Kashmiris burnt alive by Indian forces were beyond recognition. The oppressed Kashmiris had been subjected to inhuman torture by Indian occupation forces, which include stripping naked, beatings with iron rods, heavy roller treatment, electrocution, hanging from ceiling, burning of the body with iron rods, solitary confinement, sleep deprivation, sexualized torture including rape, molestation and sodomy. Mushtaq Shah, Vice

Chairman, Jammu and Kashmir Peoples League told APP that Indians occupying forces were using snipers and cluster ammunitions besides children and women as human shields during encounters and innocent Kashmiris to sleep at military camps forcing them to dig out minefields and tying youth on military jeeps, which has testified Modi government's involvement in war crimes and genocide of the Kashmiris. The fascists Modi government's illegal and unconstitutional acts of August 5, 2019 has exposed his deep-rooted conspiracy to rob Kashmiris of their history, language and ethno-cultural identity. "The butcher of Indian Gujrat" under a nefarious plan had tried to take away from Kashmiris their identity, history, language and culture," Mushtaq said. He said all the ethno-religious communities living in occupied Kashmir including Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and others had now realized how India was snatching away from Kashmiris their lands and reducing them to second

class citizens. He said the new land lease rules introduced in IIOJ&K allowing non-Kashmiris to purchase agricultural land for commercial and other non-agricultural purposes was another manifestation of India's colonial-settler mindset. The Indian Army has been given sweeping powers to take possession of agricultural land and residential areas in any part of IIOJ&K, after declaring them as "strategic". Reportedly over 430,000 Kanals of land are already under illegal possession of the Indian military and paramilitary forces. Mushtaq said Indian forces even didn't allow mass ritual and funeral of great Kashmiri leader, Syed Ali Gillani and has forcefully snatched his body from the bereaved family and buried him at night, which was highly condemnable. Similarly, great hurriat leader, Muhammad Yasin Malik was jailed for life in a fake case to silence his strong voice for Kashmiris freedom while great freedom fighter Burhan Wani

was killed in a fake encounter by the Indian occupation forces. "The Indian Govt had provided about six million illegal domicile certificates of IIOJK to Hindus in a bid to bring about demographic change there." He said the gruesome violation of human rights including forced disappearance of over 8,000 innocent Kashmiris, 8,652 unmarked mass graves and imposition of longest curfew on some 10 million unarmed Kashmiris have exposed the involvement of Indian forces in war crimes and state terrorism. He said India was reluctant to carry out a forensic investigation of the unmarked mass graves in IIOJ&K and did not allow independent observers for its spot verification. He said the burning of mosques, houses and shops belonging to Muslims at BJP-led Tripura state by Hindutva groups of RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal last year had exposed Modi's tyranny against minorities. He said mosques in Krishnagar, Dharmagar, Panisagar, Chandrapur

were vandalized by the saffron-wearing youth last year in the planned attacks on the Muslims population. Manzoorul Haq, former Ambassador told APP that India landed its troops in Srinagar on October 26, 1947 with sinister designs to annex the Muslim-majority Kashmir with New Delhi in sheer violation of the sub-continent's partition formula, UN Charter and Geneva Convention. On April 21, 1948, he said the UN Security Council had adopted an important resolution on Kashmir. The basic formula for settlement of the issue was incorporated in the resolutions of the UN Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) adopted on August 13, 1948 and January 5, 1949. Ambasaor Manzoor said these were not the routine resolutions as their provisions were negotiated in detail by the UN Commission with India and Pakistan after getting the consent of both the governments, constituting a binding and solemn interna-

tional agreement about the settlement of the Kashmir dispute. The illegal occupation of Kashmir valley by India contravened multiple articles of the 30 fundamental human rights of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) drafted by representatives from all the regions of the world including India on December 10, 1948 and was subsequently adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. "This declaration was applied to all the signatory members of the UN including India and restrained them from abuse, exploitation, maltreatment and all kinds of violence besides violation of any fundamental rights protected in UDHR," he said. He said India went against several passed UN Security Council's resolutions by revoking the IIOJK's special status. The nefarious designs of the Indian fascist Government to transform Kashmiris into a disempowered minority in their own land has been exposed with fresh delimitation of electoral

constituencies, issuance of millions of domicile certificates to non-Kashmiris, and addition of hundreds of thousands of non-Kashmiris in the voters lists. He urged international community including world powers to press Modi Govt to immediately go back to pre August 5, 2019 status of IIOJK and give right of self determination to the oppressed Kashmiris like that of East Taimour. He said international community should look beyond trade and business interests and step forward with collective action to stop genocide of oppressed Kashmiris. He deplored the UNSC members' apathy towards addressal of Kashmir dispute, which was a flash-point between two nuclear armed neighboring countries. Ambassador Manzoor said the road to peace in South Asia was passing through Kashmir and another war on this lingering issue would prove disastrous for the entire region and its negative repercussions would go beyond borders.

## KP Governor pays tribute to Kashmiri people

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali on Sunday said that the silence by the international community and the UN on the grim situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) has emboldened India to continue with its atrocities on the Kashmiris. Addressing a ceremony in connection with 'Kashmir Solidarity Day' at CM House here, Haji Ghulam Ali said that the international community should play a serious role in a permanent solution to the Kashmir issue and stop Indian atrocities in IIOJK. He paid tribute to Kashmiri people who rendered matchless sacrifices during the fight against their right to self-determination and marked it a great symbol of bravery. We will continue our diplomatic

and moral support to our Kashmiri brethren in achieving their goal of freedom, he added. Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan, caretaker provincial ministers, government officers, leaders of Hurriyat Conf-

erence, political and social figures, and students participated in the ceremony. Due to section 144 by the district administration in order to maintain law and order in Peshawar, a ceremony was held inside the CM house.

## Governor, CM, PM Advisor express condolence over death of Musharraf

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali, Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan and Advisor to Prime Minister on Political Affairs Engr Ameer Muqam have expressed their heartfelt sorrow and grief over the death of former president General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf. In a separate condolence message, issued here on Sunday, they prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in rest and to grant patience to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss with fortitude. They lauded the services of Musharraf and said that he was a brave leader.



PESHAWAR: Pakistan Railway officials held a rally to show solidarity with people of Kashmir observing Kashmir Solidarity Day. — F.P. photo

## ‘India to immediate stop atrocities in IIOJK’

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Caretaker Minister for Labor, Excise and Taxation Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi has warned India to stop the series of cruelties in Occupied Kashmir immediately otherwise, he cautioned, the tribal people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would repeat their past tradition and would stand by the Pakistan Army for the liberation of Kashmir in the shape of a movement and would not take sigh of relief until liberating the whole Kashmir. He further said that the only solution to the Kashmir issue is the implementation of the UN resolutions, hence the international community should listen to its conscience and force the UNO to honor its promise of plebiscite, otherwise the peace of the world may be endangered due to the war between two nuclear countries. He clarified that the tribal people always carved stories of bravery which are a part of history and they have repeated this history in Bara tragedy recently too. He was addressing a joint function regarding Kashmir Solidarity Day and Bara tragedy at Shah House Tehsil Bara. On this occasion, the caretaker provincial minister gave award to Tehsil Chairman Mufti Muhammad Kafeel, who played a key role in recovering the martyred child Yahya from the deep well in the Bara tragedy. The award was given on behalf of former senator Haji Muhammad Shah Khan, who also gave cash prizes to more than a dozen tribal

volunteers for their heroic role in this regard. Manzoor Afridi said that the government and people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are still in a state of mourning due to recent tragedies like Police Lines Masjid explosion and Tandah Dam boat capsize, but our commitment have become stronger than rocks and we are building the nation with renewed spirit, he concluded. Former Member of National Assembly and ex Senator Haji Muhammad Shah Khan, Mufti Muhammad Kafeel, Professor Abdul Ali Afridi and Haji Andar Gul also addressed the ceremony, while at the request of Haji Muhammad Shah Khan, the participants also raised their hands and expressed complete solidarity with the Kashmiri people.



## In brief

### Three killed, 12 injured

KHANEWAL (INP): At least three members of a family were killed and 12 others injured in collision between over speeding passenger van and a truck here on Sunday. Rescue sources said that the accident took place on M4 near Shamkot Interchange where a Alipur bound passenger van coming from Hafizabad collided with a truck. Three members of a family were killed in the accident while 12 passengers sustained injuries. The bodies and injured were shifted to Civil Hospital for medico-legal formalities. The police after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

### Men held for killing daughter

GUJRAT (INP): Calous father and grandfather strangled to death minor girl to save the inherited property here on Sunday. Police arrested the culprits. Police said that the culprits hailing from suburbs of Gujrat as per their plan sent the mother of girl to parent's home. In absence of mother, the father and grandfather strangled the nine-month old girl so as to save the inherited property and termed murder as death cause of any disease. However, the police took the body into custody and over suspicion arrested both culprits who were being investigated.

### Police recovers timber sleepers

SWAT (APP): Swat Police have recovered 38 timber sleepers in a crackdown against timber mafia on Sunday. On the directives of the Regional Police Officer Malakand, Sajjad Khan and District Police Officer Swat, Shafiullah Khan Gandapur, Khawaza Khela police during its operation against timber mafia recovered 38 illegal timber sleepers from mini-truck and arrested its driver Naveed son of Raza Khan, resident of Ghaasor (Khawazakhele) and for further legal proceeding handed him over to Forest Department.

### 27 arrested, arms recovered

SARGODHA (INP): Police on Sunday arrested 27 criminals and recovered weapons and narcotics in the district. Teams of Saddar, Bhu-lwal, Sillanwali, Shahpur and city police stations conducted raids and arrested 27 accused besides recovering 360 liters of liquor, 2.4 kg of hashish, 12 pistols, eight guns and 112 rounds from their possession.

### Shabir Shah passes away

HYDERABAD (APP): Sindhi language poet Shabir Shah 'Hatif' has passed away late Saturday night in Karachi. He was 83. Poet Shabir Shah belonged to Sayed family of Takhar, district Tando Muhammad Khan and was brother-in-law of Federal Minister for Commerce and Investment Sayed Naveed Qamar. The funeral prayer of the deceased will be offered in Karachi and he will be laid to rest in an ancestral graveyard after Zuhur prayer at Muqbro Sharif in Tando Muhammad Khan on Monday (February 06).

### JI stages Kashmir rally

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Under the auspices of Jamaat-e-Islami Baha-walpur chapter, a rally was taken out to express solidarity with people of Kashmir. The rally led by the Deputy Chief of Jamaat-e-Islami South Punjab, Syed Zeeshan Akhtar was taken out from JI Bahawalpur Office. After marching on different roads, it reached on circular road. The JI activists had held banners inscribed with slogans in favour of people of Kashmir.

# Kashmir Solidarity Day observed in Southern districts

D.I.KHAN (APP): Like other parts of the country, Kashmir Solidarity Day was also observed in southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in a befitting manner to express solidarity with Kashmiri brethren on Sunday.

In this regard, different events were organized and rallies were also taken out from different areas to express solidarity with the oppressed people of Kashmir.

A grand ceremony was organized in Govt Higher Secondary School (GHSS) No: 4 wherein Caretaker Provincial Minister for Agriculture and Live Stock Haleem Qasuria participated as Chief Guest. Besides, Additional Deputy Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan Tariq Mehmood, Assistant Commissioner Faseeh Abbasi, District Education Officer, District Health Officer Mehmood

Jan and a number of people hailing from civil society, lawyers' community, media persons and others participated in the event.

Addressing the event, the provincial minister said the Kashmir Solidarity Day is observed to remind International Community of its obligations to resolve Kashmir dispute as per the aspirations of Kashmiri people and resolutions of United Nations.

He said that the self-determination was the basic right of the Kashmiri people. He also emphasized for unity among all ranks to defeat the internal enemies of the country.

The students of GHSS No: 4 fully participated in the event by singing national anthem, Kashmir Song and delivering speeches.

Later, a rally was also taken out from GHSS No: 4 which culminated at Laghari Gate of the city.

The district administration organized a walk, led by Assistant Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan, which started from GPO Chowk and culminated at Topanwala Chowk.

The walk was attended by officials of the different departments including Finance Department, TMA, WSSC, Education Department and others besides local dignitaries, businessmen and a large number of local people.

During the walk, the participants chanted slogans in favor of Kashmiri people and against the illegal Indian occupation of Kashmir. They were also carrying several banners and placards inscribed with slogans in favour of Kashmiri People.

While addressing the participants, the assistant commissioner said that our full support is with the Kashmiri brethren where

over 0.7 million Indian army has illegally occupied the territory and committing various atrocities on the Kashmiris.

He said the agenda of the partition of the Sub-Continent was incomplete without the freedom of Kashmir.

He said the international community must focus on this important issue and take steps for its early resolution by implementing the resolutions passed by the United Nations.

At the end, the participants of the walk expressed their solidarity with the Kashmiris by making a chain of human hands and prayed collectively for the freedom of the Kashmiris.

In Paharpur Tehsil, different programmes were organized in public schools wherein students gave speeches on the topics related to Kashmir issue and also presented tableau

reflecting Indian atrocities in IIOJK.

A rally was also taken out from TMA office Paharpur under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner Paharpur Aneeq Anwar to express solidarity with the Kashmiri brethren. The rally, which was attended by representatives of all departments, social workers, business community and a number of local people, was culminated at Adda-Paharpur.

Another event was organized in Govt High School Darazinda which was attended by Additional Assistant Commissioner Darazinda Umar Mukhtar. The AAC shed a light on the importance of freedom of Kashmir and ongoing atrocities of Indian forces against helpless Kashmiri people. Later, the AAC also led a walk to express solidarity with oppressed people of Kashmir.

Assistant Commissioner Paroa also organized an event in Tehsil Paroa in connection with the Kashmir Solidarity Day which was attended by a number of people hailing from different segments of society.

The Kashmir Solidarity Day was also observed in Tank where the main event was organized in Deputy Commissioner Office and a rally was also taken out from the DC office. The main event in connection with the Kashmir Solidarity Day was held in Deputy Commissioner Office which was attended by Deputy Commissioner Hameed Ullah Khattak, Assistant Commissioner, officers and officials of different departments including police, FC and others.

Besides, various programmes were organized in different educational insti-

tutions wherein the students delivered speeches on Kashmir issue. A rally was also taken out from the DC Office under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Tank Hameed Ullah Khattak regarding Kashmir Solidarity Day. The participants of the rally chanted slogans in favour of the Independence of Kashmir and against the illegal occupation of Kashmir by Indian forces.

They were also holding banners and placards inscribed with different slogans including "Kashmir Baney Ga Pakistan", "Kashmir Is Burning" and "Kashmir needs world's attention".

The special prayers were offered during all rallies and events for the integrity of the homeland and the freedom of Kashmir besides for the martyrs of the Peshawar police line tragedy.

## Kashmir Solidarity Day observed in Hazara

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Like other parts of the country to show solidarity with the people of Kashmir protest rallies were being organized all over the Hazara division.

A chain of human hands was made on the Kohala bridge to express solidarity with the Kashmiri brothers and sisters.

On behalf of District Administration Abbottabad, Additional Assistant Commissioner Galiyat Zarak Yar Khan participated in a chain of human hands which was made to express solidarity with Kashmiris at Kohala Bridge.

A large number of citizens and students were present on this occasion and expressed solidarity with the Kashmiri brothers, the AAC appreciated the enthusiasm of the citizens and students and reiterated that the freedom struggle will continue till the inde-

pendence of Kashmir.

In Mansehra, various ceremonies and rallies were organized at different places regarding Kashmir Solidarity Day in which prominent political personalities and heads of various government institutions and students participated.

The main event was held at Barakat a boarding area of district Mansehra and Muzaffarabad where Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Bilal Shahid Rao, Assistant Commissioners Ms. Basharat Shah, Line Department Officers, Rescue 1122, TMA, Revenue Staff, the district administration of Muzaffarabad and a large number of students and general public participated.

In Haripur district administration civil society organized separate solidarity rallies to support and express solidarity with the people of Indian-administered Kashmir, and to pay

homage to Kashmiris who have lost their lives for their right to self-determination.

In Havelian Kashmir Committee organized a solidarity rally which was largely attended by civil society members and students, while in Abbottabad Peoples Student Federation (PSF) also organized a solidarity rally.

In Battagram, district administrations have organized solidarity rallies, addressing the speakers who said that from last more than two months Indian occupational forces have locked down Kashmir and practically converted the valley into the largest jail in the world.

They further said that on the same day, Indian occupation forces forcefully captured and held Kashmir and started their terrorism. Indian forces have killed thousands of Muslims and raped Muslim women.

## Completion of work on schools ordered

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Commissioner Hazara division Shaukat Ali Yousufzai Sunday ordered to complete all 146 earthquake-hit schools of the region as soon as possible.

He expressed these views while chairing a meeting regarding the incomplete rehabilitation of schools by ERRA in the Hazara division.

In the meeting, Secretary KP Elementary and Higher Secondary Schools, Moazam Billah also participated and directed to immediate complete the reconstruction work of the damaged schools.

Commissioner Hazara division directed all concerned officers to play their role, personally monitor the schools' rehabilitation projects and ensure the progress and completion of the schools.

He further said that must ensure the standard of construction work, we will not tolerate any negligence in this regard, and all schools must be completed following the orders of the Supreme Court of Pakistan on time.

In the meeting DC Mansehra Cap. (R) Bilal Shahid, DC Torgar Anwar Zeb, DC Kohistan Upper Muhammad Asif, DC Lower Kohistan, DC Kolai Palis, officials of C&W, Education department participated.

## FDA holds rally on Kashmir Day

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) on Sunday held a rally to mark the Kashmir Solidarity Day here on Sunday.

FDA Director General Dr Muhammad Zahid Ikram led the rally while a large number of employees participated in it.

The participants holding banners and placards marched on various roads and chanted slogans against atrocities of India.

Speaking on the occasion, FDA Director General Dr Zahid Ikram said that India had made the worst example of aggression and barbarism in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

## Woman shoots husband

ATTOCK (INP): A woman killed her husband over a domestic dispute in the Kamilpur Musa village of Hazro Tehsil of Attock.

Reportedly, Nazakat Bibi and deceased Abdullah were quarreling with each other over a domestic issue and during the heated exchange of words, the infuriated wife took out a pistol and shot her husband dead. She fled the scene after committing crime.

The Rango police reached the crime scene shortly after the incident was reported and moved the dead body to Hazro Tehsil Hospital for legal proceedings.

According to the neighbours, the family belonged to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and shifted Hazro a few days ago.



QUETTA: Workers of Pakistan Central Muslim League Quetta chanting slogans during a protest rally on occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day.

## DPO visits Azam Warsak area to check security

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN (APP): District Police Officer Shabbir Hussain Marwat visited the Azam Warsak area near sub-division Wana and checked the security situation in the bazaar.

According to a police spokesman, the DPO was briefed about the security situation by the Additional SHO of Azam Warsak Police Station Usman Khan Mehsud over which the former expressed his satisfaction.

During the visit, the district police chief also met with the tribal elders and traders of Azam Warsak bazaar and mingled with the people.

The public expressed

happiness and satisfaction by seeing the district police chief among them.

They were of the view that if the DPO himself was visiting the market and assessing the security situation it proved that peace has been established in the area. They assured full cooperation with the police department in every possible way for maintaining the peace in the area.

Speaking on the occasion, the DPO said no one would be allowed to disturb the peace, adding that police would not hesitate in rendering any type of sacrifice in that regard.

He said it was the responsibility of the police

to protect the lives and properties of the citizens which will be fulfilled at any cost.

The tribal leaders paid tribute to the hard work and sacrifices of the DPO and said the public was feeling secure after his arrival. Moreover, they said, the people's trust in the police has increased.

The DPO, while talking to the tribal elders, said you people also have an important role in maintaining peace. "The police will always be there to serve and protect you," he added.

He stressed on the collective efforts of police and elders to suppress anti-social and anti-peace elements.

## Swabi Police arrest 4 terrorists, recovers arms

SWABI (APP): Swabi Police arrested four terrorists and recovered weapons of different bore from their possession to save districts from destruction.

Addressing a joint press conference, Regional Police Officer (RPO) Mardan, Mohammad Ali Khan and District Police Officer (DPO) Swabi, Captain (Retd) Najmul Hussain told media on Sunday that the arrested terrorists are Saqib, resident of Bajaur, Abdul Rehman, resident of Hund (Swabi), Imran, resident of Mohmand and Zubair, resident of Bajaur were planning to target police and important installations.

They said that on January 30, 2023, district police during an operation

have killed terrorists including terrorist Commander Izharrullah, who was involved in dispatching terrorists' teams from Afghanistan and were planning to terror activities and target killing of police personnel.

The RPO Mardan said that the arrested terrorists were members of the deadly network and had arrived from Afghanistan during the month of November last year.

The police officials said that the killed terrorist, Izharrullah was wanted by police in connection with the target killing and attacking police stations with hand grenades. He was carrying a head money of Rs.2 million.

Terrorist commander Izharrullah had martyred

police personnel Mubasir Nader, Bakhtiar, Sajid and Bakht Munir and was also involved in attacking police stations Kalo Khan and Yar Hussain with hand grenades.

Arms and ammunition recovered from the arrested terrorists include 5 kilograms explosive material, 18 AGL hand grenades, 9 hand grenades, 18 electronic detonators, 60 feet safety fuse, 60 feet prima/detonating card, 2 trans meters, 2 receivers, 1 AGL launcher, 2 kalashnikov, 1 pistol, 237 cartridges of various bore, 49 dry battery seals, 2 volt battery, 2 icon wireless sets, 1 bag, 4 bundle wire, 4 magazines, 2 SMG wire, 7 mobile phone sets, 78 CD disc and a passport in the name of Abdul Rehman.

## Man rapes girl at gunpoint after offering lift

OKARA (INP): A man lured a young woman under the pretext of dropping her home and allegedly raped her at gunpoint at Akbar Road in Okara. According to details, the accused - identified as Akram - offered the girl to drop her home, but took the victim to a farm at gunpoint and raped her.

The victim underwent a medical examination at the Okara District Hospital on the orders of a magistrate. Meanwhile, the police registered a case and were carrying out raids to arrest the suspect. It is pertinent to mention here that at least three rape cases were reported today (Saturday) in different districts of Punjab.

Earlier in the day, a bus guard allegedly raped an 18-year-old bus hostess in Punjab's Vehari district at gunpoint. According to details, the incident took place within the limits of Dhalwal police station, wherein a bus guard - identified as Sheeraz - allegedly locked the bus and raped the bus hostess.

The victim was a resident of Rahim Yar Khan and was employed by a private bus company as a bus hostess. She was subjected to sexual violence while the vehicle was being taken to the bus stand.

A woman was allegedly gang-raped by two unidentified armed men in a public park located in Islamabad's F-9 area.

According to details, the incident took place on Thursday, when two unidentified men gang-raped a girl in a public park located in Islamabad's F-9 area at gunpoint.

In a first information report (FIR) registered at Margalla police station, the victim said she was walking in the park with her friend when two armed men forced them into a thicket of trees at gunpoint and overpowered her.

The accused, according to the victim, separated her from her friend and beat her up to keep her quiet. Margalla police confirmed that a case had been registered while a special unit had started investigating the incident.

## Balochistan LG employees deprived of salaries

QUETTA (APP): The employees of Local Government Department Balochistan were deprived of salaries since the past three months due to persistent decrease in revenue generation and rampant corruption.

The President All Balochistan Municipal Workers Association, Quetta Muhammad Rahim Baloch told media persons that the main reason behind non payment of salaries and shortfall in revenue generation is misuse of resources and corrupt practices.

The wastage of revenue

of the local department has accentuated financial problems for the province and if the corruption was not eliminated and money was not collected immediately, the government would be unable to pay salaries to its employees.

He lamented that the parking and other lease agreements have not yet been renewed despite passage of four years to the expiry of the agreement.

Despite completion of parking plaza at circular road by spending billion of rupees last year, not a single penny is earned by the

department from the plaza. Similarly, the main sources of income including Liaquat and other parks have been bunged for the last four years.

Apart from that, bicycle and motorcycle stands in the city have not been auctioned for last four years.

All their assets should be rented out for generating money and paying salaries to the employees.

He urged the authorities concerned to investigate the corruption in the department fix the responsibility of embezzlement of billion rupees.



# In Canada, Pakistan HC marks Kashmir Solidarity Day

TORONTO (PPI): Pakistan High Commission Canada along with the Pakistan Consulates in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal arranged a series of events comprising pictorial exhibitions, demonstrations, and roadshows to mark the Kashmir Solidarity Day. The main event was held at the Pakistan High Commission in Ottawa where High Commissioner Zaheer Janjua addressed a gathering of Pakistani and Kashmiri diaspora on the significance of Kashmir Solidarity Day.

He pointed out that the Jammu and Kashmir was one of the oldest, internationally recognized disputes on the agenda of the UN Security Council. He said there were 11 UN resolutions on this issue, but India had consistently blocked all efforts for holding a free, fair and impartial plebiscite in IIOJK as enshrined in the UN resolutions. The High Commissioner also highlighted the woes and suffering of the Kashmiris following the illegal and unilateral Indian actions of 5th August 2019. He said that India's ruling BJP was implementing the Hindutva agenda of RSS in Kashmir by assaulting the Kashmiri culture and identity.

He said the Kashmiris were being disempowered, disenfranchised and being turned into a minority in their own land through new state and fed-

eral laws, domicile rules, delimitations of constituencies, grant of domicile status to non-Kashmiri Hindus, seizure of Jammu & Kashmir Waqf Board and forcible singing of Hindu hymns at schools. Zaheer Janjua maintained that the BJP government of India had demonstrated that its Hindutva-inspired political tendencies and actions not only threaten Kashmir's political identity and historical legacy, but also pose a danger to regional peace and a global order based on international norms of choice and freedom.

"We believe that durable peace, security and development in the region hinges on peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute ... it is imperative that the Kashmiris exercise their right to self-determination through a free and impartial plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations," he said, adding Pakistan would continue to extend all possible support to our Kashmiri brothers and sisters towards a just and peaceful settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions.

Later, a pictorial exhibition was arranged at the High Commission to bring out the range of various atrocities and reign of terror unleashed by the Indian forces against the defenceless Kashmiris, particularly

after the revocation of special status of IIOJK in August 2019. The recently released BBC documentary on Earlier in the day, office-bearers and members of Kashmir Committee Ottawa arranged a protest demonstration in front of the Canadian Parliament. Braving the freezing temperature touching minus 30 during the day in Ottawa, the protestors raised placards and chanted slogans calling for an end to Indian brutalities in the occupied Kashmir, and calling on the government and the people of Canada to support the just demand of the Kashmiris for their inalienable right to self-determination. Meanwhile, Consulate General of Pakistan Toronto arranged a pictorial exhibition as well as a well-attended webinar to highlight Indian oppression in IIOJK.

A truck exhibiting different themes of Kashmir Solidarity Day through giant electronic screens installed on all sides of the trailer also drove through the city. Similarly, in Vancouver a pictorial exhibition and two separate webinars were arranged by the Consulate General of Pakistan. Local ethnic television and radio channels, including Toronto 360 TV, Canada One TV and eawaz, also ran dedicated programmes and documentaries highlighting the human rights abuses in IIOJK.



OTTAWA: Pakistan High Commissioner to Canada Zaheer A. Janjua speaking to a group of Pakistani and Kashmiri diaspora gathered at the Pakistan High Commission in Ottawa to attend a pictorial exhibition in connection with the Kashmir Solidarity Day.

## Kashmir—best example to be cited on ‘International Day of Human Fraternity’

WASHINGTON (NNI): Today, the world is observing the 'International Day of Human Fraternity' to highlight the importance of tolerance among the members of different religions, cultures and ethnicities.

Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Chairman, 'World Forum for Peace & Justice,' said, "I am so proud to be an American and a Muslim from Kashmir. Because the Valley of Kashmir, where I come from has remained the symbol of communal harmony and tolerance for centuries.

Kashmir has been haloed as the land of saints. Its culture celebrates diversity, and it has been the confluence of a rich mixture of philosophies and ways of life that merge without losing their distinct identities."

Dr. Fai asked, can anyone deny the fact – of no small significance – that while the Subcontinent under British rule was the scene of recurrent murderous strife, communal riots were unheard of in Kashmir? That unques-

tionable fact brings out the real character of Kashmir's heritage. "...It is really difficult for me to distinguish between a Hindu Kashmiri and a Muslim Kashmiri. You people speak one language and have one culture. While the rest of the country burns in communal fire, I see a ray of hope in Kashmir only..."

The present Indian leadership of Narendra Modi is wholly absorbed in pretty political concerns. Modi government has particularly failingly tried to equate Kashmiri people with fundamentalism.

The term fundamentalism, Dr. Fai clarified, is quite inapplicable to the Kashmiri society. A hallmark of Kashmir has been its long tradition of tolerance, amity, and good will across religious and cultural boundaries. It has a long tradition of moderation and non-violence. Its culture does not generate extremism or fundamentalism. Fai added that the five religious' groups of Kashmir – Buddhists,

Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims and tiny minority of Christians – have for centuries flourished in harmony and mutual bond; no religious ghettos; no religious apartheid; no economic or sharp cultural divides.

All religious persuasions rejoiced at each other's holidays and times of joy, attended social gatherings together, lived as neighbors in harmony, and treasured their mutual trust. The various faiths of Kashmir eschew fanatical or extremist dogmas that distort and debauch their doctrinal origins. Tolerance and mutual respect are their watchwords. Dr. Fai cited two recent shining examples of tolerance, communal harmony, and open-mindedness in Kashmir, although there are hundreds of such instances. India's leading weekly 'India Today' reported on May 14, 2022, that 'Muslims helped in performing the last rites of a Kashmiri Pandit woman in Kulgam in a great show of solidarity amid heightened tensions in Kashmir.'

## Catholic cardinal chides Peru Congress for inaction on vote

LIMA (AFP/APP): Violent new street protests gripped downtown Lima Saturday night, hours after a Roman Catholic cardinal voiced dismay that the nation's Congress again declined to advance elections to defuse Peru's political crisis.

Thousands of protesters skirmished with riot police once night fell, scattering amid tear gas volleys but regrouping in an effort to reach Peru's Congress.

In the latest of two months of often-lethal protests, some demonstrators fired back at police

with homemade fireworks.

A tally of arrests and injuries was not immediately available.

Peru's legislature, meanwhile, received a rebuke from a top Roman Catholic prelate.

"It hurts our souls that they have (not acted on) a proposal to move up elections," Cardinal Pedro Barreto said, hours after the church's highest ecclesiastical body sent a letter to legislators warning them that it was "urgent" to move up elections to later this year.

Congress a day earlier slammed the door until August on any further debate to bring forward general elections currently slated for April 2024 into 2023 -- a key demand of near-daily demonstrations that are crippling the country of 33 million people.

For the fourth time in a week, legislators rejected a bill on advancing elections, blocking further debate on procedural technicalities.

The move dimmed prospects for an avenue out of the crisis, which has claimed 48 lives since

## Cypriots vote for new president in close contest

NICOSIA (AFP/APP): Cypriots voted on Sunday in a close presidential election between three front runners, with the electorate focused more on corruption and the economy than the island's long-standing division.

A record 14 candidates -- but only two women -- are standing, with the winner needing 50 percent plus one vote to succeed two-term President Nicos Anastasiades.

Opinion polls predict a run-off on February 12, with no contender expected to secure an immediate outright majority.

Chief returning officer Costas Constantinou said turnout at 10:00 am (0800 GMT) stood at 11.7 percent and that voting was "running smoothly".

Former foreign minister Nikos Christodoulides is

the favourite. Backed by centrist parties, the 49-year-old commands a firm lead in opinion polls but not enough to shake off his rivals.

He is likely to face off in the second round against either Andreas Mavroyiannis, a 66-year-old technocrat backed by communist party AKEL, or Averof Neofytou, 61, leader of the ruling conservatives, DISY.

The last opinion poll by state broadcaster CyBC on January 27 had Christodoulides leading at 26.5 percent, Neofytou at 22.5 percent and Mavroyiannis 21 percent.

Many analysts believe that Christodoulides, who served in both Anastasiades administrations, is still the favourite.

"All polls indicate that Christodoulides is going to

be very much surprised if he didn't reach it," said Andreas Theophanous of the Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs.

"And if he goes to the second round, he is predicted to win," he added.

Voters appeared concerned about a cash-for-passports scandal and the pressures of irregular migration on public resources, while the issue of the island's decades-old division remains at an impasse.

Cyprus has been split since 1974, when Turkish forces occupied the island's northern third in response to a Greek-sponsored coup.

"Some things must change radically in my view, on the Cyprus problem and the economy,"

## Saudi Arabia, Oman sign executive program to enhance digital economy

RIYADH (SPA/APP): The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman on Saturday signed an executive program in the field of communications, information technology infrastructure and submarine communications cable investment.

Signed by the Minister of Communications and Information Technology

(MCIT) Eng. Abdullah bin Amer Al-Swaha and Omani Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology Eng. Said Hamood Al-Maawali, the executive program aims at activating the strategic partnership stipulated in the memorandum of understanding the two countries signed last

November.

The program aims at utilizing the geographic location of the two countries and enhance investment in submarine and land cables as well as creating a joint business environment to bolster cooperation in telecommunication and information technology infrastructure, and high-speed digital interconnection for data exchange.

It also aims at providing options for the implementation of regional digital interconnection through investment bodies and licensed companies, in addition to promoting joint investment in data centers and Global Cloud Services (GCS) to maximize the interest of the region.

## New Zealand ready to share experience with Türkiye under Asia Anew initiative: Ambassador

ANKARA (AA/APP): New Zealand is ready to share its experience with Ankara about diplomatic expansion in the wider Asia-Pacific region, according to its ambassador.

"We stand ready to share with Türkiye, our experiences in that regard," Zoe Coulson-Sinclair told Anadolu, discussing Türkiye's Asia Anew initiative.

Coulson-Sinclair's comments came as New Zealand prepares to celebrate its national day -- known as Waitangi Day -- when people of all communities and backgrounds

gather Monday in Waitangi, a small village in the north, to commemorate the first signing of New Zealand's founding document: Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The Treaty of Waitangi.

The pact between New Zealand's indigenous people and the British Crown was signed Feb. 6, 1840.

Sitting against a wall that showcased artwork -- a representation of a number of the original signatories of the Treaty of Waitangi, Coulson-Sinclair said her country of more than 5 million could be a link between the region and Türkiye as

New Zealand "might look like a gateway for some Turkish companies that are interested in reaching into the Pacific, the Pacific Islands region -- these are the kind of ways in which maybe we can help."

Türkiye launched the Asia Anew initiative in 2019 to "further enhance its relations with Asia, which is becoming the world's economic center, in multiple dimensions."

The initiative is seen by experts as a step toward reshaping the future diplomacy of Türkiye, a country that straddles two continents

## Israel intercepts ‘small aircraft’ over Gaza: army

JERUSALEM (AFP/APP): The Israeli army said Saturday it had "intercepted a small aircraft over the Gaza Strip", where witnesses told AFP they heard "explosions" near the border.

The army stressed it was not rocket or other fire that posed a threat to Israelis. "It was not a projectile launch. Full routine continues on the Israeli home front," it said in a statement.

The army didn't say where the aircraft had

been heading or where it had come from.

Nor was there any immediate claim of responsibility from any of the armed Palestinian factions in Gaza.

Earlier on Saturday, the Gaza-based Islamic Jihad group said its leader Ziad al-Nakhala had travelled to Cairo to meet Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel.

It said the two sides discussed "the situation in Jerusalem, and the West Bank, especially Jenin," a

flashpoint city and refugee camp, where Israel last month conducted its deadliest single operation in the West Bank in years, killing 10 people. The trip followed a visit by Kamel to the West Bank city of Ramallah on Tuesday, where he met Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas to discuss the recent surge in violence. On Thursday, Israel conducted air strikes on the Gaza Strip, hours after intercepting a rocket fired from the

Palestinian territory. Since the start of the year, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has claimed the lives of 36 Palestinians, including attackers, militants and civilians.

Six Israeli civilians, including a child, and one Ukrainian civilian have been killed over the same period. The densely populated Gaza Strip, home to 2.3 million Palestinians, has been under Israeli blockade since Hamas ousted forces loyal to Abbas in 2007.

The Frontier Post

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Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at  
Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,  
Peshawar.  
Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001  
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## Kashmir Solidarity Day and the next

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has declared that no amount of state terrorism, unleashed by Indian Occupation Forces, can break the will of the Kashmiris or undermine their legitimate struggle to get freedom from Indian occupation. During his message on Kashmir Solidarity Day, the Premier assured Kashmiri brethren of full moral, diplomatic, and political support, for their just cause at all levels until they attain freedom from Indian oppression.

75 years had gone by since the people of Indian-occupied Kashmir are in the chain, humanity is suffering at the hands of hypocrisy and human rights are unashamedly being smashed under gunpoint over the past seven and a half decades. Kashmiri people are awaiting a saviour, who help rescue them from Hindutva's brutal treatment and Modi's open prison in the Indian Illegally Occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Unfortunately, the self-claimed so-called biggest democracy has set asides all democratic and global norms through the continuous suppression of the fundamental rights of over 15 million Kashmiris and the heinous betrayal of multiple UN Security Council resolutions regarding the Kashmir dispute. At the same time, the global advocates of democracy and civil liberties have turned a blind eye toward the ongoing grave humanitarian crisis in Indian-held Kashmir just to promote their economic and monetary interests in Hindustan.

India has long forcibly occupied Jammu and Kashmir over the past decades, while Kashmir remained one of the longstanding unresolved disputes on the agenda of the UN Security Council until now. The Indian rulers not only themselves took the Kashmir issue to the United Nations, but they also acknowledged the need for a peaceful settlement of the issue by holding a free and fair plebiscite in the Jammu and Kashmir region under the UN's patronage. However, successive Indian governments deliberately deceived the global community and eluded their responsibility regarding the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Ironically, the Modi-led BJP Hindutva regime took the lead from its forerunners and shamelessly resorted to demographic change in the disputed territory by taking unilateral and unlawful actions and legislations including the revocation of Article 370 and Section 35 of the Indian constitution in August 2019. Modi regime issued millions of fake domicile certificates to non-Kashmiris and allowed them Kashmiri citizenship and property rights, changed electoral constituencies, and added fake voters to electoral lists to ultimately affect the future elections in the valley.

Presently, the Hindu occupier regime has turned the valley into a military garrison and blatantly used all possible repressive measures to virtually turn Kashmiris into a minority in their own land. Modi regime has intensified its atrocities, and human rights violations through ramped-up extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, and unprecedented curbs on print, electronic and social media to crush the just and lawful freedom movement of the people of Kashmir. The situation portrays an uncertain future for Kashmiri Muslims and Pakistan needs to launch renewed efforts to sensitize the UN and other global forums about the miserable condition of Kashmiri people and the unlawful actions of the Indian government in the valley. Apparently, annual appeals of Pakistani leaders did not work so far thus a forceful and concerted campaign at the UN is urgently required that convince the global forum to resolve the Kashmir issue according to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people as early as possible.

## Wagner Group, America's new challenger

According to the western media, the Biden administration has stepped up pressure on Middle Eastern allies to expel the Wagner Group from chaos-stricken oil-rich Libya and military-ruled good-rich Sudan. The reports revealed that CIA Director William Burns and US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken has pressed Egyptian President Al Sisi and UAE authorities to persuade their Sudanese and Lebanese allies to break off with the Russian Wagner Group, a military contractor firm owned by a Russian oligarch.

The Russian military contractor, the Wagner Group has become the topmost priority of the Biden administration to render it ineffective and toothless so it could not challenge US and western interests in any part of the world. Apparently, Kremlin has stolen the idea of a private military from the American Black Water group which has changed multiple names and faces over the past years, yet its primary trading in killing, destruction, and bloodshed remained unchanged and significantly boomed during this time.

Meanwhile, President Putin also recruited criminals, and assassins from Russian prisons trained and equipped them with lethal weapons, and handed them over to Retired military Generals to compete with the American CIA and Black Water in Africa, the Middle East, and other future destinations of major powers. Surprisingly, the Wagner Group successfully expanded its influence in multiple nations including Mali, Nigar, Sudan, Congo, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Lybia, and others in a few years. The group's fighters had been fighting alongside the Russian military in Ukraine and pushed back western nations in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region which caused great concerns in the Western capitals.

Presently, Biden's aides are relentlessly working on the mission to defame, discredit, destroy, and detach the Russian Wagner Group in its missions in multiple nations, and for that purpose, a heightened shuttle diplomacy, propaganda campaign, and other tools and tacts are being use to get it done. As reported, Biden has convinced several African leaders during US-Africa Leaders Summit in recent days while others are being coaxed by Blinken and Burns. Certainly, opposing blocs would appear in resource riched Africa, and new rivalries would flourish in the continent. Although, Putin and Biden would accomplish their mission and will enjoy their triumph but Africans alone would suffer the devastations of their rivalry.

# Death and destruction return to the streets of Israel, Palestine

Once again, Israelis and Palestinians are on the brink of a full-blown confrontation, and maybe one that will be worse than any before. Despair and the perception of there being no alternative have taken hold of both protagonists.

Recent events in Jenin, Jerusalem and other parts of the occupied West Bank, which claimed the lives of scores of Palestinians and Israelis, have left both peoples staring into the abyss of another prolonged period of bloodshed, destruction and trauma, but this time without either the hope of a political solution or any firm, proactive international involvement to prevent even deadlier escalation.

The recent visit by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken did little to reassure that Washington is ready to put its full weight behind efforts to prevent such an eventuality.

It would be completely futile to consider, out of context, the deadly attack that killed seven Israelis in Jerusalem on a Friday night a week ago, or the shooting of two Israelis the following day, as mere revenge for an Israeli raid on Jenin two days earlier in which nine Palestinians were killed.

That would be to oversimplify a complex situation that has left both sides blind to any peaceful solution. Most Jewish Israelis believe that the continua-

tion of the occupation, oppression and blockading of Palestinians is the only method of guaranteeing Israeli security. Meanwhile, an increasing number of Palestinians consider resorting to armed struggle as the only way left to them if they are to see their aspirations for self-determination and living with dignity materialize.

Jenin might have become a hub of Palestinian militancy, and Israeli raids inside refugee camps there are meant to prevent attacks on security forces and civilians on both sides of the Green Line. But for decades, Israel has resorted to the very same methods of applying the disproportionate use of force, carelessly harming civilians in the process, while failing to achieve its objective of living without fear for its security.

For too long the Israeli security forces have been treating attacks on civilians and their property, and other violations of their human rights, as no more than collateral damage in a process of containing militancy. All that this achieves, however, is the radicalization of the local population, especially the younger generation, and increasing calls for senior Israeli Defense Forces officers to be investigated by the International Criminal Court for war crimes.

Nothing can justify the random shooting of worshippers leaving a syna-

gogue, and whatever led a lone shooter to commit this atrocity, beyond deep-rooted hatred, went with him to the grave when he was killed by Israeli police officers as he tried to escape. He probably knew that his chances of fleeing the scene alive were slim, as has been demonstrated by previous similar incidents.

The following day it was a 13-year-old Palestinian who shot and wounded two Israelis, before being shot himself, injured and arrested. The Israeli government's promise of a response, in which it used the phrase "strong, swift and precise," suggested it would be inflicting further bloodshed and other forms of suffering, mainly on innocent Palestinian civilians, with no hint of reflection on how to transform this vicious cycle of violence into peaceful dialogue.

The wall-to-wall international condemnations of the killing of Israeli civilians is understandable and justified. However, it cannot and should not be taken out of context. Last year was, according to Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, the deadliest since 2004, in which 144 Palestinians were killed by Israel's security forces in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem). Most of them, according to this and other reports, were unarmed and the victims

included children.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad do not cover themselves in glory by hailing the killing of civilians. But depriving these organizations of support will only be achieved by changing the circumstances that empower them in the first place — first and foremost being the occupation and blockade, which must be ended.

The factors that suggest we might be headed for an escalation in violence that is more severe than any we have seen for a very long time include a combination of: The coming to power of the most far-right government in Israel's history, which is dead set on igniting tensions with the Palestinians; the unpopular and dysfunctional administration of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, which is entering its twilight period, as is the Palestinian Authority; and the rivalry between Fatah and Hamas, with growing support among Palestinians for a return to armed struggle. Meanwhile, the international community remains a mere bystander, refusing to take a stand either politically or morally.

These adverse conditions deepen the political impasse and exacerbate the conditions that provoke further escalation.

The recent incidents mark the first time that such violence has taken

place on the watch of the new Netanyahu government, in which the extreme religious-nationalists Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich serve as senior ministers and are very much in charge of security, both inside Israel and in the occupied territories.

This is uncharted territory for them and a situation for which they cannot blame others, as they have done for many years. Instead, it is now up to them to provide solutions when security crises emerge. Their answer, however, so far seems to be mainly in the form of more collective punishment, promotion of legislation for the death penalty for terrorists (as long as they are Palestinians), and handing out more weapons to the Jewish population.

The seizing and demolition of houses was tried, tested and failed in the past, and so this continuing tactic is no more than a twisted act of revenge against innocent people, merely because they are related to a killer — or simply for being Palestinian.

What good can come out of this? It is immoral, it violates international law and it reveals the even uglier face of the occupation while breeding ever-greater hatred and radicalization.

The death penalty for terrorists is a populist measure the security forces have always opposed. In most cases the perpetrators

are killed during their attacks and should anyone be caught and sentenced to death it would turn them into instant martyrs, only serving to encourage others to emulate them.

Similarly, handing out more weapons to untrained civilians, in many cases extreme right-wingers, can only lead to unnecessary killings and the evolution of militias answerable to Ben-Gvir and his ilk, who do not believe in the democratic process.

After all, this is an Israeli government controlled by elements who are one-trick, collective-punishment ponies, who disregard Palestinian lives and rights, and demand the expansion of Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and, ultimately, the annexation of that land to Israel, which would leave millions of Palestinians stateless and without rights.

The international community is watching what is happening to Israel with dread, as the very democratic system of the country is under attack and relations with the Palestinians head toward confrontation and bloodshed.

But it should not be surprised, as this arena has for too long been left to domination by those who believe in conflict until victory, while those who believe in peace and coexistence have been marginalized and are now in danger of being silenced.

## The West and Japan work to enhance their ties, post-Ukraine

Andrew Hammond

The news agenda this week has been dominated by talk about the US debt ceiling, a potential new offensive by Russia in Ukraine, and a new EU green growth plan. Yet, taking place largely under the global radar, there was also a potentially

Last month, the visits by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to France, Italy and the UK highlighted the importance of security relations in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine. Whereas some politicians in Europe and Japan might previously have regarded a

increasingly viewed in a broader strategic context, as last month's discussions around security issues have shown.

During Kishida's visit, Japan and the UK signed a new "reciprocal access"

Meanwhile, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni announced that her country is looking to develop a new "strategic partnership" with Japan. On the security front, Italy recently joined forces with the

Inflation Reduction Act, they are stepping up collaboration in a number of areas, including energy-related security and cooperation.

An agreement between the EU and Japan in December for cooperation on hydrogen underlines the

economic and security responses to the Soviet Union, the G7 is likely to assume increasing importance among the Western allies as they put less emphasis on the G20, given Russia and China's membership of that larger group.

***In France, the key issues Kishida discussed with President Emmanuel Macron included the war in Ukraine, and the strengthening of French and Japanese security ties in the Indo-Pacific region, which Paris intends to make a priority axis of its diplomacy. France, which is already active in Japan's civil nuclear industry, intends to strengthen its presence in the nation's military industry; Tokyo recently announced plans to significantly increase the budget for its armed forces. Meanwhile, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni announced that her country is looking to develop a new "strategic partnership" with Japan. On the security front, Italy recently joined forces with the UK and Japan to collaborate on the development of a new fighter jet that uses artificial intelligence. While Kishida did not visit Germany — the remaining European member of the G7 — last month, there is no question that Chancellor Olaf Scholz is pro-Japan, too. He recently acknowledged that his choice of Japan as the destination for his first official visit to Asia since becoming chancellor was "no coincidence," given the close ties between Berlin and Tokyo.***

hugely significant visit by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to Japan and South Korea.

Important as the South Korean leg of his trip was, the visit to Japan was particularly noteworthy. Stoltenberg said this week that Japan's renewed focus on security means the nation is "even more" of a partner "for peace," and he applauded its plans to double spending on defense, saying that this reflected the country's resolve for greater security involvement in a volatile world.

Japan has long had very close military ties with the US. However, what is particularly significant, potentially, is the way in which Tokyo's ties with Europe are blossoming on the security front.

bilateral alliance as nonessential, it is now increasingly viewed as indispensable.

The growing bond between Russia and China worries both Japan and Europe. Meanwhile, the 2017-21 Trump presidency showed that the US might not always be the highly dependable ally it once was, especially given the possibility that Donald Trump might stand in next year's presidential election, and perhaps win.

Moreover, while Tokyo and the European capitals have previously tended to view their relationships as being centered around economics, including the 2019 Japan-EU Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, this is changing. The partnership is

treaty that allows military forces from both nations to be deployed on each other's soil. It has been described as the most important military agreement between the two powers since 1902.

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While security issues are increasingly key to relations between Europe and Japan, economic and industrial issues remain very important as well. With Europe and Japan concerned by the US

strength of the two powers in this sector, which was clearly shown in a joint study published last month by the European Patent Office and International Energy Agency. It assessed the patents filed for all technologies relating to hydrogen between 2011 and 2020, and found Europe and Japan to be head of the global pack.

The key reason for Stoltenberg's trip this week, and for Kishida's last month, is that Japan holds the presidency of the G7 for 2023, which Europe believes will be one of the most important years for the group in the post-Cold War era, given the continuing war in Ukraine.

As was the case during the Cold War, when the G7 coordinated the West's eco-

There are some who are skeptical about the chances of the G7 producing any meaningful outcomes this year. However, the Western club has previously been at its best in times of crisis. The very fact that it was founded in 1975 in the aftermath of the geopolitical and economic shocks that followed the decision of the US to withdraw from the Gold Standard underlines the fact that it can potentially be fit for purpose in turbulent times, such as today.

In the mid-1970s, the G7 played a key role in managing the key issues of the day and also formally brought Japan into the Western policy-making community. A similar far-sighted, strategic approach is needed in 2023.

## What are the prospects for a cross-Strait detente?

Matthew Fulco

In the past two years, predictions of the timing of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan have proliferated, ranging from the near future to 2049, the centenary of the People's Republic of China and the target year for the "great rejuvenation" of the Chinese nation."

It is implied that the annexation of Taiwan, which Beijing prefers to think of as "reunification," must occur to consummate the middle kingdom's restoration.

Four-star U.S. Air Force Gen. Mike Minihan became the latest heavyweight to weigh in on the issue when a memo he pre-

pared leaked in late January. He wrote of a gut feeling "that we will fight in 2025," though he emphasized, "I hope I am wrong."

Minihan seems to expect political tumult ahead — the memo mentioned "a distracted America" — that could provide China with a window of opportunity to attack Taiwan. Both the U.S. and Taiwan will hold presidential elections in 2024.

Though the Chinese military exhibited an unprecedented show of force and has since operated closer to Taiwan than before then-U.S. Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit, no evidence exists of an

accelerated timeline for annexation.

On the contrary, Chinese leader Xi Jinping has since reiterated China's focus on a peaceful, if coercive, resolution to what it calls "the Taiwan question."

To be sure, the U.S. military has concluded that Xi wants China's People's Liberation Army to be capable of launching an invasion of Taiwan by 2027. But that is a target, not an expression of intent. A simple timeline will not decide whether Beijing ultimately resorts to force against Taiwan.

For all its gray-zone provocations of Taiwan, the Chinese leadership remains wary of the immense costs of a war and unlikely to launch one on a whim, especially when it has bigger priorities — from weathering a fierce COVID-19 storm to resuscitating the lockdown-battered economy to mitigating damage wrought by its now-muzzled "wolf warrior" diplomats.

But if Beijing felt that it had exhausted all nonmilitary options to recover Taiwan and had the capability to win a cross-Strait

war, the risk of conflict would increase exponentially.

Both Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the opposition Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) understand that a sustained lack of cross-Strait dialogue increases the risk that Beijing will eventually give up on a peaceful settlement. Cross-Strait relations have been in a deep freeze for nearly seven years now.

It is partially for this reason that both parties have, in their own ways, quietly sought to lower tensions with Beijing in recent months.

As the less-Beijing skeptical of Taiwan's two major political parties, the KMT has taken the lead on reaching out to China. The KMT began these efforts right after August's live-fire drills, despite the inauspicious timing.

That vice chairman Andrew Hsia defied popular sentiment to travel to China shows how concerned the KMT was. During the trip, which was outwardly undertaken in support of Taiwanese businesspeople in China, Hsia met with Zhang Zhijun, Beijing's point man on Taiwan.

(Continued on Page-7)

# Iraqi PM’s delicate balancing act

Over the past two decades, Iraq has been a battleground for the intensifying rivalry between the US and Iran.

The latter has the allegiance of many Iraqi Shiite political and armed groups, while the US presence has mostly been reduced to a small contingent of military personnel, mainly tasked with training, equipping and advising the Iraqi Armed Forces in its efforts to counter the threat of a resurgent Daesh.

At one point, Iran-backed forces worked alongside the US-led international coalition in the country to defeat the notorious terrorist proto-state, which had seized vast swaths of territory and plunged a fragile, post-invasion Iraq into chaos.

With the threat of Daesh mostly eradicated, however, the thinking among some of the political elites in Baghdad has shifted toward a termination of the American military mission and limiting Washington’s engagement in Iraq. It is a goal they came close to achieving late last year, when Iran’s outsize influence in Baghdad’s corridors of power peaked.

In the estimation of Iraqi political elites with ties to Iran, a sustained US presence not only provides Washington with military leverage, it can also be used to threaten Tehran’s designs on its neighbor, and the wider “Shiite Crescent,” in non-kinetic ways.

Last year, Iraq’s political stalemate managed to produce a government composed largely of pro-Iranian factions and political figures, including groups designated by the

US as terrorist organizations, rebuffing Muqtada Al-Sadr’s rhetoric and repeated escalations that attempted to derail its formation.

For a country faced with worsening socioeconomic crises, security challenges and a political leadership beholden to rival interests, the formation of a government was a welcome relief in the eyes of many Iraqis. But most outside observers decried the ascendancy of Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani to the premiership. To them, the new prime minister’s links to pro-Tehran figures in Baghdad meant that after he was sworn in, the next item on the agenda would be the expulsion of all US personnel, completing Iran’s “quiet” usurpation of its neighbor.

Yet that has not happened, largely as a result of Al-Sudani’s careful maneuvering both at home, in the wider region and beyond. His government has completed its first 100 days and the most remarkable observation so far is how the balance of influence in Iraq has markedly shifted from pro-Iran to an uneasy mix.

Iraqi voices are gaining prominence and the US is looking to leverage a less hostile reception in Baghdad, to the chagrin of a pro-Iran camp that is struggling to recalibrate itself and its objectives in a shifting landscape.

In the early days of Al-Sudani’s government, hard-liners within the Coordination Framework moved to seize control of Iraq’s security agencies, including the Interior Ministry, the National Security Council and the

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Iraqi National Intelligence Service.

The Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shiite political parties dominated by former Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki and the Popular Mobilization Forces, a collection of heavily armed militias with links to Iran. Control of Iraq’s security agencies would have given them some highly sought-after “benefits,” such as immunity and security for select militia groups, while unleashing the power of the state on rivals, perceived enemies or even the general public.

However, Al-Sudani defied the expectations that he would capitulate to the pro-Iran factions that nominated him for the premiership. He resisted most of the Shiite coalition’s demands that focused on reshaping the country’s security apparatus, retained control of the Iraqi National Intelligence Service, allowed an incumbent to remain in charge of the Counter Terrorism Service, and appointed his own interior minister.

Beyond reining in the Coordination Framework and the PMF, Al-Sudani has also managed to keep the Sadrist at bay by retaining the services of one of them, Hamid Al-Ghazi, as secretary-general of his Cabinet. It remains to be seen how well his political cunning will fare in the long term, given the mounting criticism within Shiite political circles that have now set their sights on gaining control of the provinces, securing lucrative contracts and influencing provincial elections

expected this year.

On the diplomatic front, Al-Sudani is cognizant of Iran’s declining influence in Baghdad and its weakening position abroad, hence Iraq’s continuing reliance on the US despite the risk of a backlash from his core political base.

Meanwhile, Tehran is distracted by the ongoing protests at home and new international sanctions that seek to cripple its ability to provide Russia with lethal support for the war against Ukraine. For Baghdad, there is no better time to pursue the same depth of relations with Washington as Saudi Arabia and the other oil and gas countries in the Arabian Gulf.

Of course, while the official explanation for such diplomacy is that Iraq is merely seeking to maintain positive ties with both Tehran and Washington, the prevailing suspicion is that it is leaning toward the latter to help loosen the vice-like grip of the former on Iraqi internal affairs.

For instance, the implementation of energy and trade deals with other Gulf nations that were initiated by the previous government will help reduce Iraq’s dependence on Iran, ultimately weakening the pro-Tehran factions that benefit from such economic and political ties.

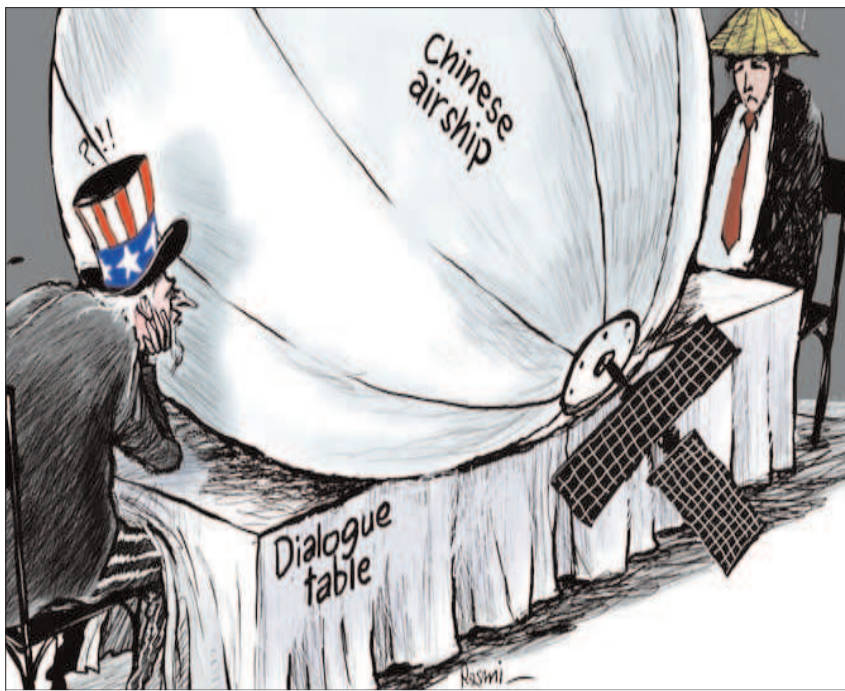
The reality of this precarious balancing act, however, is that it leaves little room for Al-Sudani’s government to maneuver. Frequent meetings with the US ambassador in Baghdad have yet to deliver tangible benefits from what his raucous critics condemn as a wholesale embrace of the “enemy.”

Their criticism not only stems from the refusal to expel about 2,000 US military advisers. Their latest complaints are about the recent deployment of counterterrorism forces to crack down on the smuggling of dollars into Iraq, after the US Federal Reserve last year reduced dollar-denominated transactions in the country by 70 percent.

The move has weakened the Iraqi dinar, sent consumer prices soaring and fueled anti-American sentiment in Baghdad at a time when the prime minister is seeking to demonstrate that Iraq is the best conduit for dialogue to reduce the tensions between the US and Iran that indirectly harm the Iraqi people.

Looking ahead, though, there is some cause for optimism even though the political climate in Baghdad is getting heated. Al-Sudani has proved that he is a skilled politician during his first 100 days in power, adept at deciphering and exploiting rivalries within the Shiite camp. This means that even his most ardent critics have acceded to his leadership, so as to safeguard at least some of their interests, and in the process abandon their fruitless zero-sum politicking.

Washington must play its hand smarter and recognize that Al-Sudani’s pragmatism will accomplish a lot more than any of the alternatives, in terms of ensuring Iraq’s stability and resisting Iran’s encroachment, the effects of which can be further enhanced by diversifying the engagement between the US and Iraq beyond counterterrorism.



## Don’t take your eyes off Iran’s northern border

Luke Coffey

Last August an extremist Shiite group stormed the embassy of Azerbaijan in London and briefly took it over. Last week, another radical attacked an Azerbaijani embassy, but this time in Tehran.

A gunman walked unchallenged past an Iranian security guard and strolled into the embassy, where he killed one Azerbaijani official and wounded two others. A few hours after the attack, the gunman appeared on television giving interviews before he was finally arrested. Baku described the incident as an act of terrorism and recalled all its embassy staff back to Azerbaijan for their safety. Iran said the attack was not politically motivated, and involved a personal matter.

At a minimum, the gunman’s attack was a gross dereliction of Iran’s legal responsibilities under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The convention, to which Iran is a party, requires host nations to protect

Turkmenchay between imperial Russia and Persia, which created the border between these two empires along the Aras River. This move divided ethnic Azerbaijanis between the two empires, and the consequences of this move are still being felt today. Millions of ethnic Azerbaijanis are living in Iran and there has been a constant, but low-level, drumbeat of calls for independence and self determination. While Azerbaijan refrains from commenting publicly about the Azerbaijani minority in Iran, policymakers in Baku are acutely aware of the situation.

Azerbaijan is one of the few predominantly Shiite regions of the world that has never fallen under the control or influence of Iran. Azerbaijan and Israel also enjoy close relations. The world’s largest all-Jewish settlement outside Israel is in Azerbaijan, and Baku supplies Israel with about 40 percent of its oil. This is

have maritime disputes in the Caspian Sea that have even led to confrontations in the past. There have been cases of Iranian naval vessels and fighter jets entering Azerbaijani waters in the Caspian and harassing ships.

In response to the attack on its embassy last week, Azerbaijani security services quickly rounded up a 40-person strong network of Iranian spies and collaborators operating in Azerbaijan. This is the second such counterintelligence operation to take place inside Azerbaijan in the past year. Since 2020, Iran has been conducting large scale military maneuvers along its border with Azerbaijan in a way that has not been seen before. Last October, the Iranian military even rehearsed a military crossing of the Aras River. Unsurprisingly, Azerbaijan considered this to be a provocative move.

A recent report for the Arab News Research & Studies Unit, entitled “The South Caucasus and the Gulf: Overlapping interests

***This move divided ethnic Azerbaijanis between the two empires, and the consequences of this move are still being felt today. Millions of ethnic Azerbaijanis are living in Iran and there has been a constant, but low-level, drumbeat of calls for independence and self determination. While Azerbaijan refrains from commenting publicly about the Azerbaijani minority in Iran, policymakers in Baku are acutely aware of the situation.***

embassies by taking “all appropriate steps to protect the premises of the mission against any intrusion or damage.” Clearly, Tehran did not fulfil its obligations. Considering the tense relationship between Tehran and Baku, and the Islamic Republic’s penchant for attacking embassies, the possibility that this gunman was acting on orders from Iran’s security services cannot be ruled out.

This attack on Azerbaijan’s embassy should serve as a wakeup call. While much of the international community’s attention on Iran is focused primarily in the Middle East, for centuries Tehran has also played a role, for better or for worse, in the South Caucasus. The tensions today, between Iran and Azerbaijan cannot be overstated.

The root cause of these tensions is found in the 1828 Treaty of

a constant concern of Tehran.

Meanwhile, Iran has a cozy relationship with Armenia, which is Azerbaijan’s regional rival. During the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2020, Iran allowed its territory to be used by Russia to resupply Armenia. Iran has used Armenia to evade international economic sanctions in the past. There’s also a growing military relationship between the two countries. Iran has provided Armenia with drones and antitank weapons. According to the US State Department, in 2008 Armenia even provided Iran with missiles and automatic weapons that were used against American troops in Iraq.

In recent years relations between Iran and Azerbaijan remained cordial on the surface, but below the surface they are tense. The two countries

and the benefits of enhanced cooperation,” best summed up the overlapping concerns about Iran between Azerbaijan and the countries of the Gulf. The report said: “Iran has repeatedly shown itself to be a meddling and troublesome neighbor for both the Gulf and South Caucasus regions,” and “enhanced consultation, and possibly even coordination, between certain Gulf states and countries in the South Caucasus would help to improve regional stability and push back the malign Iranian influence.” It would also be wise to add Israel to this discussion.

As the world remains focused on Tehran’s activities in Syria, its missile attacks in northern Iraq, its destabilizing acts of terror in the Gulf, and the use of its drones by Russia against Ukraine, it would be wisenot to take our eyes off Iran’s northern border.

## Climate change increases risk of human trafficking

The transborder smuggling of humans, though a criminal activity, has been flourishing for years. Even now, as the global economy struggles with inflation or recession, the amount and frequency of human trafficking has been rising at a breakneck speed.

A report released last week by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime said there was mounting evidence that climate change was increasing vulnerability to trafficking. The report was based on analysis of data from 141 countries around the world from 2017 to 2021. It says that community-level studies in different parts of the world pointed to weather-induced disasters as root causes for human trafficking.

Human trafficking’s fortunes seem to improve whenever the world is in turmoil. And this is what has been happening over the past few years.

With incidents of extreme weather conditions increasing, such as the prolonged droughts that have hit sub-Saharan Africa, the massive floods that have ravaged South Asian nations including Pakistan, or the erosion of coastal areas in countries including Bangladesh, tens of millions of people have been forced to move

from their homes and are displaced either within the country where they live or, as has been happening more frequently, fall prey to human traffickers who promise them a permanent solution and a blissful future in the developed world. The UN says that, in 2021 alone, climate-related disasters internally displaced more than 23.7 million people, while many others fled their countries.

The UN office noted that an increase in cases of human trafficking had been observed in Bangladesh and the Philippines after devastating cyclones and typhoons displaced millions. Droughts and floods in Ghana and the Caribbean region, which is increasingly prone to severe hurricanes and rising sea levels, have also led to people abandoning their homes and migrating.

Another category of people who are forced into moving out of their homelands are the victims of civil wars and prolonged armed conflicts. Unfortunately, these have often happened in the same areas which have been hit by rising incidents of climate change, with the Middle East, Africa, and South and Southeast Asia being the location of some of the most violent

Ranvir S. Nayar

and long-running armed conflicts. These have also driven millions to head for foreign shores, seeking to escape the bullets and bombs in their backyards and settle in peaceful countries where they can find employment and restart their lives.

Unfortunately, in both cases — climate change and armed conflicts — the vast majority of people who are worst-hit are from the poor and marginalized sections of these societies. While the people who are better off are generally able to escape the worst of climate change or conflicts, the poor remain highly vulnerable and hence are over-exposed to human trafficking gangs.

Also, increasingly, armed conflicts are being caused or made worse by climate change. Note the conflicts between various tribes over land holdings in many African nations where climate change has begun to render large tracts of land unfit for agriculture or cattle rearing. There are hundreds of small, but sustained, armed conflicts that have been going on for over a decade in Africa. With droughts or floods impacting larger areas more severely, these conflicts will only become more

common in the future. And they could spread out of Africa, with Asia and the Middle East being among the most likely regions for this vortex to hit next.

This will be music to the ears of human trafficking gangs across the world, as it assures them of a long line of confirmed customers (or, rather, victims) for decades to come. But it is not just the displaced who are victims of human trafficking. The countries that end up receiving these millions of displaced persons also suffer from the ill-effects of such unplanned and disorganized migration, which fuels societal friction and puts enormous strains on the economies of the recipient countries, even if they are amongst the richest nations of the world.

But the world need not be a helpless victim of human traffickers. So far, the international community has failed to act in a coordinated fashion to counter these gangs and, in many cases, some countries, notably the European nations, imagined that just by funneling a few million euros or buying some modern weaponry and gadgets for local police forces in the countries that are the source of these migratory flows, or lie along the migration routes, can solve the problem.

But, more often than not, the police forces in these countries are not only completely ill-trained and ineffective, but are themselves in cahoots with the human trafficking gangs, who share their ill-gotten wealth with them.

Instead of patchwork solutions, these challenges require the adoption of holistic approaches — whether that is taking adequate measures to mitigate the impact of climate change or helping communities vulnerable to climate change adapt. These measures are in consonance with the commitments that rich nations have made for decades in terms of funding poorer countries to help them deal with climate change — which has been caused for the most part by the developed economies of the world.

The global community also needs to improve coordination among various arms of government — be it law enforcement or social services — to map out the areas which may be most vulnerable to climate change and/or armed conflicts — which can often be transnational — and then come up with a joint plan to help communities prepare for climate change and protect themselves from falling victim to the traffickers.

## What are the prospects for a cross-Strait detente?

(Continued from Page-6)

Of Hsia’s visit, KMT chairman Eric Chu said in August: “This is not for the party itself, but for the good of Taiwan.”

Hsia’s controversial trip was reminiscent of the spring 2005 visit of then KMT chairman Lien Chan to China, dubbed the “ice-breaking journey” by Taiwan’s media. Lien made the trip shortly after China passed its Anti-Secession Law codifying the use of force against Taiwan if Beijing deems the island to be seceding.

Lien’s trip paved the way for ever-deeper KMT-CCP exchanges that circumvented Taiwan’s elected DPP government. The strategy paid off though: The KMT won the 2008 presidential election in a landslide.

The KMT continued to extend its olive branch in October, sending a congratulatory letter to the CCP on the first day of its

20th National Party Congress. The letter highlighted the 1992 consensus, the nebulous KMT-CCP understanding that the Chinese mainland and Taiwan belong to the same entity, as well as opposition to Taiwan independence.

The KMT has found a receptive audience in Beijing. Speaking at a conference in December for cross-Strait entrepreneurs, China’s new No. 4, Wang Huning, expressed his hope that the businesspeople would “make continuous efforts to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, promote the peaceful and integrated development of cross-Strait relations and advance national reunification.”

The ruling party too has subtly shifted its tone on cross-Strait relations since its resounding defeat in the November local elections. Voters did not rebuke the DPP for its management of

cross-Strait relations but rather its pandemic policies, which overpromised — Taiwan initially pursued “zero-COVID” — and ultimately devastated many small businesses.

Still, the DPP realizes that many aspects of its governance will come under greater scrutiny now that it is politically vulnerable and election season is approaching. With the economy forecast to grow less than 3% this year, the slowest rate since 2018, some Taiwanese may question whether less trade with China — the reality when the DPP is in power — is the way to go.

It is no wonder that President Tsai Ing-wen in her New Year speech called on Beijing to resume talks with Taipei. She spoke of her hopes that people on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait can resume exchanges “in an orderly manner” this year and also offered to help China deal with its

COVID-19 surge.

Even Xi Jinping seems a bit more conciliatory these days. He spoke of Taiwan in convivial terms during his New Year address, saying that people on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait “are members of one and the same family.” Nor did his speech mention bringing Taiwan under China’s control.

In line with Xi’s softer Taiwan tone, China in late January scrapped its import ban on Kinmen Kaoliang sorghum liquor following a meeting between Taiwan Affairs Office Director Sung Tao and Kinmen County magistrate Chun Fu-hai. Kaoliang is the Taiwan-controlled outlying archipelago’s biggest export and popular with Chinese sorghum liquor aficionados.

The stakes are unusually high for Taiwan’s next presidential election in

May 2024. Never have U.S.-China relations and cross-Strait relations both been so strained with Taiwan going to the ballot box.

The winner will have to play a weak hand against a China that is militarily stronger than ever and unwavering in its determination to bring Taiwan under its control.

The likely DPP candidate, Vice President Lai Ching-te, has stoked controversy in Washington for his alleged “deep-green” (strongly pro-independence) leanings, best encapsulated by his statement in 2017 that he is “a political worker for Taiwan independence.”

He recently clarified his stance, saying that Taiwan has no need to declare independence because it is already an independent and sovereign nation. He added that the Republic of China, Taiwan’s formal name, and the PRC are not subordinate to each other.

This viewpoint aligns neatly with mainstream political opinion in Taiwan. Indeed, only a fraction of voters believe that Taiwan is a province subordinate to Beijing.

How Lai would handle the tense cross-Strait relationship remains uncertain though. Lai lacks Tsai’s experience in the area; she was a senior adviser to Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council from 1994-1998 and its chair from 2000-2004, while he is best known for serving as the mayor of the southern city of Taipei.

Of the two likely KMT candidates, party chairman Eric Chu and New Taipei City Mayor Hou Yu-ih, Chu has more experience

engaging with China. Chu traveled to Beijing in 2015 to meet with Xi, which likely helped pave the way for then President Ma Ying-jeou’s historic meeting with the Chinese leader later that year in Singapore.

Hou, however, is the more popular of the two politicians. Some polls show him defeating Lai. None so far show Chu doing so.

Regardless, the DPP faces an uphill battle to win the presidency for a third consecutive time. Since Taiwan fully democratized in 1996, no party has ever accomplished that feat.

It will be even harder for the DPP to win if the economy continues its downward trajectory.

Gross domestic product declined 0.86% annually in the fourth quarter of 2022, the first contraction in nearly seven years. Lukewarm demand for electronics exports, the backbone of Taiwan’s economy, was the culprit.

That said, China has a history of ramping up its intimidation of Taiwan during election season, which helps the DPP make the case that the party tougher on China is the best one to lead the country. Should Beijing repeat that behavior this year, it could cause the KMT to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory — and ironically worsen the prospects of cross-Strait detente.

### Important Notice

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# Multiple initiatives to boost Balochistan’s livestock, dairy sectors on cards

QUETTA (APP): The Balochistan government has chalked out a comprehensive plan to upgrade the Dairy and Livestock sectors to exploit their full potential and generate economic activities across the province.

Giving outlines of the plan, an official of the Balochistan government said that dairy and poultry farms in the province would be overhauled to meet international standards and achieve maximum outcome.

He said the government had also planned to establish new veterinary hospitals and dispensaries to ensure livestock’s better health and productivity.

Establishing camel research and milk processing units in Musakhail and Washuk district would also

be approved in the coming days, he added. In order to generate more revenue, the government would also set up a cattle farm in Lehri district, the official said.

Modern livestock equipment to cater the needs of cattle owners and to boost the sector would also be provided, he said.

Under the vision of chief minister, Abdul Quddus Bizenjo to revive the livestock sector for improving the living standards of local people, the government would launch the project of Backyard Rural Poultry Balochistan, he added.

He said the lack of proper marketing of livestock was the main issue and for this purpose, the government has approved the plan for the construction of Hide, Skin and meat markets to help improve the

standard of marketing of this huge sector.

The government had also started Sheep and Goat fattening programme in Balochistan and that would boost the sector and also attract people to invest in the sector, he said.

The official said that the department was working to strengthen the Semen Production Unit and Animal Disease Investigation Laboratory at Quetta.

**Balochistan govt establishes sale points of flour to ensure flour at fixed price:** Balochistan food department has established sale points of flour across the province to ensure the provision of a 20 kg bag of flour for Rs 1510 to provide relief to the masses.

The Balochistan government would continue its efforts to ensure the avail-

ability of wheat flour at a fixed price in the province, said an official of the Balochistan government.

The government would take stern action against vendors and hoarders’ self-imposed increase of prices of wheat flour and other essential commodities.

The chief minister has directed the authorities concerned to ensure the provision of flour items at fixed price and the deputy commissioners should take action against those who were selling flour at high prices and impose fines on them.

The district authorities conducted raids in various areas of the province and recovered thousands of flour bags. The raiding party sealed many godowns and arrested their owners for hoarding.



PORT QASIM: Parliamentarians visiting CPEC projects in Sindh organized by Pakistan-China Institute in cooperation with Power in Port Qasim and Shanghai Electric and SECNC.

## China’s textile, apparel exports see stable growth

BEIJING (APP): China’s exports of textile and apparel products registered stable growth last year, data showed. The export volume reached 323.3 billion US dollars in 2022, up 2.6 percent year on year, according to the China National Textile and Apparel Council.

Textile exports gained 2 percent from a year ago to total about 148 billion US dollars, while exports of apparel and accessories rose 3.2 percent to over 175 billion US dollars.

Large textile enterprises saw their combined operating revenue climb 0.9 percent year on year to nearly 5.26 trillion yuan (about 780 billion US dollars) in 2022.

## Saudia, Oman sign executive program

RIYADH (APP): The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman signed an executive program in the field of communications, information technology infrastructure and submarine communications cable investment.

Signed by the Minister of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) Eng. Abdullah bin Amer Al-Swaha and Omani Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology Eng. Said Hamood Al Maawali, the executive program aims at activating the strategic partnership stipulated in the memorandum of understanding the two countries signed last November.

The program aims at utilizing the geographic location of the two countries and enhance investment in submarine and land cables as well as creating a joint business environment to bolster cooperation in telecommunication and information technology infrastructure, and high-speed digital interconnection for data exchange.

It also aims at providing options for the implementation of regional digital interconnection through investment bodies and licensed companies, in addition to promoting joint investment in data centers and Global Cloud Services (GCS) to maximize the interest of the region.

# Seedless citrus need energetic propagataion for exportable surplus

MULTAN (APP): An agriculture expert has advocated energetic propagation of seedless citrus varieties to sizably expand area under its cultivation for exportable surplus that can attract dollars to Pakistan via exports.

Dr. Muhammad Rafiq Akhtar, director agriculture information Punjab, stressed, it was time the plants of new varieties of seedless kino be prepared in bulk as early as possible in nurseries and be provided to farmers at lower price to improve financial standing of farmers and fetch foreign exchange through exports either by orchard owners themselves or the exporters.

Seedless kino emerged on Pakistan agriculture landscape only after its natural mutations were observed and tested for many years and fruit and its production potential analyzed and matured.

In Punjab, it was the work of scientists from

Citrus Research Institute (CRI) Sargodha working under the umbrella of Ayub Agriculture Research Institute (AARI) Faisalabad.

Spring season Feb-Mar is best for grafting of seedless kino, said Dr. Rafiq in an advisory detailing technicalities involved in preparation of seedless citrus plants and grafting.

Plants of new varieties of seedless kino are available at limited places and in very low number in Punjab, he said and asked farmers to exercise caution in selecting grafting wood for their citrus orchards. Farmers can also consult AARI and CRI scientists for assistance in this important selection of graft wood.

Graft wood should be obtained from the plant of the age of 7-8 years that is best in production and quality, produces zero seed fruit and possesses resistance against diseases. Weaker branches of old plants should be avoided.

Detailing specifications

of graft wood and root stock, he said, graft wood should be 10-15 mm thick or at least match the thickness of a pencil and length should be 15-20 cm with 3-4 eyes or buds. The graft wood should be 6-9 month old, has white line, should have round shape with no thorns.

Root stock should be 10-15 mm thick and 3-4 feet long. For nursery cultivation, seed bed structure should be 4 feet wide and six feet long, should be at a height of 15cm from land level. Seed should be planted 10mm in depth and seed rows should be 15cm apart.

After shifting to nursery, plant to plant distance should be 25cm while rows should have a distance of 20-30cm. Two feet space should be left after every four rows so that farmers face no difficulty in grafting plants or cleaning the space.

Grafting is easy when juice starts running through plants and their crust is removed easily.

# Tourists spots in Pakistan can fetch huge foreign exchange: Meher

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Kyrgyzstan Trade House Meher Kashif Younis on Sunday said Pakistan can earn huge foreign exchange from tourism industry by offering world class services to foreign and local tourists especially during winter season when snow capped peaks are centre of attractions of tourists.

Talking to CEO Discover Pakistan Dr. Kaiser Rafiq, he said if snow capped peaks in other global destinations can be accessed during peak winter season why flights to Pakistan’s northern area are disrupted with every weather forecast.

He said local tourists who is also Coordinator operators should be facilitated to manage chartered flights to northern areas to attract foreign and local tourists.

He said what’s tourists want is security coupled with better service laced with trained guides in addition to best living condi-

tions accompanied by hygienic foods.

He said air connectivity to far flung areas in winter of otherwise needs to be improved significantly which will promise an influx of tourists. He said a sizeable number of foreign tourists spend whole of season at one spot where they feel comfortable with facilities and package.

He said government must tailor results oriented tourism policy offering a basket of incentives to investors eyeing the tourism sector with tax holidays, loans on easy terms and conditions and rebates etc.

Meher Kashif Younis who is also Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman said Swat, Huza, Galiat, Chitral, Malam Jabba, Naran, Skardu should have circular economies that allow them to reinvest in tourism industry and must be fully capatilised and promoted.

He suggested incentives

such as zero tax during season on air tickets, restaurants, hotel stays, shopping and other entertainment activities etc should also be given to tourists. Dr. Kaiser Rafiq said “Discover Pakistan “ a first-ever tourism channel showing the best scenic spots to attract foreign and local tourists and response from foreign viewers is tremendous and unbelievable.

He said internationally popular historic religious places especially Sikh, Bhudda and Hindu needs special focus and huge number of Sikh and foreign tourists have shown their keen interest to visit their holy places and other tourist spots.

He said in view of their overwhelming response, efforts are being made to start chartered flights and five stars hotel during next season if government patronised and made procedures simplified under one window operation.

## Traders stage Kashmir rally

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Under the auspices of Markazi Anjuman Tajraan Bahawalpur, a rally was staged to condemn Indian brutalities against the people of Kashmir and to express solidarity with Kashmiris.

The rally was taken out from the commercial hub of the city and after marching on city roads and passing through different bazaars, it reached Circular Road where the participants staged demonstration in protest against India.

Addressing the rally, Syed Israr Hussain, the President of Markazi Anjuman Tajraan Bahawalpur, said that India has been victimising innocent people of Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJK) of violence. He said that millions of innocent people of IOJK were forced to face atrocities being committed by Indian armed forces.

He said that traders and people of Pakistan stood firmly by with the brothers and sisters living in IOJK. He urged the United Nations and the world community to put pressure on India to stop violence against the people of IOJK.

## ‘We Exhibit 2023’ to be organized

SIALKOT (APP): Chairperson Legal Aid Committee Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCIS) Lubna Tabassum has said “We Exhibit 2023” will be held on March 11 at Family Park Sialkot Cantt.

Talking to APP, she said women entrepreneurs would be given an opportunity to participate in the exhibition which was very important for business women.

She said the exhibition would not only give women of the region an opportunity to display their manufactured products at local level but also help new entrepreneurs in determining their line-up business.

She said the WCCIS had been serving women entrepreneurs with a mission of assisting them in commercial sector and creating a conducive environment for working women.

Lubna Tabassum said ‘We-Exhibit 2023’ would be an excellent opportunity for women entrepreneurs to showcase and highlight their products and bring up their businesses to the next level, adding that 600 booths had been booked for the exhibition.

# Tobacco vendors’ licensing enforcement campaign continues

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control Department, Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) in collaboration with the Ministry of National Health Services’ project Tobacco-Free Islamabad issues licenses to point of sale every year.

Project Manager, Tobacco-Free Islamabad, Muhammad Aftab Ahmed, appreciated the efforts of the Islamabad administration to make Islamabad a tobacco-free city.

He said the health department considers precautionary measures as its priority. He said that the campaign was aimed at controlling, regulating, and discouraging the sale of tobacco.

He said that the civil administration in collaboration with the health min-

istry was determined to make Islamabad a smoke-free city.

He said that the World Health Organization already recognized Islamabad as a smoke-free city. The move, he said, would not only help in compiling shopkeepers’ data but also increase the revenue of the department, besides controlling tobacco sales to youth.

He said that licensing of tobacco sellers has proved to be a very effective way to curb the illicit sale of cigarettes in the capital. He added before taking legal action, the excise team issues a warning to the vendors to get a license or renew the existing one within a week.

# EU to fund projects for green inclusive growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Pak-British Friendship Council North West Chapter Muhammad Arbab Khan Sunday said the European Union will fund three new development programmes worth 87 million to support green and inclusive economic growth in Pakistan.

Talking to Chairman UK-Pakistan Joint Business Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq, he said the programmes are part of the European Union’s support to Pakistan in post-flood rehabilitation and reconstruction and are designed in close cooperation with the federal and provincial governments.

He said these projects will focus on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Gilgit Baltistan (GB), and

Balochistan and aims at improving agricultural value chains, providing access to clean energy and enhancing the availability of the skilled labour force, said a press release.

He said they are also part of the broader coordination efforts by the EU and its member states materialised through the Team Europe Initiative and contribute to EU’s Global Gateway, an overarching initiative to link the digital, energy and transport sectors and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the world.

Mian Kashif Ashfaq hoped that these plans would contribute toward strengthening socioeconomic indicators, such as the rural economic transformation, provision of cheap

energy and imparting much-needed technical training for the youth, he said that the EU support was necessary for providing desired impetus to Pakistan’s green and clean efforts.

He said the programmes will enable Pakistan to better utilise the skills of its people and its natural resources, especially given the large-scale devastation caused by the recent floods.

He said the EU support comes at a crucial time when country is grappling with an economic crisis and affectees are still struggling with the effects of the terrible floods and it will contribute to economic recovery in the aftermath of the floods and make Pakistan stronger and more resilient.

# Need urged to bring maximum area under cultivation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan Hi Tech Hybrid Seeds Association Shahzad Ali Malik Sunday said Pakistan can attain food autarky by bringing entire arable land under plough with exclusive use of certified best quality seed preferably hi-tech hybrid seed for record bumper crops production in the country.

Talking to a delegation of progressive farmers from Mamukanjana district Faisalabad led by Chaudhary

Shoukat Ali Arain, he said Pakistan has the potential to offset the impending threat of food insecurity hovering around in the wake of Russia-Ukraine conflict by offering a basket of incentives to farmers for cultivation of arable land. The use of hi-tech hybrid seeds and certified approved varities of seeds will promise better yield through transparent results-oriented management at the grassroots level across the country.

Pakistan was scrambling to get things right but a catastrophic flood worsened the situation, he said adding that agriculture was important not only for food security but also brought about \$4.4 billion through exports.

Shahzad Ali said in prevailing scenario of global uncertainty we should focus on the promotion of the agriculture sector and all kinds of non-certified seed varieties must be banned permanently.

# MP to resist IMF pressure to enhance GST to 18%: Anjum

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: As the International Monetary Fund has been pushing the government to increase the general sales tax rate to a minimum of 18 percent, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry’s Businessmen Panel (BMP) has announced to resist such destructive and harsh move, as the country’s debt servicing cost might escalate to alarmingly Rs5.2 trillion, with inflation accelerating to 29% and economic growth rate slowing down to 1.5 percent in the current fiscal year.

FPCCI former president

and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar stated that the IMF’s demand to consider increasing the GST rate by 1% to 18% in the current fiscal year would prove to be highly inflationary and 1% increase would push the prices of all goods upwards. The higher inflation and lower economic growth would cause higher unemployment and poverty in the country, he added.

He expressed his dissatisfaction about the government’s ability to raise \$8 billion from capital markets and foreign commercial banks in these challenging times.

He said that the government has already spent

Rs2.56 trillion on debt servicing during July-December period of the current fiscal year. The central bank last month increased the interest rates to 17%, which might not help contain inflation but will surely further bleed the budget.

He raised questions about the inflationary impact of the planned increase in electricity prices to lower the circular debt. The government’s estimates were that due to further increase in the electricity prices, inflation could jump to 29%.

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reported that inflation hit the 48 years’

highest level of 27.6% in January. The likely acceleration in the index would bring more misery for the trade and industry which was facing difficulties in meeting soaring cost.

He asked the government to inform the IMF that due to floods, tight monetary policy, high inflation, and a less conducive global environment, the economic growth rate might slow down in the range of 1.5% to 2% -- a pace that was even lower than the population growth rate and would cause more unemployment in Pakistan.

He said that the agriculture sector would contract, the industrial sector might

show nominal growth but the services sector was likely to grow around 3%. Compared to old estimates of generating about 1.5 million new jobs, the government had now realized that the additional jobs in the current fiscal year might not be more than half a million.

According to some estimates, about two million new entrants came in the market in search of jobs every year and a low additional employment number suggested that there would be a higher jobless rate in Pakistan.

The government claimed that it had made arrangements for the \$30 billion gross external loans for this

fiscal year, as the country’s economic viability was at stake, as its gross official foreign exchange reserves plunged to \$3.1 billion.

The government still believed it would raise \$1.5 billion by floating Eurobonds and had made it part of the external financing plan. As against the budgeted over \$7 billion foreign commercial loans, the Ministry of Finance still saw \$6.3 billion materializing in the current fiscal year. The IMF was of the view that in present circumstances, it would be difficult to raise \$8 billion from the capital markets and foreign commercial banks. There were also questions

whether the government could arrange at least \$4 billion for making upcoming debt repayments, excluding rollovers. It hoped to receive a total \$11 billion from the multilateral creditors during the current fiscal year but its materialization depended upon the revival of the IMF program. So far, the Asian Development Bank had been helping Pakistan in a major way, but the World Bank was looking towards the IMF.

There is also issue about the low FBR’s tax-to-GDP ratio, which was now estimated at around 8.4% at the inflated size of the economy. On the projected old

size of Rs78 trillion, the ratio was 9.6% of the GDP, which the IMF did not endorse.

Presently, the total cost of the debt servicing could peak to a whopping Rs5.3 trillion in the current fiscal year 2022-23 while the government had budgeted Rs3.94 trillion but the revised projections were Rs1.3 trillion higher than the budget estimates.

The Rs5.2 trillion would be equal to 54% of the budget announced in June last year and massive spending projections could lead to a demand by the IMF for more taxes or cut in other expenses to create some fiscal space.



## In brief

## Edwards as women's coach

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Former England captain Charlotte Edwards has been appointed head coach of Mumbai Indians' women's team in the inaugural Women's Premier League. The 43-year-old led England to 50-over and T20 World Cup glory in 2009 during a glittering 20-year international career. Since retiring as a player in 2017 she has coached in England and Australia. The WPL, a T20 competition featuring five Indian franchises, runs from 4-24 March. Former India players Jhulan Goswami and Devika Palshikar have been named as bowling and batting coaches respectively.

## Muir wins in Boston

LONDON (Agencies): Laura Muir led a dominant British performance in the 3,000m at the World Indoor Tour in Boston as she claimed victory in her season-opening race. European and Commonwealth 1500m champion Muir won in a time of eight minutes 40.34 seconds as British athletes filled the top four positions. Melissa Courtney-Bryant finished next in 8:41.09, ahead of Katie Snowden (8:47.41) and Hannah Nuttall (8:47.72). Elsewhere, Morgan Lake set an outright British women's high jump record. Competing in Hustopece, Czech Republic, Lake's indoor clearance at 1.99m saw her better Katarina Johnson-Thompson's mark of 1.98m set at the 2016 Rio Olympics. The World Indoor Tour event in Boston also saw the men's world 200m champion Noah Lyles in action, and the home athlete impressed with a 60m personal best of 6.51 seconds, edging compatriot Trayvon Bromell by two-thousandths of a second. Briton Neil Gourelly won the men's mile as he clocked a world-leading time of 3:52.84 to rank third among the UK's all-time indoor performances.

## Norrie victory seals GB place

LONDON (Agencies): Cameron Norrie secured Great Britain's place in the Davis Cup Finals group stage, with his victory over Colombia's Nicolas Mejia giving the visitors an unassailable 3-1 lead in Bogota. The British number one made it back-to-back straight-set wins at altitude on clay as he beat Mejia 6-4 6-4. It meant Dan Evans was not required to play the final rubber against Nicolas Barrientos. Evans and Neal Skupski won their doubles contest earlier on Saturday. The British pair defeated former world number ones Juan Sebastian Cabal and Robert Farah 6-4 6-4 to turn the tie in GB's favour, after Norrie beat Barrientos on Friday to cancel out Evans' surprise opening loss to the 253rd-ranked Mejia. "My feelings are of immense pride for what the boys have done," said GB captain Leon Smith. "They went out and fought really hard. It never had to be the highest quality tennis because the conditions don't allow for that, but it needed a lot of grit and determination," he added. The challenge of competing 2,566 metres above sea level and using the unfamiliar pressureless balls required to cope with the high altitude had led captain Smith to describe the trip as the "most complicated" his side could have drawn. However, Norrie seized the opportunity to send 10-time winners GB into September's 16-team group stage with a hard-earned win at Pueblo Viejo Country Club.

## Quetta Gladiators edge out Peshawar Zalmi in exhibition match at home venue



CM Balochistan province Abdul Qudus Bizenjo, left, handing over the trophy to Quetta Gladiators' captain Sarfaraz Ahmed.

QUETTA (Monitoring Desk): Sarfaraz Ahmed's Quetta Gladiators on Sunday defeated Peshawar Zalmi by three runs in a last-ball thriller in a Pakistan Super League (PSL) exhibition match at Quetta's Nawab Akbar Bugti Cricket Stadium.

Quetta, the capital of Pakistan's impoverished southwestern Balochistan province, has not seen a cricket match in several years owing to the province's precarious security situation. Separatist groups, who demand independence from Pakistan, have mounted attacks on the country's security

forces in recent weeks.

Thousand of cricket fans watched the action live as Pakistan captain Babar Azam donned the yellow colors of the Peshawar Zalmi for the first time and led the franchise against Sarfaraz Ahmed's Quetta Gladiators. Set a target to chase 185 runs, the Gladiators managed to score an impressive 181-7 and needed four runs off the last ball before Naseem Shah was able to steal the match away with a dot ball.

"It was one cracker of a game," Quetta Gladiators wrote on Twitter. "This victory is for our fans," it added. Batting first, the

Gladiators' impressive performance was spearheaded by middle-order batter Iftekhar Ahmed, who remained unbeaten on 94 from 50 balls while Abdul Wahid Bangalzai scored 28 runs from 19 balls.

The highlight of the match was the last over of the Gladiators' innings when Ahmed hit Wahab Riaz for six sixes. Riaz proved to be the pick of the Zalmi bowlers though, finishing with figures of 3/47 at the end.

For Zalmi, Muhammad Haris smashed 53 off 35 balls while Shahid Afridi scored 25 from 17 balls. Muhammad Hasnain ended up with figures of 3/30 while Ahmed also performed well with the ball, taking two wickets.

The PSL, Pakistan's own professional cricket league, will see its eighth edition kick off from February 13 when defending champions Lahore Qalandars take on the Multan Sultans in Multan. The PSL, arguably Pakistan's biggest sports event, will see cricket action in Karachi, Multan, Lahore, and Rawalpindi before it concludes on March 19.

## Usman successfully defends WBO Youth World Title

DUBAI (INP): Pakistani boxer, Usman Wazeer, the reigning WBO Youth World Champion, on Sunday successfully defended his title against the Thai challenger, Krung Kling in Dubai.

According to detail, WBO Youth World Champion Pakistani boxer Usman Wazeer has made the country proud by achieving another big success in boxing by successfully defending his Youth World title in Dubai. In the title fight, Usman Wazeer defeated Thai boxer Krung Kling and in the 7th round of the 10-round title fight, Usman knocked out his opponent.

Usman Wazeer is undefeated by winning all 10 international fights so far and he has named this victory after the martyrs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police. The boxer said that he is proud of the sacrifices of policemen in the war against terrorism. I am grateful to the people of Pakistan for praying for my success.

On the other hand, Pakistani boxer Muhammad Saqib has also won the international fight in a boxing competition in Dubai. The young boxer knocked out the Iranian opponent in the third round.

## Man United slip up in draw with Everton, Chelsea go top of WSL

MANCHESTER (Reuters): Manchester United's title hopes suffered a setback as they were held to a scoreless draw at home by Everton on Sunday, allowing Chelsea to replace them at the top of the Women's Super League table after a cracking 3-2 win over Tottenham Hotspur.

The Blues moved into first position on 31 points, two ahead of United and five ahead of Manchester City after 12 games. Arsenal, who are fourth on 25 points with two games in hand over the top three, take on West Ham United later on Sunday.

On a frustrating afternoon for United, Ella Toone hit the post in the first half as the home side created several good chances but Everton, fifth in the table, showed steely resolve to keep them at bay.

The Toffees' Irish international keeper Courtney Brosnan combined some superb saves with the occasional slice of luck as she kept a clean sheet, with her best stop denying Katie Zelem midway through the second half.

In London, Tottenham striker Beth England scored against her former club but it wasn't enough to stop Chelsea from going back to the top thanks in part to a superb solo goal from Lauren James that helped secure the three points.

England, who joined Spurs from Chelsea in January, cancelled out Jess Carter's eighth-minute opener for the Blues, but James crowned a mazy run from the right wing by drilling a calm finish to put them in front again.

Norwegian Guro Reiten, recently awarded Norway's Golden Ball as the nation's best player in 2022, added a third for Chelsea, who had to endure a nervous finale after Spurs substitute Nikola Karczewska made it 3-2 in the 89th minute.

## 3rd Allama Iqbal Polo Tournament: Remington Pharma clinch trophy



LAHORE (APP): Remington Pharma won the title of the 3rd Allama Iqbal Polo Tournament sponsored by Lahore Smart City after beating Diamond Paints by 9-7 in the final played here at the Jinnah Polo Fields on Sunday.

The chief guest on the occasion was Project Director Lahore Smart City Brig Muhammad Nadeem Aslam (R), who distributed prizes among the winners at the prize distribution ceremony. Jinnah Polo Fields President Lt Col Shoaib Aftab (R), Secretary Maj Ali Taimur (R) and a large number of spectators were also present there to witness and enjoy the enthralling final on the occasion of Kashmir Day.

The final match proved a very challenging and exciting one, and after a tough fight, Remington Pharma registered an impressive 9-7 triumph over Diamond Paints. Phenomenal Hamza Mawaz Khan emerged as hero of the final as he gave a brilliant performance and malleted eight excellent

goals for Remington Pharma, which had also a half goal handicap advantage, while the remaining one was beautifully converted by Ahmed Bilal Riaz.

Nico Roberts though played outstanding polo and impressed the spectators with beautiful mallet and pony work and also fired in five fabulous goals while his teammates Bilal Hayat Noon and Mir Shoaib Ahmed slammed in one goal each, yet their efforts proved futile and they lost the title clash by 7-9.

John Fisher and Amirreza Behboudi supervised the match as field umpires. Talking to media after clinching the title, Captain of Remington Pharma Hamza Mawaz Khan said: "The team Remington Pharma played very well in this season and it was because of hard work as well as team work due to which we have been recording title victories one after another.

We will work harder and try to lift more titles in the remaining events of this

season." Sharing his views, Basel Faisal Khokhar of Remington Pharma said: "My father Dr. Faisal Khokhar, mother Maryam Faisal Khokhar and the entire family is fully supporting me and it was due to their full support and buck up that I have reached this point. We have played this season well and now won this prestigious tournament as well. Now we are eager to add more titles in our titles tally.

"Earlier, FG/Din Polo won the in the subsidiary final by defeating Platinum Homes/Master Paints 9-6. Remiro Zavellata smashed in superb six goals while Mian Abbas Mukhtar banged in a brace and Shah Shamy Alam scored one goal.

For Platinum Homes/Master Paints, which had a half goal handicap advantage, Amirreza Behboudi cracked a quartet while Agha Musa Ali Khan and Qadeer Ashfaq scored one goal each. John Fisher and Ahmad Khan officiated the match as field umpires.

## Amir, Shaheen, Wahab and Wasim on fast bowlers in HBL PSL

LAHORE (APP): The HBL Pakistan Super League has been synonymous with high-quality fast bowling since its inception in 2016. A distinct feature of the league has been the domination of pacers with four of the five leading wicket-takers in the tournament's history being fast bowlers.

Feeding into the depth of Pakistan's pace bowling arsenal, the HBL PSL has produced some talented quicks including Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Muhammad Hasnain, Muhammad Wasim Jnr, Naseem Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Shahnawaz Dahani who have made a mark on the international stage.

PCB Digital spoke with Muhammad Amir, Muhammad Wasim, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Wahab Riaz, as the fast bowlers discussed the mantra to success in T20 cricket, the bowling tactics deployed for different stages of an innings and the impact of HBL PSL on Pakistan's fast bowling landscape. These interviews are available at the HBL PSL YouTube Channel.

### Muhammad Amir – Karachi Kings

A longtime member of the Karachi Kings outfit, Amir was the first player to take a hat-trick in HBL PSL when he dismissed Lahore Qalandars' Dwayne Bravo, Zohaib Khan and Kevon Cooper on successive balls in Dubai in 2016. He has taken 54 wickets and also bowled six maiden overs in his 59-match HBL PSL career, most for any bowler in the tournament.

"In T20 cricket, you have to understand what the pitch demands from you as a bowler. You do not worry about which batters are on strike, but instead assess what the wicket requires you to do. "If there is swing on offer, I will rely on fuller lengths but if the pitch is slow, I will use the off-cutter as my stock ball.

"Nowadays in T20s, there is not a lot of swing to play with apart from the first couple of overs, hence, you have to come up with a

strong plan B. You must have different types of deliveries besides conventional swing to outfox the batter.

"As a new-ball bowler, my role in the team is to take early wickets in the Powerplay. On the other hand, while defending a target, I try to create pressure by bowling dot deliveries because if I go for a wicket, I may concede boundaries and the team cannot afford that."

### Muhammad Wasim Junior – Islamabad United

Wasim Jnr has been a dynamic addition to the Islamabad United unit over the past two seasons with his skiddy pace often troubling the batters in the death overs. 12 of Wasim's 20 wickets in HBL PSL have come in the death overs of an innings, showing his utility in the final phase.

"Fitness is central to a fast bowler's success and bowling rhythm. Bowling an accurate yorker is a difficult task but the more practice you do in the nets, the better you get at executing the effective delivery.

"If you are bowling in the first innings, your main goal is to dismiss the batters early and keep the opposition restricted to a low score, whereas in the second innings, you can be defensive in your lines and dry up the runs depending on the target."

### Shaheen Shah Afridi – Lahore Qalandars

Lahore Qalandars captain Shaheen has struck in his first over of an innings 15 times in the HBL PSL, consistently providing his team with an attacking start. He was the leading wicket-taker in HBL PSL 7 with 20 scalps. To date, he is the third most successful bowler with 70 wickets in 50 matches at an average of just over 20 with an economy-rate of 7.63.

"Any good batter in the world who has played in the HBL PSL, will always appreciate the standards of fast bowling in the league.

"The main reason is that all the fast bowlers here have healthy competition amongst themselves. They

are constantly looking to better each other and putting in impressive performances. This is a positive sign for Pakistan cricket that we have good quicks coming through who bowl with some heat."

### Wahab Riaz – Peshawar Zalmi

Wahab remains the only bowler in HBL PSL to reach the 100-wicket landmark when he took the scalp of Islamabad United batter Danish Aziz last year. The 37-year-old is also the most capped player in the league with 77 appearances and has donned Zalmi colours across all seven seasons.

"As a bowler, you should be aware of your strengths and weaknesses. You should know how to bowl according to each phase of the innings. The more matches you play and the more experience you gain, you learn important lessons with the exposure.

"I keep things very simple in T20s. It is necessary you realise that batters will attack and you can go for runs, but you need to trust the process and not forget the basics."

### Upcoming HBL PSL media releases:

6 February – Significance of HBL PSL

7 February – PCB Podcast, featuring Imad Wasim, Mohammad Rizwan and Shadab Khan

Previous HBL PSL media releases:

20 January – HBL PSL 8 schedule announced

24 January – Fans to nominate Hamar Heroes for HBL PSL 8

25 January – Teams strengthen rosters in HBL PSL 8 replacement draft

31 January – Babar Azam will aim to notch maiden century in HBL PSL

1 February – Shaheen raring for his comeback in HBL PSL 2023

2 February – Babar, Sarfaraz and Shaheen feature in special edition of PCB Podcast

3 February – New boys on the block

4 February – Fakhar, Haris and Sharjeel on making of aggressive openers.

## Pakistan finalize team for Tent pegging World Cup qualifiers at home



ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Equestrian Federation of Pakistan (ECP) has finalized a five-player team for the Tent Pegging World Cup qualifiers scheduled to take place in Pakistan from February 15. Irfan Wattoo,

Wajahatullah Khan, Nasir Abbas, Tasawur Abbas Lak and Fazeel Amjad Bhatti have been selected, following rigorous trials, to represent Pakistan at the event. Meanwhile, Haroon Bandial was named head coach of the team.

"We have done complete preparations since Pakistan is hosting such a big event for the very first time," said President EFP Sultan Mohammad Ali.

"Pakistani horses are admired worldwide. We hope we live up to this expectation through our performances" he added.

It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan was given the opportunity to host the Tent Pegging World Cup Qualifiers after India lost the hosting rights of the event last year for letting Indian players play for Nepal's team illegally.

Six teams will participate in the event which includes hosts Pakistan, Egypt, Libya, Belarus, Iran and Syria.

## Lionel Messi scores stunner to help PSG to narrow win



LONDON (Agencies): Lionel Messi scored in the second half to help Paris Saint-Germain recover from a woeful start and extend their Ligue 1 lead to a provisional eight points with a 2-1 home victory over Toulouse on Saturday.

Messi struck the winner after the break with his third goal in his last five league games to put PSG on 54 points from 22 games. Achraf Hakimi had cancelled out Branco van den Boomen's opener in the first half for Christophe Galtier's side, who had only

won two of their last five matches in Ligue 1.

The result left Toulouse in 12th place on 29 points.

Marseille are second on 46 points before hosting Nice on Sunday with third-placed Lens travelling to Stade Brestois. Without Neymar and Kylian Mbappe, both injured, Messi was flanked by Hugo Ekiti in attack with Vitinha just behind. "Lionel was our engine, he scored and created chances. I ask of the team that they play for him," said Galtier.

"His team mates need to make more efforts defen-

sively to give him more freedom to create movement and opportunities." Renato Sanches was on in midfield following Marco Verratti's suspension, but the Portugal international left the pitch in tears after sustaining a thigh injury on 12 minutes.

Van den Boomen then opened the scoring in the 20th minute with a finely taken free kick that left Gianluigi Donnarumma with both feet stuck in the ground. Marquinhos latched onto a Messi free kick, only for his deflection to hit the post 12 minutes before the break, but Hakimi was more precise five minutes later with a superb curled attempt from outside the box.

Messi then curled another one into the bottom corner from outside the area in the 58th minute to put PSG decisively ahead, coming close to adding one more in stoppage time only to hit the post.

## Int'l coach Shah Faisal appointed as coordinator KP Karate Association

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Karate Association Sunday appointed international coach Shah Faisal as Coordinator in a general council meeting held here.

Looking after his thorough work for the development of the Karate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and holding scores of Karate events in Hayatabad sports Complex as Administrator, the General Council in its meeting unanimously decided to appoint him as Coordinator of the Association.

The meeting expressed the hope that he would continue his vital work for the support and coordinate with

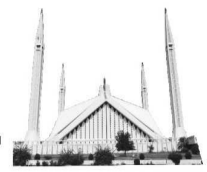
various institutions so that the Game of Karate would be promoted more not only in the province but also in all across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The meeting, Chaired by its President Khurshid Khan, also lauded Shah Faisal for holding many events with the private and public partnership.

Chairman Pakistan Karate Federation Muhammad Jahangir, Secretary General of Provincial Karate Association Pride of Performance Khalid Noor along with office-bearers of various District Associations participated in large numbers.

In the meeting, satisfaction was expressed while reviewing the performance of the association and commitment was reiterated to work as a team to improve the performance and promotion of karate in the provinces.

Shah Faisal has paid tribute to the Karate Association, especially President Khurshid Khan, for appointing him as the coordinator, saying that he will use all his energies for the promotion of karate in the province and the search for new talent, the welfare of the players and will play a role to give them maximum opportunities.



## In brief

### Maintenance work with cost of Rs 31.1m

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Highway Authority (NHA) has planned to commence maintenance work on Hazara Motorway (E-35) with an estimated cost of Rs 31,178,824. According to an official document of NHA, the special maintenance work and rehabilitation of the service road from Km 28-29 (South Bound) will cost Rs 7,347,690. The 180 km-long motorway has six lanes till Haripur, after which it is a four-lane road till Mansehra, and narrows down to two lanes till Thakot. The motorway starts from Havelian, passes through Abbottabad, Mansehra and Shinkiani, and ends at Thakot, the document said. This Motorway has five tunnels two at Abbottabad and one each at Battal, Karmong and Mansehra. Up to Haripur, it is a six-lane controlled-access while from Havelian to Mansehra portion has four lanes. The Mansehra-Thakot section has two lanes. Hazara Motorway is divided into seven packages - the first four (from Burhan to Mansehra) have been completed and were inaugurated on 27 December 2017, 18 November 2019 and last were 3 sections inaugurated in July 2020.

### PPPP invites applications

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary General Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) Farhat Ullah Babar has invited applications for issuance of tickets to candidates willing to contest by-poll in 31 constituencies of the National Assembly. According to a press release issued by party secretariat, the applicants have been directed to send in the applications with a bank draft worth Rs40,000 in the name of the President PPPP by February 12. The candidates from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to send their particulars to Zardari house, Islamabad, while the candidates from Sindh and Balochistan should send their duly filled applications to Bilawal House, Karachi.

### World Pulses Day to be marked

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Pulses Day will be marked on February 10 across the globe including Pakistan to recognize the significance and nutritional benefits of pulses (also known as "legumes") pulses are not only nutritional, they can also contribute to the development of sustainable food systems towards eradicating world hunger and poverty. According to the UN, this is an effective strategy for achieving its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aims at strengthening global peace and enhancing food security. Pulses--also known as legumes--refer to the edible seeds of pod-bearing plants, such as dry peas, dry beans, lupins, lentils, and chickpeas. While pulses exist in various shapes, varieties, sizes, and colors and remain a large part of dishes from across the world, the most popular and widely-consumed types of pulses are dried beans, peas, and lentils. By definition, pulses strictly comprise dried seeds of leguminous plants cultivated for food and exclude vegetable crops harvested while still green. Their seeds are loaded with essential nutrients such as fiber, protein, vitamins, and minerals, making them important and healthy superfoods.



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Qamar Zaman Kaira participating Walk on occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day from Foreign Office to Constitution Avenue.

## Pakistani nation fully supporting Kashmir cause: Kaira

ISLAMABAD (APP): Adviser to Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Qamar Zaman Kaira Sunday said Pakistani nation was observing the Kashmir Solidarity Day on Sunday (February 5) across the world to give a strapping message of supporting the right to self-determination.

Addressing a Solidarity walk jointly organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, he said Kashmir is a jugular vein and an integral part of Pakistan, adding the whole nation is ratifying and endorsing the Kashmir cause since generations to generations.

He said the country has always supported the Kashmir indigenous movement to get the right to self-determination and also urged the international community to play its pivotal role in resolving the

lingering Kashmir issue as per the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

The adviser said the sole objective of celebrating Kashmir Solidarity Day is to shake the conscience of the international community. He further said the world community should break silence over India's perpetrated atrocities and barbarism against innocent people of Kashmir.

Reiterating government's resolve to support Kashmiris, Qamar Zaman Kaira said all walks of life including officials, students, journalists and others in Pakistan are supporting just the demand of Kashmiris for the right to self-determination.

He said India is using different tactics to suppress freedom struggle of Kashmiris but it will not succeed in its nefarious agenda. "Former Indian Prime Minister Nehru has made a promise with

Kashmiris to resolve the dispute through United Nations (UNSC) resolutions and the Indian government should now fulfill his supreme leader promise," he added.

Speaking on the occasion, senior leader All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir chapter Ghulam Muhammad Safi thanked Pakistan and its people for supporting Kashmiris in their struggle of freedom. Observing the Kashmir Solidarity Day is a meaningful and fruitful to urge international community to pressurize India to impede its tyranny against the oppressed Kashmiri people, he maintained.

A large number of officials, students, journalists and other had also participated in the Solidarity walk commenced from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and concluded in D-Chowk Islamabad.

## Skin allergies on rise during winter season

ISLAMABAD (APP): During the winter season, skin allergies are on rise due to dry, cold weather causing itchy rash as dehydration may also a major factor. Talking to a private news channel, Health Expert Dr Saira Awan said to avoid developing winter rash to use water and natural oils in the skin help it stay moist and enhance its protective abilities. Winter rash occurs when the skin loses too much moisture during cold seasons.

She informed that cold, dry air and central heating can suck the water and oils from the skin other environmental factors, as well as lifestyle factors and certain medical conditions can also cause dry skin and rashes. Replying to a question, she said 'Dermatitis' refers to any inflammation of the skin. Dermatitis causes dry, itchy patches to form. It may result from poor circulation or exposure to harsh chemicals, an allergen or an infection.

She further informed about winter skin allergies including 'Rosacea' is a bacterial infection that causes rashes and small, red bumps on the skin. 'Cold urticaria' this rare skin condition causes swollen, itchy bumps called hives to form after exposure to the cold. Some people develop the hives after swimming in cold water, while others are sensitive to cold air. The rash is temporary and lasts for 1-2 hours after exposure to the cold. 'Psoriasis' Cold, dry weather can trigger psoriasis flares other triggers include stress, smoking, and certain infections, she expressed.

## Salik demands UN documents, publications in Urdu

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Federal Minister for Population Welfare and Convener, World Minorities Alliance (WMA), J. Salik on Sunday demanded the United Nations to disseminate and translate its documents and publications in Urdu language and declare it as its seventh official language.

He also urged the UN to allow designated minorities' observers at its General Assembly to end disparity. The Convener WMA made these remarks while exchanging views with Patron-in-Chief, WMA Muhammad Saeed Faisal on the upcoming international interfaith conference to be held under the auspices of the Alliance in Washington DC. J. Salik said the UN should ensure distribution of its documents in Bangla, Turkish, Korean and Swahili as these languages were also spoken by millions of people around the globe.

Referring to his principle demand, he said

the UN should realise that Urdu language is widely understood and spoken in the South Asia region and due to rising Indian, Pakistani, Bengali, Sri Lankan and Nepali diaspora in the Middle East it is understandable among a large number of people. He added that Pakistan is the only country in the world that has been created by the minorities of the subcontinent against the majority Hindus. The flag of Pakistan is also custodian of equal minorities rights and representation in the country, he added. Salik told the Patron-in-Chief that the international interfaith conference due in the first week of March is also intended to advocate for equal rights for the minorities like Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and people of other faiths as the demographic representation of different faiths varies from one country to the other.

## Railways starts upgradation work to improve services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has accelerated the upgradation work involving the private sector to improve services in passenger trains as well as major railway stations to address the growing issues, especially sanitation issues.

"The department was of the view that the cleanliness-related services in trains and at major stations, including Lahore, Faisalabad, Karachi, Rawalpindi, Quetta, Peshawar, Khanewal, Sukkur, Sahiwal, Multan and Bahawalpur were not satisfactory," an official in the Ministry told APP.

He said that if services of

the private sector were hired under a fast-track policy, the hygiene conditions at stations and in trains could be improved which would also restore the confidence of passengers in the department. The official said Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique asked the officials to accelerate efforts to bring uniformity in the design and signboards of stalls at the major railway stations under a policy.

He said that Saad Rafique was curious to quickly devise a policy in a bid to bring uniformity in the design of all the stalls. It is pertinent to mention

here that last year Pakistan Railways decided to engage the private sector to increase profit by improving services at major stations. "The services required to be improved included renovation and construction of washrooms and their maintenance and other janitorial services at platforms, waiting for areas and yards," he added.

To a question, he said that Pakistan Railways has also started upgradation work of its five major railway stations across the country on modern lines to facilitate the passengers and help the department to generate more revenues.

## AJK minister urges UN to implement SC resolutions on Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Azad Jammu and Kashmir Khawaja Farooq Ahmed on Sunday urged United Nations and the international community to implement United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) resolutions on Kashmir.

Talking to APP, the AJK minister said that the international community should shun its duplicity on Kashmir issue.

He said that UNSC in its several resolutions had promised a free and fair plebiscite in Kashmir but India had refused to implement those regulations. Rather it had deployed almost one million Indian troops in Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, he said.

He said that the international community should impose sanctions on India which had been making mockery of UNSC reso-

lutions on Kashmir.

"Kashmir is not a territorial dispute, rather is it a humanitarian issue and world powers should not prefer their economic interests over lives of hapless Kashmiris being butchered by Indian occupation (occupation) forces", he remarked.

The AJK minister thanked the Pakistani nation for observing 'Kashmir Solidarity Day' to remind the UN and the world superpowers about their commitments to Kashmir. He said that Pakistan had always provided moral, political and diplomatic support for the Kashmir cause.

He said that "human chain" made on February 5 on bridges linking AJK with Pakistan was meant to demonstrate that Pakistanis and Kashmiris were united on just cause of Kashmir.

## AMAN 2023 exercises to bridge interoperability among regional navies

ISLAMABAD (APP): As offense is universally acknowledged as the best defense; a balanced and capable military force is equally imperative for peace among the nation and in regions. This capability becomes more inevitable when nations house in volatile regions where unending hegemonic wishes and insurgencies continue to repeat over the decades. Therefore, countries have to opt for better defense capabilities to ensure regional peace with an aim to promote bilateral and multi-lateral peace overtures at parity with other countries. For the purpose, the defense forces carry out different exercises like Pakistan Navy (PN)'s biennial multinational exercise with its AMAN 2023 commencing in Karachi this year from February 10.

Its core objective is to project country's positive image, consolidate PN's position in regional maritime arena and enhance interoperability with regional and extra regional navies and demonstrate Pakistan's commitment to peace.

It was in view of the importance of regional peace that Pakistan Navy (PN) started multi-national AMAN exercises from 2007 to strengthen maritime security and enhance regional and extra regional cooperation and interoperability.

Since commencement of multinational drill, the PN had successfully conducted seven exercises so far with 8th exercise planned for current month inviting over 110 countries to participate. This Exercise has emerged as a major International Naval event as evident from growing number of participants and reflects Pakistan's growing positive image.

Its main attraction is the maiden Pakistan International Maritime Expo and Conference (PIMEC), aimed at showcasing country's maritime potential and promoting regional cooperation and stability and to display a united resolve against terrorism and maritime crimes including piracy. Chronological AMAN series reveal that first AMAN Exercise held in March 2007 participated by 14 ships from Bangladesh, China, France, Italy, Malaysia, UK and USA that further expanded to Nigeria, Australia, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Sri Lanka and Poland in coming years. In 2007, Special Operations Forces and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (SOF/ EOD) teams from Bangladesh and Turkey also participated in SOF exercises. Overall 28 countries participated in the exercise with 29 observers.

The 2nd Exercise, AMAN-09, conducted in March 2009 was participated by 24 countries with military assets besides 29 observers as AMAN-11 was participated by 28 countries with naval assets and besides 43 observers and in AMAN-13 Navies of 29 countries participated in exercise with 36 observers.

Similarly, AMAN-17 conducted in North Arabian Sea from in 2017, was participated by 34 countries including Pakistan participated with military assets and there were 67 observers; AMAN-19 was led in North Arabian Sea with 46 countries including participating in it with 11 ships, two P3Cs, 15 SOF/EOD/ and other equipment with 113 observers.

AMAN-21 was the last of the series conducted in North Arabian Sea from February 11-16, 2021 where some 11 ships from seven nations, one Turkish MPA, four SOF teams/ Observers, three EOD teams/Observer, 11 Senior officers and 117 Observers along with PN Ships, aircraft, SSG (N) teams and PAK Marines assets took part in the drills. This year 110 countries have been invited to participate in the Exercise to provide them a common forum for information sharing, mutual understanding and identifying areas of common interests for group analysis and dialogue.

It is also expected to developing and practicing response tactics, techniques and procedures against asymmetric and traditional threats during sea phase of the exercise, intermingling of multinationals with depiction of their respective cultures during cultural shows and food galas.

The Exercise is being divided into Harbour and Sea Phases wherein the

former includes arrival of participating units, opening ceremony at PN Dockyard, wreath laying, friendly sport matches, Maritime Counter Terrorism Demo by SSG (N)/ Pak Marines, table top discussions (TTDs) on professional topics, calls and visits including ship visits, international band display, international cultural display and food gala and the first ever Pakistan International Maritime Expo and Conference (PIMEC) at Expo Centre Karachi.

The sea activities include an International Fleet Review (IFR) being scheduled at sea on February 14, 2023. During IFR, various operational activities mainly RAS (L) Token, Counter Piracy Demo by PN MSW Team, Rocket Depth Charge (RDC) firing, Surface Firing on Killer Tomato, Fly Past by Air Units (PN, PAF and Foreign participating Aircraft), Man and Cheer Ship have been planned in the honor of the Chief Guest.

In addition to IFR, various exercises would be conducted to practice response against maritime security threats in a multinational environment. Special Operation Forces (SOF), Explosives Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and Marines teams will also participate in these exercises. The SOF/EOD/Marine personnel have the frontline role against threat of maritime terrorism and other crimes. Therefore, a number of exercises have been planned to develop Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) for combined action by multinational forces against asymmetric threats. The objectives for the flagship PIMEC are to provide opportunities to maritime industry to display products at one forum and interact directly with International Maritime Industry.

Experts believe that inviting International Maritime and Defence Manufacturers for joint ventures would not only help transfer of technology to boost Pakistan's Industrial setup but also highlight country's vast potential for Blue Economy and reinforce efforts in the realm of Maritime Diplomacy.

## Shah Faisal Mosque becomes attraction for local, int'l tourists

ISLAMABAD (APP): Shah Faisal Mosque, one of the country's biggest mosques, is attracting foreign dignitaries and domestic tourists at large, due to its architectural beauty in the heart of scenic Margalla Hills.

Talking to APP, Zulfiqar Ali, a resident of G-9, said he along with his family visited and offered prayers in the Shah Faisal Mosque, whereas its magnificent architecture left them spell bounded, as it was designed in a very unique style.

"The mosque's cleanliness and location besides Margalla hills is a source of inspiration for visitors and they love offering the prayers to deliver their religious obligation."

"The lovely winter season and peaceful atmosphere is also a key factor for our trip," he added.

He said the security

arrangements, book and food stalls made their day so pleasant and marvelous, adding despite of cold weather, the people were visiting and feeling relieved after hearing Azaan and by offering prayers there, as the practice made them feel spiritual and refreshed.

Sajid Ali, a resident of Karachi, said, "Visits to the mosque exemplify the religious enthusiasm of women, children, young adults, students of various universities and elders."

He stressed the need to allow the women to enter in the main hall of the mosque.

He further said, "There is a dire need to further improve and modernize the cleanliness system, security arrangements and availability of hot water for ablution during the winter season."

It is pertinent to mention

here that the Shah Faisal Mosque nestled at the foot of Margalla Hills, is one of the most massive and quintessential structures located in capital. Named after its benefactor Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the mosque is not only one of the country's largest mosque but in the world and it is among the most popular and historically significant tourist attractions.

Saudi King Faisal allotted a colossal grant of \$120 million for the construction of a mosque in Pakistan when he paid a historic visit to the country in 1966. A competition for the design of the mosque was held, and among 43 authentic proposals from 17 countries, Turkish architect Vedat Dalokay's design for the mosque was deemed worthy of winning the contest.

## APHC hails Pakistan's constant support to Kashmir cause

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan was observing Kashmir Solidarity Day to reiterate the unflinching support of Pakistani nation to the just struggle of Kashmiri people for their inalienable right to self-determination under United Nations resolutions.

Chairman J&K People's Freedom League and ex-Convener All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), Muhammad Farooq Rehmani, in a Kashmir Solidarity Day message, said it was the day of difference by Pakistan to ensure her unending and constant support to the struggle of freedom for Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

"We hail the day of solidarity for Kashmir and its freedom from settler-colonialism of India, which aims at transforming Kashmir into a Hindutva State and banning Islam in both Kashmir and India," said Rehmani.

He said 33 years of the solidarity Day by Pakistan with the brave and oppressed people of the IIOJK&K.

He said that today in 1990, Pakistan as a state and as a nation had given a pledge

to the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir that no stone would be left unturned and no part of the world unapproachable to create a political environment for tangible support to the freedom struggle of Kashmir.

He said," now is the time to strike when the iron is in hand". India, during the last 3 years has dismembered and fragmented the state, broken all the promises and violated and trampled all its bilateral agreements and finally reorganised the Occupied State according to its own colonial laws and an aggressive settler-policy to make radical changes in its Muslim demographic, cultural, linguistic and educational character, without taking into consideration great risks to the regional peace, UN Charter, SC resolutions and the UN Human rights principles in this regard.

He urged upon the cherished goal of the people of Pakistan and Jammu and Kashmir for unity, and solidarity saying that today words need to be translated into action and rituals replaced by solid steps for reflection of the great aim of freedom for Jammu and Kashmir.

### Two criminals arrested

KABUL (Agencies): The Afghan security forces arrested two people in connection to criminal offenses in Afghan Capital. Kabul Police Headquarter in a statement on Sunday said that Crime Branch officers arrested two people in connection to a robbery in ninth police district of Kabul of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, according to the source, the car seized from the robbers returned to its owner in Kabul city on Sunday.

## The Frontier Post

# AFGHANISTAN

Rajab 14, 1444 — Monday, February 06, 2023

### Needy families received aid

KABUL (Agencies): Local officials said that 9,986 needy families received humanitarian assistance in Farah, Takhar, Paktia, and Logar provinces. 500 needy families have received seven items of food assistance in Farah Rood district of Farah province. Meanwhile, 2,593 needy families received flour, cocking oil, lentils, and some other food items in Takhar province. Elsewhere, 293 needy families received flour, cocking oil, lentils, and salt in Warmamay district of Paktika province.

## Hairatan-Mazar line remains closed Trade increases with Torghondi railway

KABUL (TOLONews): After the Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railway was closed for trade between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, the transportation of commodities through the Torghondi railway has increased.

According to the Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA), 50 wagons of food materials were imported through the Torghondi railway within 24 hours.

“Yesterday, 50 wagons of commodities were imported via Torghondi port. The total weight is 3,360 metric tons. A major

part of it is food materials,” said Abdul Sami, a spokesman for the ARA.

The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) said that the traders have been conducting trade through the four ports.

“The challenges that existed previously at the customs office do not exist now. Both the Central Asian nations and the South Asian countries can directly run their businesses through transit,” said the acting head of the ACCI. This comes as

Turkmenistan’s foreign ministry said that it has agreed on the establishment of a new corridor for the transportation of commodities through Afghanistan to South Asian Nations.

The Uzbekistan government closed the Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railway for exports and imports to Afghanistan.

The ARA said that a delegation of the caretaker government will visit Uzbekistan this week to negotiate the resumed operations of the Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railway.

## UN rights rapporteur urges release of detained professor

KABUL (Agencies): The United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights called on Afghanistan’s Taliban administration to release a university lecturer and education activist detained by security forces in the capital Kabul.

Local media reported Ismael Mashal had been distributing academic and other books on Kabul’s streets after tearing up his own diploma on live television in protest at a Taliban decision in December to ban female students from universities.

The decision came after Taliban authorities closed most girls’ high schools and barred most women from working for charity groups.

“(I am) concerned about yesterday’s arrest of peaceful education activist and university lecturer Ismael Mashal by the Taliban,” UN rights rapporteur Richard Bennett said on Twitter, calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Abdul Haq Hamad, head of media monitoring at the Taliban information ministry, said Mashal had been arrested by security forces after gathering journalists, creating a crowd on the street and “creating propaganda against the government.”

Hamad said he had visited Mashal in detention and found he was being held in good conditions including heating, and had been able to contact his family. It was not immediately clear whether Mashal would face formal charges or further punishment.

The international community has condemned Taliban restrictions on women, with some diplomats saying foreign capitals will not consider formally recognising the Taliban government unless it changes course.

The Taliban seized power in August 2021 when US-led international coalition forces completed their withdrawal from Afghanistan after a 20-year presence, triggering the collapse of the Western-backed government.

## Blast shakes Kabul, hurt at least 2 people

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghan caretaker government security officials have reported a blast that took place in ‘Pashtunistan Square’ in district two of Kabul city late Saturday.

Khalid Zadrán Spokesperson of Kabul Police Command has confirmed the incident to Khaama Press that an explosion took place on Saturday evening in Pashtunistan Square.

Zadrán said the explosion was caused by a magnetic mine placed in a Toyota ‘Hilux’ vehicle, which injured two civilians. Kabul police spokesperson did not provide any further details about the terror incident, but security personnel has reached the area and investigations are underway.

Meanwhile, some local Kabul residents have described the blast as quite horrific and loud which was heard from distant places. No one or group has claimed the responsibility for the attack so far.

Yesterday, anonymous people slaughtered seven members of a family in the ‘Chimtaal’ district in Mazar-i-Sharif, a northern province of Afghanistan. It is still not identified who committed the group killing on the street and “creating propaganda against the government.”



behind the slaughter.

Two weeks ago, Mursal Nabizada, a former parliament member of Afghanistan, and one of her security guards were in killed in the heart of Kabul, with no one taking the responsibility for the killing.

Despite the ruling regime’s tremendous efforts, security remains a major concern across Afghanistan.

istan.

Target killing, explosion, and suicide attacks take place in a frequent manner in Kabul and other major cities of Afghanistan.

Security issues pose major threats to foreign nationals and potential investors in the country. The bombing which took place in a Chinese-run hotel in Kabul a couple of

months ago, resulting in the injury of scores of Chinese nationals is a clear example.

On top of other issues, taking extra security measures need to be prioritized by Afghanistan’s ruling regime to attract national and international investors and increase its engagements with the international community.

## Mujahid: 300 passport employees detained or fired for corruption

KABUL (TOLONews): Zabiullah Mujahid, the Islamic Emirate’s spokesperson, said that so far, 300 General Directorate of Passports employees have been arrested or fired on charges of corruption.

Speaking to TOLONews, Mujahid said that the Afghan government is committed to rooting out corruption and that the passport office has been cleared of any corruption.

“There were some forgeries produced. So far, 300 people from that department have been fired, arrested, and jailed due to corruption there,” Mujahid

told TOLONews.

However, some Kabul residents claim that even though the General Directorate of Passports is closed to the people, passports are given out to people in exchange for high fees.

“There are some people who sell passports for a lot of money on the black market. This has caused a lot of problems for the people,” said Ramin, a resident of Kabul.

“Some of our relatives have paid 1200 dollars, 1000 hundred dollars and 1500 dollars to get passports and leave the country,” said Hekmat Shah,

another resident of Kabul.

Residents of Kabul said that receiving a passport is a fundamental right and that the Islamic Emirate should begin issuing them.

“It’s been six months since I registered at the passport office, I filed the online form, but unfortunately I haven’t received any calls or forms from the office,” said Ahmad Zahid, a resident of Kabul.

The spokesperson of the passport department said that the technical problem has not been resolved in this department so far, so the issuance of passports has been stopped.

“All technical groups are working to find solutions to the existing problems so that we can then begin the passport distribution process. Passport distribution generally is halted at all,” said Noorullah Patman, the spokesperson of the passport Directorate, told TOLONews.

The passport directorate has been closed to the public for about five months, and there have been no updates on the ongoing technical issue; however, this Directorate issues passports to patients after receiving approval from the medical commission.

## 7000 plus Afghan refugees returned home from Iran



KABUL (Khaama Press): Taliban authorities at the Refugee and Repatriation Department of Nimruz province announced that 7,612 Afghan refugees have returned to the country from Iran over the past week.

Sediqullah Nasrat, the director of the Refugees and Repatriation Department of Nimruz province on Saturday said that 519 refugees who suffered critical economic conditions, received cash aid from the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Mr. Nasrat added that IOM – the United Nations agency for migration distributed food and other necessary items to the remaining families.

He further stated that some 7,612 Afghan migrants have returned to the country from Iran through the Abrishum land route over the past week alone.

This comes as the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation Afghanistan on Saturday signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a private organization called ‘Osta’ to create employment opportunities for more than a thousand needy families.

Some experts have described the main reason for the migration of Afghan nationals to the neighboring countries as extreme poverty, unemployment, lack of job security, and political instability.

Meanwhile, some local residents say that in the absence of jobs, they don’t have a choice but to migrate to other countries no matter what the consequences might be.

Prior to this, the authorities of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation reported the return of some 3,000 Afghan migrants, a

majority of who were forced to leave, while others left Iran of their own will.

Since the Taliban’s return to power in August 2021, thousands of Afghans fled Afghanistan to the neighboring countries fearing persecution and death threats. Most of these people entered host countries through illegal channels, now facing serious problems including forceful deportation and imprisonment.

Over the past couple of weeks, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan have extradited thousands of Afghan nationals due to not having legal stay permits (visas). While in Afghanistan, under the Taliban regime, a large majority of the Afghan populace suffers dire poverty, hunger, unemployment, instability, isolation, and several other challenges of different kinds.

## Businessman provide treatment to 20 addicts



NELLI (Pajhwok): Agha Ali Hamdard, one of the youth from the Kaiti district of central Daikundi province, has arranged a rehabilitation facility for 20 drug addicts in the district.

He told Pajhwok Afghan News 20 drug addicts of his locality who were in terrible condition and live a difficult life were assisted towards rehabilitation and they were provided with the treatment in this facility.

Hamdard pay all the expenses for the rehabilitation and treatment of these addicts from his personal budget. “People complained against drug addicts, they robe homes, harassed families and society thus I decided to treat all the drug addicts in the district,” he said.

“When all the addicts of Kaiti district are rehabilitated then the treatment of

addicts from other district will be started,” he maintained.

He added addiction was a dangerous phenomenon and it was the responsibility of every person in the society to right against it.

He added he offered the cost of rehabilitation from his personal expenses.

Police also confirmed the rounding up of drug addicts and taking them to the rehabilitation centre.

Police Spokesperson Ghulam Ali Javid told Pajhwok Afghan News 20 drug addicts were brought private rehabilitation centre for treatment last week.

He added a local businessman will bear the cost of rehabilitation of these youth.

He hailed the initiative of Daikundi young businessman and urged other well off people to follow

the footsteps.

Najib Zafari, the rehabilitation Camp head, said they treated addicts by psychological methods, held meetings and offered advices to the addicts.

Considering the condition of the patient they offered short and long term treatment to the patients.

Zafari said they are offered proper clothes and food during the treatment.

“We have a physician and a nurse that provide them with the medicine according to their condition,” he added.

The facility he said had a working license from the Ministry of Public Health and so far treated 150 addicts.

This comes that people in Daikundi province often complained against drug addicts and demanded their treatment.

## ACCI concerned over safety of traders

KABUL (TOLONews): The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) expressed concerns over the safety of traders, saying that 13 traders have been abducted within the last month.

According to the ACCI, the abductors misuse the clothes and appearance of the forces of the Islamic Emirate.

“There have been armed robberies from homes, the stealing of two to three cars. Approximately there were between 12 to 13 incidents that we have been informed about. They were the traders from the private sector,” said Khanjan Alokozai, a member of the ACCI.

“The life and financial

protection is something that encourages traders to invest in the country. When the life and business of an investor is not safe, he/she will reduce investment,” said Abdul Naseer Rishtia, an economist.

But the Kabul department of security said that there have been meetings on the issue and the Islamic Emirate is committed to the security of the traders.

“We are in close contact with the traders. We pay full attention to their safety. This is our responsibility. Not only the traders but we will defend all people because this is our responsibility,” said Khalid Zadrán, a spokesman for the Kabul security department.



The ACCI said that the traders have also been abducted in other

provinces. Earlier, the intelligence directorate said that four

kidnappers were arrested in Dar-e-Sof district of Faryab province.

## If Kabul wants legitimacy, it should meet its promises, says John Kirby

KABUL (TOLONews): John Kirby, the US National Security Council coordinator for strategic communications, said that the Islamic Emirate will continue to isolate itself from the international community by reneging on their promises.

In an interview with the VOA, Kirby emphasized that if the Islamic Emirate wants to be recognized by the international community and wants financial aid and investment, it must fulfil its commitments.

“So, if the Taliban wants to be considered legitimate, if they want the recognition of the international community, if they want financial aid and investment in their country, then they should meet their promises, meet their obligations, and behave accordingly,” Kirby stressed.

Speaking to VOA, Kirby said: “They made promises



in Doha, they made promises after they took over Kabul, that they would govern in a responsible way and that they would respect the progress that women and girls had made in Afghanistan, they specifically said that, and here we see them reneging on those promises.”

“The Americans are interested in working with the future government of Afghanistan on the condi-

tion that this government be impartial and not against it(America),” said Jawid Sangdil, an international relations expert.

In this interview, the US National Security Council coordinator for strategic communications said he considered Daesh a viable threat to the current government of Afghanistan and the world.

“[The Taliban] are constantly under threat by ISIS

in Afghanistan. ... We know that ISIS remains still a viable threat, a credible threat, not just in Afghanistan, but in other parts of the world too,” Kirby said.

The Islamic Emirate’s spokesperson, Zabiullah Mujahid, rejected these claims and said that the US had not kept its promise to the Islamic Emirate and had always worked to prevent recognition of the Afghan government.

“Unfortunately, the promises made by the US have not yet been fulfilled. The issue of the blacklists of Islamic Emirate officials have not yet been resolved, along with the normalization of relations between the US and Afghanistan, toward which we have made a final attempt in the past year and a half.

Unfortunately, the US still continues to apply pres-

sure,” Mujahid said.

Meanwhile, William Burns, the director of the CIA, stated at a Georgetown University School of Foreign Service event that Daesh continues to be a threat.

“I think the successful US airstrike against Ayman al-Zawahiri, the co-founder of Al Qaeda directly responsible along with Bin Laden for the deaths of more than three thousand innocent people and 9/11 and many other acts of terrorism, was a demonstration of our continuing commitment as an agency and as a government,” Burns said.

The Islamic Emirate government has not been recognized by any country in the over a year and a half, although many of its neighbors, including Iran, Pakistan, China, and Uzbekistan, have diplomatic missions in Kabul.

# Rallies being held across country to observe Kashmir Solidarity Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): Activists of political parties, religious outfits, government officials, members of human rights and civil society organisations came together in processions and rallies held in all parts of the country, today (Sunday), to express solidarity with the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK).

The participants demanded the United Nations and international community take notice of Indian atrocities in the valley and rid people of inhuman curfews, detentions and raids. In Islamabad, activists, human rights bodies and civil society organisations reaffirmed their pledge to stand by their Kashmiri brethren till the achievement of their right to self-determination.

Adviser to Prime Minister for Kashmir and GB Qamar Zaman Kaira, while addressing participants of the rally, said Indian atrocities in the occupied valley are increasing and asked India to fulfill its promises to the people of Kashmir.

People and government of Pakistan will

continue their unconditional support to Kashmiri brethren till they get their right to self-determination, he added.

Speaking on the occasion, senior leader of All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir chapter Ghulam Muhammad Safi thanked Pakistan and its people for supporting Kashmiris in their struggle of freedom.

Meanwhile, human chains were formed at Kohala and other important points linking Pakistan and Azad Kashmir.

In Karachi, a solidarity rally was attended by the provincial minister as well as the police chief. Nasir Hussain Shah said the Kashmiri people were fighting Indian occupation for seven decades and reiterated that their struggle would soon yield results. Kashmir Solidarity Day is observed to express wholehearted support to the just struggle of oppressed Kashmiri people for their inalienable right to self-determination under the UN resolutions.

## Rana Sanaullah warns PTI of consequences over ‘Jail Bharo’ movement

MULTAN (NNI): Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said on Sunday that Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) is not afraid of elections and it will contest and win across Punjab in the upcoming polls.

While addressing PML-N Workers Convention in Multan today, Rana Sanaullah said PML-N Qaid Nawaz Sharif gives responsibility to Maryam Nawaz to reorganise the political party.

“Propaganda is being made that PML-N is afraid of elections. We are ready for elections. We will contest the elections and win grab victory across Punjab.” He predicted that PML-N will form its government in Punjab.

He said that PML-N is aware of inflation that increases troubles for the common man. He said that Pakistan was on the path of prosperity in 1999 and the whole world was telling that Pakistan will become the Asian Tiger

after becoming a nuclear power.

He said that former premier Nawaz Sharif had rejected the pressure from foreign countries including the United States (US) for refraining from nuclear tests but Nawaz Sharif ordered to conduct of six nuclear blasts in response to India’s five nuke tests for sake of the Pakistani nation and the Muslim Ummah.

Rana Sanaullah said that Pakistan secured its future by conducting nuclear tests and Nawaz Sharif had brought the country out of the crisis. He added that Sharif had also brought the country out of crisis after becoming the premier in 2013.

He claimed that the menace of load shedding and terrorism were eliminated from the country in 2017 but unfortunately, Sharif was ousted for not receiving salary from his son. “PML-N is not afraid of elections. We will con-

test the polls.

Criticising the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief and ex-premier Imran Khan, Sanaullah alleged, “Ladlay knows only one thing to do which is holding long marches. Ladla had hurled abuses against Nawaz Sharif and ordered attacks on police stations during 2014 long march.”

“He had concluded the sit-in after the APS incident. The then premier Nawaz Sharif had invited him to sit together for uniting the nation at the time too.” The interior minister said that PTI is now going to launch a ‘Jail Bharo Tehreek’ [Fill the jail movement]. He threatened that he will also deal with the PTI’s Jail Bharo Tehreek. Sanaullah said that PTI leaders should remember the days of May 25 and November 26.

He said that the PTI leaders will be kept in the same cells where PML-N leaders were locked up.

## Terrorist Indian state committing genocide of Kashmiris: Mushaal

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Chairperson of Peace and Culture Organisation, Mushaal Hussein Mullick said that terrorist Indian State had been committing genocide of Kashmiri people in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) for the last over seven decades.

Mushaal, wife of jailed Kashmiri Hurriyat leader, Muhammad Yasin Malik on Sunday in a statement said that India was the biggest terrorist State, which was involved in the brutal killing and tortured of innocent and unarmed Kashmiri people for their crime to raise voice against the unlawful subjugation of Indian authorities for last 75 years.

The chairperson vowed that the courage of the brave people of the occu-

pied valley could not be dampened with the brutal and inhuman tactics.

However, the hurriyat leader lamented the world powers duplicity and apathy towards the world worst crisis on the surface on the earth, as the fascist government adopted a ruthless policy of genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Kashmiri people of the occupied valley.

Mushaal said that Kashmiris would never accept the Hindutva regime and would fight for their inalienable right to self-determination till last drop of their blood.

She appreciated Pakistanis for observing Kashmir Solidarity Day on every February 5 for last 33 years ti convey a strong message to world that Kashmiris were not alone

in their fight for right to self-determination.

However, she stressed the need for the solution of the decades-long Kashmir dispute. Mushaal said that UN was legally and morally bound to secure implementation of its resolutions on Kashmir, adding that settlement of the lingering dispute as per the Kashmiris’ aspirations was imperative for peace and stability in South Asia, as it could trigger nuclear war between Pakistan and India. The chairperson urged that the UN must fulfill its responsibilities pertaining to Kashmiris’ right to self-determination as the decades-old unresolved dispute has not only put a question mark on the UN’s credibility but it is constant threat to regional as well as world peace.

## PM for further unity to infuse vigour, strength to Kashmir cause

(Continued from Front Page)

He said that Kashmiris were right in raising the questions as to why the issue lingered on for the last 75 years. Kashmir and Palestine issues could not be resolved while atrocities of enormous proportions were being carried out.

He said Kashmiri people would get freedom soon, but along with slogans, words and speeches, they would have to prove with practical steps. The prime minister said Japan and Germany had been destroyed during World War, resulting in huge casualties while their major cities were turned into ruins, but after 60 years, they once again prevailed over the world and Europe due to their hard work.

They turned their destruction into success on the basis of hard work and commitment, he opined.

The prime minister also stressed that the Muslim world had been blessed with huge resources and with unity, they could resolve issues confronting them.

The prime minister said as prime

minister of allied parties and a representative of 220 million Pakistani people, he fully assured Kashmiri brethren that they would continue their support for their due right to self-determination.

“But first, we have to forge unity among our ranks, besides, bringing economic and political stability,” he added. The prime minister said they should strive to make Pakistan economically stronger. As Pakistanis, they should shun their political differences and work together to secure the legitimate rights of the Kashmiri people. Referring to the global scenario, the prime minister said there was a rule of ‘might is right’ and expressed that it was never too late to mend and if they resolved with unity, they would secure freedom for the Kashmiri people.

He said former prime ministers Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif had effectively raised the Kashmir issue. During 1998, in response to the Indian nuclear tests, Nawaz Sharif conducted five tests which made Pakistan as a nuclear power.

The former prime minister also rejected \$5 billion offer made by former US president Bill Clinton for not conducting the nuclear test, he added.

The minister said in 1999, former Indian premier Vajpayee visited Lahore and Minar-e-Pakistan, while in the Lahore accord, he promised to resolve the Kashmir issue within one year. The prime minister said Pakistan was a nuclear power and India could not cast an evil eye.

The prime minister said a nation could rise only with honour and not with a begging bowl and they were making efforts to save every penny and expressed the optimism that they would succeed in steering the country out of the present challenges.

Earlier, AJK prime minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas and other members of the assembly spoke on the occasion and highlighted the Kashmir issue, the heroic struggle of the Kashmiri people and their sacrifices.

They also expressed their gratitude to the government of Pakistan and the Pakistani nation for expressing solidarity with the Kashmiri people.

### U.S. shoots down Chinese balloon over Carolina coast

NEW YORK (APP): The United States Saturday shot down a Chinese balloon, which it insisted was on a spying mission, off the Carolina coast after it flew over some sensitive military sites across North America and became the latest flashpoint in tensions between Washington and Beijing, according to media reports.

The reports, quoting US officials, said that an operation was underway in U.S. territorial waters in the Atlantic Ocean to recover debris from the balloon, which had been flying at about 60,000 feet and was estimated to be about the size of three school buses.

The balloon was downed by Air Force fighter aircraft, according to the reports A livestream of the balloon showed it deflated and falling toward the water below.

On Friday, China stated that the high-altitude balloon was a civilian device “used for scientific research such as meteorology.” On Saturday morning, when President Biden was asked about the balloon, he told reporters “we’re gonna take care of it.”

According to the Chinese foreign ministry’s statement, the airship was “affected by the westerly wind” and its ability to control its direction “is limited.” The statement also says that the balloon “seriously deviated from the scheduled route” and expressed regret that “the airship strayed into the United States due to force majeure.”

### Jail doctors declare Sheikh Rashid healthy

SLAMABAD (PPI): Doctors at Adiala Jail declared on Sunday that Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid was medically fit.

During the medical examination, the doctors also checked Mr Rashid’s fever, blood pressure, and heart rate. On Saturday, a local court in Islamabad sent Mr Rashid to Adiala Jail on judicial remand for 14 days in a case related to levelling allegations against former president Asif Ali Zardari.

The AML supremo was produced before the court of Judicial Magistrate Umar Shabbir amid strict security by the capital police where the police requested the court for another five-day physical remand of Mr Rashid along with a photogrammetric test.

### Ahsan blames financial crisis on Imran

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal Sunday flayed Imran Khan for damaging the economy. Addressing a public gathering, Iqbal flayed Imran Khan and his government as saying: “The people of Punjab are suffering because of his policies. Another dacoit will be made the Chief Minister after two thieves. Punjab needs a leader like Shehbaz Sharif who serves the country and its public.”

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf will face a dreadful defeat in the upcoming elections. The public has already decided in the favor of Pakistan Muslim League-N (PMLN). The public of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is very fed up with PIT’s government as it cannot safeguard the province.



MULTAN: Chief Organizer and senior vice president of PMLN Maryam Nawaz addressing a workers convention.

## Parliamentarians laud CPEC during tour to projects in Sindh

ISLAMABAD (PPI) Parliamentarians visiting CPEC projects in Sind, termed Thar as ‘bulwark of Pakistan’s future Energy Security’.

The delegation was organised by Pakistan-China Institute (PCI), in cooperation with Power China in Port Qasim and Shanghai Electric and Sind Electric Coal Mining Company (SECMC) in Thar.

According to a PID statement on Sunday, the delegation was led by Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman, Senate Defence Committee and PCI. During the 3-day visit, the delegation first visited the Power China project at Port Qasim, which generates 1320 megawatts of electricity. Power China CEO Guo welcomed the delegation and briefed them on the project. The Port Qasim power plant, an Early Harvest project of CPEC, provides electricity to over 4 million homes through clean energy, and it emits environment-friendly white smoke, using supercritical technology. The project has generated jobs, provided revenue to Pakistan worth over \$ 600 million in taxes and duties, and contributed to resolving Pakistan’s chronic energy shortage.

Then on day two of the Sind CPEC projects tour, the delegation flew to Thar where it first toured the Sind Electric Coal Mining Company (SECMC), which is a joint private-public partnership with support of the Sind government and China, witnessing the driving of dumper trucks by Thari women, in a living example of Women’s empowerment.

The delegation also visited the newly established 1320 megawatts power plant established with invest-

ment from Shanghai Electric. China’s total investment has been \$ 26 billion, generating 85,000 jobs, including 12,000 in Thar, plus 28,000 Pakistani students now study in China, resulting in a huge socio-economic transformation of the country, thanks to CPEC. Over 5000 megawatts of electricity have been added to the national grid and some 700 kilometres of road infrastructure have knit the Federation of Pakistan closer together facilitating easier and faster travel.

Speaking to the workers of CPEC projects in Port Qasim and Thar, Senator Mushahid Hussain termed CPEC as ‘single most transformative initiative for economic development in the last 30 years, as it provided a basis for energy security, employment, and changing lives and livelihoods of the people of Pakistan’.

Senator Mushahid Hussain said that ‘Pakistan huge natural resources, including mineral wealth, natural gas and maritime wealth which needs to be exploited for the blue economy.’

Thar alone has 175 billion tons of coal reserves, more than the oil reserves of Iran and Saudi Arabia put together. Thanks to CPEC, this ‘black gold’ is now contributing to the national economy. The natural gas reserves in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are several times higher than these reserves in Sui’. The Senator added, ‘if we truly exploit and utilise our mineral wealth, natural gas, and offshore blue economy, cumulatively worth almost a trillion dollars, Pakistan can bid goodbye to the IMF handouts, which we have received for 23 times, without bringing about quality change’.

He urged the need to change nation-

al economic priorities instead of policies that undermine national sovereignty and people’s dignity. Parliamentarians belonging to different political parties lauded CPEC as a guarantor of a better tomorrow for Pakistan and thanked China, as a trusted ‘all weather friend’, for reposing such confidence in the future of Pakistan by investing in CPEC projects in Pakistan. They also lauded the role of these companies in promoting people-centric development through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The parliamentary delegation included Mahesh Mailani, MNA, Minister of State for Health, Senator Dr Zarqa Suhrwardhy, Qaiser Sheikh, MNA, Chairman of National Assembly Finance Committee, Senator Qurratul Ain Marri, Muhammad Abubakr, MNA, Chairman of NA Parliamentary Affairs Committee and Senator Muhammad Akram Baloch. “It was an eye-opening experience to see the impact of CPEC on the local communities and the progress being made on these projects,” stated Senator Qurratul Ain Marri. Dr. Mahesh Kumar Melani, Minister of State for Health, added, “The visit gave us a deeper understanding of the benefits and opportunities created by CPEC for the people of Pakistan.

The projects are transforming lives and providing a brighter future for all,” Senator Muhammad Akram stated. “I am proud to be part of a delegation that is witnessing the progress and success of CPEC first hand. It is a testament to the strong relationship between Pakistan and China and the commitment to building a better future for both our nations.”

## AJK PM demands East Timor, Sudan type referendum in Kashmir

MUZAFFARABAD (NNI): Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan while terming the unresolved Kashmir dispute as a constant threat to regional peace has said that if a referendum can be held in East Timor and Sudan, why not in Kashmir.

While addressing a special session of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly convened on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day in the State metropolis on Sunday the PM said that the United Nations must take effective notice of the prolonged military occupation of Kashmir by India and play its much needed role to settle the long-running dispute in line with the UNSC resolutions. “If a referendum can be held in East Timor and Sudan, why can’t it be held in Kashmir?”, the PM said adding that the unresolved Kashmir was a burning spark that has the potential to jeopardize the peace of the whole world.

Referring to Britain’s role, the PM said that the responsibility of the

Britain was even more important as it quit the subcontinent while leaving the partition of India halfway.” Today we remind the United Nations to complete the incomplete agenda of partition of India”, he said.

The AJK premier thanked the Prime Minister of Pakistan Shabbaz Sharif for visiting Muzaffarabad and expressing solidarity with Kashmiri brethren in occupied Kashmir. Denouncing the Modi government’s unilateral move to change the region’s special status, the PM said after abrogating article 379 and 35A the Hindu supremacist regime was hell bent on changing the region’s demography aimed at converting Muslim majority of the state into a minority. He said that India was investing heavily in Occupied Kashmir, but Kashmiris have rejected this so-called investment by the Modi regime. Recalling Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Geelani, the PM said, “SAS Geelani had once said that even if India paves the streets of Kashmir

with gold, we would still refuse to identify ourselves as Indians”.

Referring to Kashmiris’ history of resistance, the PM said that Kashmiris have an enviable history and tradition of fighting against aggressors. Lauding the matchless sacrifices Kashmiris have been rendering for the past 75 years, he said that sacrifices rendered by the people of the occupied Kashmir wouldn’t go in vain. He said that India cannot suppress the Kashmiris’ legitimate struggle but the dint of force. The PM thanked China for opposing the holding of G20 conference in Occupied Kashmir. He said that he had asked the OIC Secretary General to seat Kashmiris in his secretariat. Hailing Pakistan’s consistent support and it’s role to promote and project the Kashmiris’ right to self-determination at international level the PM said that Pakistan had always lend it’s all out support to Kashmir cause despite facing myriad of challenges.

“Pakistan is the center of hope for oppressed nations of the world”, he said.

## Britain faces largest ever healthcare strikes

LONDON (Reuters): Britain faces its largest ever strike by health workers on Monday as tens of thousands of nurses and ambulance workers walk out in an escalating pay dispute with the government, spelling further disruption for an already strained health system.

Nurses and ambulance workers have been striking separately on and off since late last year but Monday’s walkout involving both, largely in England, will represent the biggest in the 75-year history of the National Health Service (NHS). England’s top doctor, Stephen Powis, said strike action this week, which will also see physiotherapists walk out on Thursday, would most probably be the most disruptive so far.

Health workers are demanding a pay rise that reflects the worst inflation in Britain in four decades, while the government says that would be unaffordable and cause more price rises, and in turn, make interest rates and mortgage pay-

ments go up further.

Around 500,000 workers, many from the public sector, have been staging strikes since last summer, adding to pressure on Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to resolve the disputes and limit disruption to public services such as railways and schools.

Asked by Sky News if the strikes would put lives at risk, business minister Grant Shapps said he was “concerned that it does” because of a lack of cooperation between the back-up services, such as the army, and those workers who are striking.

“The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) have very responsibly [...] told the NHS this is where we are going to be striking and they’re able to put the emergency cover in place.

Unfortunately, we’ve been seeing a situation with the ambulance unions where they refuse to provide that information,” he said.

Ambulance workers have denied Shapps’ allegation.

Sharon Graham, leader of the Unite union, told the BBC on Sunday she wanted Sunak to come to the negotiating table, accusing the government of lying about ambulance workers.

“This government is putting lives at risk,” she said.

The NHS, historically a source of pride for most Britons, is under extreme pressure with millions of patients on waiting lists for operations and thousands each month failing to receive prompt emergency care.

The RCN says a decade of poor pay has contributed to tens of thousands of nurses leaving the profession 25,000 over just the last year with the severe staffing shortages impacting patient care.

The RCN initially asked for a pay rise of five per cent above inflation and has since said it could meet the government “halfway”, but both sides have failed to reach an agreement despite weeks of talks.