

Gandapur declared PO

ISLAMABAD (INP): A session court Saturday declared Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Amin Gandapur a proclaimed offender for his continued absence from proceedings in a reference against him. According to details, sessions court Judge Rana Mujahid Rahim heard the case pertaining to violation of the Section 144 against the PTI leaders and dismissed the bail plea of Gandapur.



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Imran out to create hurdles in revival of IMF programme

PM for enhanced agri production to attain food autarky; welcomes KSA-Iran deal for resumption of diplomatic ties

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan was out to create hurdles in the revival of the International Monetary Fund's programme which was reached during the previous tenure of PTI's government.

In a short statement in the Urdu language and shared by PM Office Media Wing, the prime minister said that the creation of chaos on roads and anarchy was a part and parcel of his agenda, aimed at fanning the fire of instability in the country. "The timid person did not allow the courts to search him as he is guilty," he added. He said Imran Khan did not want the poor people of the country to be lifted from the issues of price inflation and economic pressure nor desired the steering of national resources. "Imran Khan's evasion of courts amounts to the height of cowardice," the prime minister observed.

First, he (Imran) left the IMF programme and now resisting the courts,

he said, adding he (IK) had also deviated from his promises and ideals. On the other hand, the prime minister said, Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan Muslim League-N faced the worst kind of vengeance at the hands of NAB-Niazi connivance in the past. "We have faced the courts and laws in the trumped-up charges framed against our family members including sons, daughters and sisters," he added. The leadership of PML-N endured the ordeals of death cells and braved the unfounded cases of heroin, he added.

The Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif also underlined the need for enhancing agriculture production to attain food autarky and thus save the country from different economic issues. He also directed for effective resolution of the issues by improving the supply of food grains and food chain to the public through a comprehensive mechanism. The prime minister chaired a meeting to review progress on the ongoing reforms of the Agriculture Task Force and the upcoming cultivation of cotton, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. During the meeting, the prime minister stressed upon early implementation of the agriculture reforms for increasing the agri-yield, besides making the federal and provincial agriculture research institutions more efficient. He regretted that being an agricultural country, Pakistan had been importing agricultural commodities.

The meeting was attended by Minister for National Food Security Tariq Bashir Cheema, Minister for Trade Syed Naveed Qamar, PM's Advisor Ahad Cheema, PM's Special Assistant Jehanzaib Khan, Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi and other relevant federal and provincial authorities. For the production of cotton, the prime minister assigned the task of making it a profit earning produce by ensuring profit-based income to the cotton growers.

He also directed for a crackdown against sellers of fake pesticides with iron hands, besides initiating strict legal proceedings against the people involved in its sale. He also asked for ensuring the provision of quality seeds to the farmers through a transparent and effective seed certification process.

The meeting was briefed about the projected overall production of cotton and the proposals for the support price. The prime minister directed for implementation of immediate and long terms measures for increasing cotton production per acre. The support price should be devised by keeping in view the ratio, per acre cost and maximum profit to the farmers, he added. The prime minister was also briefed about the functioning of the research entities and the seed certification mechanism. The prime minister directed for a transparent and effective certification process and urged the provinces to play their role in this regard.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif also welcomed the signing of the historic agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran for the resumption of diplomatic ties. On his Twitter handle, the prime minister said, "This China-mediated deal augurs well for peace, stability & economic development in ME & Muslim world."

He further observed that it showed that with collective wisdom, win-win outcomes were possible. Earlier, on Friday, the foreign office spokesperson, in a press statement, said that Pakistan firmly believed that this important diplomatic breakthrough would contribute to peace and stability in the region and beyond.

Pakistan commended the role played by China's visionary leadership in coordinating this historic agreement which reflects the power of constructive engagement and meaningful dialogue. "We laud sagacious leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran for this very positive development," it was added. With a history of consistently supporting and coordinating efforts for bridging gaps between the two brotherly countries, the spokesperson said, "Pakistan will continue to play a constructive role in the Middle East and the region. We hope this positive step would define a

template for regional cooperation and harmony." Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain presented a donation cheque contributed by the federal educational institutions for the earthquake hit people of Turkey and Syria to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

During a call on, the prime minister observed that the federal government was improving the educational standards in collaboration with the provincial governments. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. During the meeting, the overall political situation of the country was also discussed.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif expressed his deep grief and sorrow over death of senior journalist Abdul Rauf's son. The prime minister expressed condolence and prayed for the high ranks of the departed soul. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. He also prayed for the bereaved family to bear the loss with fortitude.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting on Agriculture Task Force.

## Pakistan Army upholds soldierly attributes of courage: COAS

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Saturday said that Pakistan Army upholds soldierly attributes of courage, mutual cooperation, resilience and competence which have been displayed during our ongoing fight against terrorism.

According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the army chief expressed these remarks during the 60 hours long arduous and rigorous 6th International Pakistan Army Team Spirit (PATS) Competition which concluded at National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) Pabbi with an impressive closing ceremony. COAS General Asim Munir graced the occasion as the chief guest, the military's media wing said in a statement.

Some seven Pakistan Army teams, Pakistan Navy, and 10 international teams including Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Morocco, Uzbekistan, Thailand, Jordan, United States of America (USA), Iraq, Kazakhstan and Qatar participated in the competition, while, teams of Azerbaijan, Canada, Gambia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Maldives, Senegal, Sudan, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the United Kingdom (UK) participated as observers.

The competition continued day and night from 7-9 March in the mountainous and rugged terrain of Pabbi. Over the years, the competition has gained much popularity and has become an international team spirit evaluation event. While

addressing the ceremony, the COAS appreciated the participating teams for their professionalism, endurance and high morale displayed during various stages of the exercise.

The COAS reiterated, "as a training exercise, PATS appropriately replicates the degree of emphasis given by all armies on physical fitness, combat skills and teamwork of their troops in the face of evolving character of warfare. "To this end, Pakistan Army upholds soldierly attributes of courage, mutual cooperation, resilience and competence which have been displayed during our ongoing fight against terrorism". The COAS also gave away prizes and medals to the participants of the competition. International observers and Defence Attaches of participating countries also attended the ceremony.

## ECP issues public notices for by-polls on 3 NA seats

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Returning Officers (ROs) for by-elections on three vacant seats of the National Assembly from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa issued public notices for by-elections on Saturday.

These vacant NA constituencies include NA-22 (Mardan-III), NA-24 (Charsadda-II) and NA-31 (Peshawar-V) respectively. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is holding by-elections on these seats for second time. The seats were earlier declared vacant in wake of the acceptance of the resignations of PTI legislators, Ali Mohammad Khan, Fazal Mohammad Khan and Shaukat Ali by the Speaker National Assembly.

In by-elections held on October 16, 2022, these seats were won by the PTI Chairman Imran Khan, but, he did not retain any of them, so all these seats were declared vacant and now another by-election would be held on them. The public notices for holding by-elections on them have been issued under Section 57 and Section 102 of the Elections Act, 2017 by the Returning Officers of each vacant National Assembly seat.

According to the notices, aspirant candidates could file nomination papers with the Returning Officers from March 12, 2023 to March 14, 2023 whereas the initial list of the candidates would be issued on March 15, 2023, which would be followed by the scrutiny of nomination papers till March 22, 2023.

## KP CM stresses need for plan to eradicate drugs use

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan has termed the prevailing situation of drug use in Pakistan and specially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as of grave concern and said that it is the collective responsibility of all segments of society as well as the government; and stressed the need of coordinated and concerted efforts by the government agencies and welfare organizations under a well devised strategy so that the menace of drugs use could be eradicated on sustainable basis.

While lauding the role of Dost Welfare Foundation in this regard, Muhammad Azam Khan said that the foundation had been working for the last 30 years for the rehabilitation of drug addicts in the province and make them useful citizens which deserves appreciation.

He expressed these views while addressing a function organized here on Saturday in connection with the 30 years celebration of Dost Welfare Foundation. Azam Khan remarked that during these 30 years of its establishment, the Foundation has extended various kinds of services and facilities to more than 400,000 drugs affectees for which the management of the Foundation deserves huge felicitation. He expressed the hope that the foundation will continue its selfless services for humanity in future as well.

"The 30 years long journey of Dost Welfare

Foundation is full of remarkable achievements which has been aided and supported by its companions and friends who have so generously contributed all their time and efforts in reaching out to the most vulnerable segments in our society to heal and restore their self-respect", the Chief Minister said and added that Dost's services particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, former FATA and parts of Afghanistan, which were veritable war zones for the past 40 years, include victims of war such as refugees, displaced persons, women and children in crisis and community members caught in the crossfire.

Azam Khan stated that Pakistan in general and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular are in the grip of massive drug addiction which is affecting the younger generation adversely; and added that according to the UNODC, 11 present population of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is using hardcore drugs, which is almost double figure of other provinces.

"With a professional and dedicated term, Dost Welfare Foundation provides a continuum of care through its program for drug abuse prevention, rehabilitation, vocational skill training, HIV prevention, human rights protection, legal assistance, research and networking with government departments and civil society organizations", the Chief Minister maintained and continued that the foundation is working in areas

where normally government agencies do not reach. He stressed that such work can best be undertaken by non-governmental organizations with government support through public-private partnership.

Azam Khan further said that besides the treatment and rehabilitation of drug users, Dost Foundation also reaches out to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of society such as people at risk of or infected by HIV/AIDS, prisons inmates, juvenile offenders, street children, women in crisis, victims of war and disaster and added that it also reaches out to these unfortunate miserable and stigmatized individuals living in difficult conditions through a process of awareness, primary prevention, rehabilitation and social development. He termed children as future of nation and said that Dost Foundation pays special attention to their welfare and rehabilitation through its child protection partnership and network.

Addressing the function, Managing Director, Dost Welfare Foundation Mrs. Munawar Hamyuni, Behram Azam Khan, Aizaz Khan and other speakers highlighted the 30 years journey and achievements of Dost Foundation. On this occasion children of Dost Welfare Foundation presented a tableau and highlighted the negative effects of drug use. Besides, President Dost Welfare Foundation, Parveen Azam Khan, the function was attended by people from civil society and donors in large numbers.

## 2 security guards dead, 1 injured in IED blast

QUETTA (Agencies): Two security guards were killed and one injured in a blast from an improvised explosive device (IED) targeting the convoy of Sardar Khan Rind — son of Balochistan MPA Sardar Yar Mohammad Rind — officials confirmed.

Dhadar Assistant Commissioner Fahad Shah Rashdi told media that the convoy was targeted in Sunny Shoran area of Bolan district. "Two bodyguards were killed and one was injured in the IED blast while Sardar Khan Rind was unharmed in the blast," he said, adding that the dead and the injured were moved to District Headquarters Hospital Dhadar for treatment.

Dhadar Station House Officer Shaukat also told media much the same. The MPA corroborated the police official's statement, saying: "There has been a blast [targeting] my elder son Sardar Khan Rind's convoy. He is safe, although others in the convoy have been martyred and injured," he said.

Balochistan Chief Minister Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo condemned the incident and expressed regret over the loss of life and those injured. He ordered that all resources be utilised to bring the culprits to justice. "The terrorist elements want to create an atmosphere of fear and panic. The law and order situation in the province will be maintained in any case," he said. Bizenjo also extended his condolences to the victims' families and offered prayers for them.

## First Ramazan likely from 23rd

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has predicted that the crescent moon of the Holy month of Ramadan 2023 to be sighted on March 22, 29 Shabanul Muzam. The PMD has said that according to climate records, the weather is expected to be fair or partly cloudy in most parts of the country on the evening of March 22.

The new moon of Ramazan, 1444 AH, will born on the crossing conjunction point at 22-23 PST on 21-03-2023. According to astronomical parameters, there is a chance of sighting the new moon of Ramazan, 1444 AH on the evening of March 22, 2023 as according to Islamic calendar on 29th of Shaban, 1444 AH.

In case the holy month begins in line with the PMD's forecast, the first Ramazan will be on March 23, Thursday. Ramazan-ul-Mubarak, the month of fasting, is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. During the fast, Muslims must abstain from eating, drinking, gossip and cursing, and are encouraged to focus on meditative acts like prayer, reading the holy Quran and charity.

## PTI worker Bilal died in car accident: Punab CM

LAHORE (Agencies): Rubbishing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) claims that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) worker Ali Bilal was killed in police custody, the interim Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi Saturday asserted the youth in question died in a car accident.

Addressing a press conference in Lahore along with Inspector General of Police (IGP) Usman Anwar, Mohsin Naqvi vowed not to bow before the pressure and dirty propaganda being perpetrated by the PTI leadership. The PTI had claimed that Punjab Police killed its worker Ali Bilal — nicknamed Zille Shah — during Wednesday's standoff with the PTI protestors at Zaman Park.

On Wednesday, Punjab Home Department imposed Section 144 in Lahore citing serious security threats for seven days. The clashes occurred as police attempted to disrupt the gathering of the PTI workers at PTI Chairman Imran Khan's residence. Horrific images of the body of the PTI worker in Lahore began circulating on social media. Later, more details of Bilal's death began to surface, including CCTV footage of a private 4x4 vehicle, which can be seen dropping Bilal at a hospital where he was pronounced dead.

The Punjab government has also issued a timeline of the incident, sharing details about the escape of PTI workers from the police van and the arrival of the private vehicle at the Services Hospital. Sharing details about the incident collected during the probe, CM Naqvi said that Raja Shakeel informed PTI leader Yasmin Rashid that the man was hit by the car.

At this, Yasmin Rashid asked Shakeel — a member of PTI's central Punjab wing — to come with her to Zaman Park and he went with the former health minister leaving the driver in the car, he added. He said that Yasmin then went to Zaman Park and told Shakeel not to worry.

The CM said that Yasmin told the entire incident to other party leaders and sent Shakeel back from Zaman Park. "The driver of the car also changed his appearance by shaving the beard off," he added. He added that the elections are set to take place on April 30 in the province and efforts are being made to disrupt the law and order situation. "They should have staged their rally a couple of days after," he added.

CM Naqvi said that Section 144 was imposed due to Aurat March. He added that all the evidence will first be taken to

Bilal's family. "His father was also offered money to stand his ground, however, he knew that it wasn't right," he added. CM Naqvi also said that the Punjab government will financially help the family.

"I am accused of murder, is it that easy to level murder accusations on someone?" he said, adding that the PTI is openly requesting to file an FIR for the murder. "Don't make false accusations and mislead everyone," he added. Addressing the presser, Punjab IG said that all these people — who brought Bilal to the hospital in a 4x4 vehicle — have been arrested and would be presented before a court.

"I was informed that the owner of the vehicle, in which the deceased worker was brought to the hospital, is Raja Shakeel," the IG said. Shakeel, according to the IG Anwar, left for Zaman Park with Rashid leaving behind the car's driver Jehanzaib, one of the two people arrested by the police. The video circulating on social media is fake, he claimed.

"Police have found evidence against claims made by PTI with the hard work of its technical team. The conspiracy has failed," the police chief said. "Action will be taken if abuse by police is proven," the IG said. The IG said that the deceased PTI worker's father Liaquat Ali had also appealed for an investigation into his son's death. "Action will be taken if evidence of police torture is found," the IG assured.

Sharing details of the vehicle involved in the incident, the provincial police chief said: "A video of a black vehicle arriving at the Services Hospital was reported. The vehicle has been recovered with the help of 31 CCTV cameras and GPS from the Waris Shah road." The head of the provincial police department said that the worker's body was brought to the Services Hospital at 6:52am. He added that there was no conspiracy to kill the PTI worker. "The Punjab Police will share the investigation with [Bilal's] father. We promise to present all the evidence to Zille Shah's father." He also asserted that all the proof will be presented before the court. Reacting to the presser held by CM Naqvi and IG Punjab, PTI — taking to its Twitter — wrote that the "people in power think that they'll get away with the killing of Zill e Shah". The party stated that there will be justice one day. "What they don't understand is that there is a Super Power above them & He is watching everything and IA Insaaf Hoga, aaj nahi tou Ka! They will die an even more painful death," the party tweeted.

## Pakistan hails restoration of Saudi-Iran relations

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: After the world witnessed a major development in global politics amid the restoration of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Pakistan has warmly welcomed it and called it a "diplomatic breakthrough".

Both countries from the Middle East have agreed to restore ties and resume their diplomatic missions in a Chinese-brokered announcement that could have wide-ranging implications across the Middle East. In a trilateral statement, Iran and Saudi Arabia said they would reopen embassies and missions within two months and implement security and economic cooperation deals signed more than 20 years ago.

The Foreign Office, in a statement on Friday, said: "Pakistan firmly believes that this important diplomatic breakthrough will contribute to peace and stability in the region and beyond". The Pakistani government commended

China's role in coordinating the historic agreement deeming its leadership visionary for the major feat which reflects the "power of constructive engagement and meaningful dialogue".

"We laud the sagacious leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran for this very positive development," the FO stated. Pakistan said it will continue to play a constructive role in the Middle East and the region following its history of consistently supporting and coordinating efforts for bridging gaps between the two brotherly countries.

"We hope this positive step would define a template for regional cooperation and harmony," it further added. Riyadh cut ties after Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions in 2016 following the Saudi execution of revered Iranian cleric Nimr al-Nimr — just one in a series of flashpoints between the two long-

standing rivals.

Friday's announcement, which follows five days of previously unannounced talks in Beijing and several rounds of dialogue in Iraq and Oman, caps a broader realignment and efforts to ease tensions in the region. "Following talks, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have agreed to resume diplomatic relations and reopen embassies and missions within two months," said the joint statement, which was published by both countries' official media.

The detente between the two Muslim nations has the potential to reshape relations across a region characterised by turbulence for decades. Iran and Saudi Arabia support rival sides in several conflict zones including Yemen, where the Huthi rebels are backed by Tehran and Riyadh leads a military coalition supporting the government. The two sides also vie for influence in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.





# Sharjeel: Sindh reduced its expenditures due to current economic situation



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that due to current economic situation, the Sindh government has reduced its expenditures and made cuts on development projects but no cuts have been made in public transport projects.

The minister pledged to complete all the projects on priority basis. He added that peoples bus service and EV Bus would be started on all major routes of Karachi. The minister said this while talking to media after inspection of

BRT Red Line Corridor on Saturday.

The minister said that the chief minister Sindh Murad Ali Shah had given him full support to complete the public transport projects. The minister added that he visited today BRT Red Line project with project consultants and contractors to inspect the pace of work.

He said that due to historic inflation in the country, the cost of project has increased and contractors were facing difficulties to maintain the pace of work. When they started work on the project the iron cost them Rs. 140000 per ton which is increased to Rs. 310000 per ton.

The minister said that they held detail discussion with the contractors and assured them that there genuine issues would be resolved and also talked with Asian Development Bank on the matter. On the assurance from Sindh government, the contractors have paced up the speed on the project two days ago.

The minister said that after the assurance to contractors, Sindh government would not accept any compromise on the speed of project as citizens of Karachi were facing severe problems.

He admitted as minister that citizens of Karachi who use university road

were facing troubles and apologized with the people of Karachi for the difficulties. He added that once the project completed it will benefit the people. He said that government is well aware of situation and its machinery is on the field to complete the project as soon as possible.

He said that peoples bus service, Pink Bus Service and EV Bus has received tremendous response from the citizens. More routes would be functionaze within a week or fortnight. Responding to question, he said that fare of people's bus service are under review and added that due to inflation in the country and increase in diesel prices people's bus service could not be operated on current fare structure.

He said that Sindh government has no option but to increase the fares. He said that the fare of people's bus service would not be increased at once but in phases keeping in view the difficulties of common people.

Earlier minister visited the under construction Corridor of BRT Red Line alongwith consultants, contractors. Secretary Transport Abdul Haleem Shaikh, GM Construction Trans Karachi Pir Sajjad Sarhandi briefed the minister on lot one and lot two of the corridor.

## 17 police officers fired for skipping census security duty

KARACHI (NNI): The Karachi police department took serious punitive action against 17 police officials for performing their 'on filed' census security duty by sitting idle at their homes.

Reportedly, the SSP District Central, Karachi took to task 17 police officials who shirked their duty and stayed at homes.

These officials were deployed to provide security duty to census staff. SSP Central Maroof Usman fired all these police officials for showing negligence in the performance of their duty. Like other parts of the country, the first digital population census started in Sindh on March 1 which will continue till April 1.

## Ombudsman Western Australia to reach Karachi today

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Ombudsman Western Australia Mr. Chris Field, and Principal Assistant of Chief of Staff to the President Ms. Rebecca Poole, are visiting Karachi on an official visit and would reach Karachi on March 12.

The Provincial Ombudsman Sindh Mr. Ajaz Ali Khan would be hosting them. During their visit, they would call on Honourable Chief Minister Sindh on March 13 and will visit Sindh Ombudsman Secretariat on March 14. They would call on Governor Sindh on March 15 and they will also visit Mazar-e-Quaid and Mohatta Palace.

## Two traffic wardens dismissed for 'corruption'

LAHORE (INP): Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (ret'd) Mustansar Feroze Saturday dismissed two traffic wardens for taking bribe from a citizen to get prepared his driving licence.

Both the wardens were dismissed after allegations of getting bribe were proved against them, the CTO said and added that the citizens should identify and report such corrupt elements, so that an effective action could be taken against them. Besides, 2,889 traffic personnel were appreciated over good performance in the month of February, the CTO said and added that appreciation certificates had also been issued to them.

He said that such appreciation system would promote the culture of merit in the traffic police.

## 10-year-old special child found dead in car

KARACHI (INP): The dead body of a 10-year-old boy was found inside a parked car on the roadside shocked and horrified the residents of Karachi's Korangi area on Saturday. According to preliminary investigations, the father of the deceased child is employed in Hyderabad, while the dreadful incident took place in the Zaman Town area of Korangi.

The vehicle's owner, identified as Shehzad, reported to the police about the detection of the dead body Shehzad, a local resident, had gone to fetch his mother's medicine and upon returning to his car, found a lifeless body in the back seat. According to the police, the body had signs of torture and it is suspected that the child was subjected to sexual assault.

The police said that the cause of death will be determined after the completion of a post-mortem examination. Following finding the dead body of the body, the family members expressed their outrage through a strong protest. The child's maternal uncle shared that the child was mentally disabled.

The family of the deceased stated that they have no personal enmity with anyone and demanded the perpetrator should be arrested and justice be served.

## Sindh CM, NDMA agree to adopt technology for fight disasters

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Lt Gen Inam Haider have agreed in their meeting at CM House that modern technology would be adopted for disaster management.

The CM said that most of the natural disasters were weather related, therefore their forecast could be made much before their occurrences through technological help. He added that this would help the provincial and federal governments to make a contingency plan much before the

disasters.

Chairman NDMA LT Gen Inam Haider said that his organization has developed close coordination with international agencies working to forecast weather and its related impacts. He added that the NDMA itself was installing weather-related latest equipment and gadgets to assess the weather and patterns of the disasters during the last few decades.

He told the CM that the provincial disaster management authorities would be also connected with their systems along with sharing daily reports and forecast warnings so that they can make their plans

and necessary preparedness accordingly.

Murad Ali Shah said that his province was facing disasters from the 2010 flood, the 2011 floods, then the urban floods, and now heavy rains and floods. "We must learn lessons from these natural disasters and must equip and strengthen our institutions to mitigate the impact of such disasters through contingency plans and timely forecasts.

In the meeting, they agreed to further strengthen coordination between the NDMA and the PDMA so that proper planning could be made to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters.

## PTI doing politics over party worker's body: Tarar

LAHORE (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Attaullah Tarar on Saturday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was doing politics over the bodies of its workers to achieve its nefarious designs.

Addressing a press conference at Model Town, he said that the family of the deceased PTI worker, during a rally, was pressurised to give statements according to the party line. When the worker was taken to the Services Hospital, he was pronounced dead. He said Rescue 1122 was not called to get help for the party worker, which raised questions. The PTI was declaring the death as a murder, which was very unfortunate. Politics of baseless

allegations by the PTI had become identity of the party, he said adding that the PTI had become habitual of dumping its workers and leaders after using them for personal gains.

Atta Tarar said that the caretaker Punjab government would take the investigation to logical conclusion. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) left a progressing country in 2018 whereas the PTI ruined the institutions and economy in four years.

The PML-N would continue taking steps for betterment of the country, he said adding that the party had the ability to bring the country out of challenges like it did in the past. The SAPM said that baseless propaganda

campaign was being run on the social media about the incident. He asked the provincial caretaker government to conduct an investigation into the incident and make public every aspect and fact about the incident.

The PTI government was involved in money laundering as they sold out Tashakhana gifts after taking them abroad whereas kickbacks were received in public funds. He said the PTI chief should appear before the courts in cases registered against him as nobody was above the law.

To a question, the SAPM said that the PML-N was ready for the elections; however, it wanted level playing field for everyone by ensuring rule of law.



SEHWAN: A large number of devotees attending 771st Urs celebration at shrine of Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. —APP Photo

## JI announces sit-ins across Karachi

KARACHI (NNI): Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi chief

Hafiz Naemur Rehman has announced to stage sit-ins across the metropolis to protest against the delay in the schedule of local government (LG) polls on the remaining 11 seats.

Hafiz Naemur Rehman, while addressing a sit-in outside the office of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Sindh chapter, announced to stage sit-ins across the metropolis over the delay in LG results and schedule for polls on the

remaining 11 seats despite spending 1.5 months.

The JI Karachi chief alleged that Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) has once again stabbed Karachi in the back with the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) after the regime change.

Despite negative tactics, JI continued its Haq Do Karachi Tehreek and a large number of citizens took part in it. Hafiz Naemur added that Karachiites gave a heavy mandate to Jamaat-e-

Islami and exposed the conspiracy of the PPP.

He said that JI emerged as the biggest political party of Karachi in the recent LG polls despite the flawed voter lists and delimitations. Karachiites want to see development in the metropolis.

Hafiz Naemur said that the current chief election commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja performed duties as the chief and bureaucrat of all three provinces but he is completely unaware of the real issues of Karachi people.

## Miftah sees salvation in structural changes

KARACHI (NNI): Miftah Isamil, political maverick belonging to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, advised structural changes in the country for any progress while mentioning that popular leaders, including Imran Khan and Nawaz Sharif, would not be able to make the state of affairs better.

He said any popular leader from the political parties or martial law would not make the country prosper unless the roots of the problems were identified.

About his future in electoral politics, Mr Isamil added he decided to stay away from politics. The former finance minister headed the economic ministry

under the PDM government and he was sacked in September 2022 when Ishaq Dar made an entry into the country to resolve the country's economic issues, however the situation became worse.

He said all had ruled Pakistan, from Asif Ali Zardari to Nawaz Sharif and from Shehbaz Sharif to Imran Khan however, the living standard of the people did not improve. He cited "inflation" as the worst challenge afflicting the country while saying the economy would remain in tatters unless long-term reforms were not adopted.

He said no particular party would sweep the elections while mentioning the

PML-N would "definitely not sweep the polls". He also acknowledged Imran Khan as huge following in the public, while mentioning the PPP would find it difficult to contest elections in Punjab because of less followers in the province.

He said he would vote for PML-N in the polls, but also highlighted he would refrain from casting vote in the case of no suitable candidate from the party.

He said there was no competence in all major parties. Leaders of all parties only made efforts to become the prime ministers but no focus was paid to the sufferings of ordinary Pakistanis who had less income or no job.

### KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA SERVICE TRIBUNAL, PESHAWAR

### TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders along with 2% call deposit are invited from Sales Tax registered firms for purchase of **IT AND ELECTRIC EQUIPMENTS** for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Service Tribunal. Tender should reach the undersigned on / before 27-03-2023, 10:00am and will be opened on the same day at 02:00pm

Tender documents can be obtained from the undersigned office during office hours.

All the Government Taxes will be applicable.

The competent authority reserves the right to reject all bids at any time prior to acceptance of a bid as per clause 47 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement of Goods, Works and Services Rules, 2014

This advertisement is also available on [www.kpst.gov.pk](http://www.kpst.gov.pk)

#### REGISTRAR

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA  
SERVICE TRIBUNAL, PESHAWAR

INF(P) 737/23, The Frontier Post Peshawar, Date:12-03-23

## Commissioner reviews Ramadan arrangements

LAHORE (APP): Commissioner Lahore Division Muhammad Ali Randhawa chaired a meeting at his office on Saturday to review the measures taken to facilitate the citizens during the holy month of Ramadan.

Addressing the meeting, the commissioner said that official sales points should be extended at tehsil level while district officers and assistant commissioners would supervise the ramzan bazaars and ensure sales of commodities at government announced rates.

The commissioner directed the deputy commissioner to submit reports in his office regarding price control measures in their respective districts.

He added that arrangements and preparations should be completed before Ramadan as per government's instructions. He warned that no one would be allowed to resort to profiteering during the month of Ramadan.

Deputy Commissioner Lahore Rafia Haider, Additional Commissioners and other officers concerned attended the meeting while deputy commissioners of other three districts of Lahore division were attended the meeting through video link.

پاکستان سول اور ایوی ایشن اتھارٹی

### PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

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Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority requires services of qualified individuals to fill the following vacant posts on **contract basis for three (03) years (extendable)** where selection will be made purely on suitability and merit:-

Post	No. of Seats	Prescribed Qualification	Quota & Pay Scale	Age Limit
Joint Director Electronics (EG-05)	Ten (10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BE/BS Electronics / Avionics / Industrial Electronics / Telecommunication Engineering from HEC Recognized University.</li> <li>Minimum Experience of 15 Years with maintenance / up-gradation of Communication, Navigation and Surveillance systems.</li> <li>Should possess experience in carrying protective and corrective maintenance of high tech. equipment like Radar, Nav. Aids, Radio Communication System and Building Management systems.</li> <li>Excellent Presentation, Problem Solving, Leadership, Decision Making and Analytical Skills.</li> <li>Conversant in formulating PC-I and PC-II and other planning commission requirements.</li> <li>Conversant with PPRA rules.</li> <li>The individual should be able to prepare specification, design, plans, estimates, studies assessments and reports for assigned tasks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Merit</li> <li>Lump Sum Monthly Pay (Gross) of Rs. 264,122 per month with 5% annual increment (Negotiable)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximum age limit of 50 Years.</li> <li>(Including all age relaxations)</li> </ul>

**Application Procedure:**

(a) Interested candidates are required to fill & submit Online Job Application Form available at [www.caapakistan.com.pk](http://www.caapakistan.com.pk) within fifteen days from the date of this advertisement.

(b) Candidates will be required to upload scanned copies of certificate / degree of the required qualification only of the concerned post as mentioned above and CNIC while applying for the job.

(c) In case a candidate does not upload the above documents with the online application form, his/her application will be rejected.

(d) All the interested candidates must read the Terms of Reference (TOR) mentioned in the detailed notice available at [www.caapakistan.com.pk](http://www.caapakistan.com.pk) before applying for the post.

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**HEADQUARTERS PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY,**  
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PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan addressing during a ceremony held on completion of 30 years of Doost Welfare Foundation.

## PTI renders fertile agricultural lands barren: Mayor

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali has said that the incompetency of the previous PTI government has rendered fertile agricultural lands barren in district Peshawar.

He expressed these views during his visit to Och (dried) Canal at Pishtakhara, a Suburban locality of Peshawar on Saturday. Chairman Tehsil Pishtakhara Haroon Siffat

also accompanied him during the visit and gave him a detailed briefing regarding the issue.

The Tehsil Chairman told the Mayor that for a long time, water is not released in the canal, which has inflicted huge financial losses on the growers of the area. He said that situation will not be tolerated anymore.

In response to the demands of the Tehsil Chairman, Haji Zubair Ali

gave a deadline of 48 hours to the Irrigation Department for cleaning and release of water in the canal.

The Mayor further said that irrigation water in the canal remains available for 12 months of the year and said that the PTI government was intentionally not giving any relief to the people and made all public welfare activities, as victims of the interests and politics.

## PDM will not participate in by-elections

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) has announced it will not participate in by-elections, said a provincial spokesman of the multi-parties alliance on Saturday.

In an explanatory statement regarding the announcement of schedule for by-elections on some National Assembly constituencies, the spokesman said that PDM and its allied political parties have already decided no participation in by-elections.

## Budget for 2nd shift staff released

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Department has released the budget for employees working in the second shift of schools being run by the Elementary and Secondary Education throughout the province, said the spokesman here on Saturday.

All the district education officers have been directed to submit a report comprising staff details of their respective districts by March 15. This staff include male and female principals, headmasters, teachers and clerical staff deputed in government schools in second shifts.

Monthly salaries would be released on receipt of the staff report, accordingly.

## QWP hails KSA, Iran agreement

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief of Qaumi Watan Party, Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Saturday welcomed the agreement of diplomatic ties between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran.

He said that it is heartening to know that through the initiative of Chinese President Xi Jinping, Saudi Arabia and Iran have agreed to resume diplomatic ties and respect each other's sovereignty.

# Governor inaugurates Olive Festival at Tarnab

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali on Saturday visited Agricultural Research Institute Tarnab Farm Peshawar and inaugurated the Olive Festival besides inspecting the Agricultural Commodity stalls set up on this occasion.

During his visit, Governor KP also made announced to provide an olive oil-producing machine on his behalf to the farmers of the southern districts in order to ensure the export of olive oil. The jubilant farmers lauded the Governor's announcement.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor KP urged the farmers to employ modern agri methods and technology to progress in the field of farming.

He said the production of olives not only will lead to an increase in the coun-

try's foreign exchange but also lead to the economic development of farmers, the creation of employment opportunities and eradication of poverty.

Abdul Halim Kasuria, Secretary Agriculture Muhammad Asrar Khan, and DG Research Dr Abdul Bari said the governor KP was a "public governor in the true sense" and they were grateful to him for announcing the olive oil extraction machine (OOEM) for the farmers of the southern districts.

With this initiative of the Governor, the cultivation of olives in the southern districts, especially in Waziristan, will be promoted more than before and now the farmers will not have to go to remote areas of the province to extract oil from Olives.

Italy and other donor

agencies are providing a lot of support in olive farming in Pakistan and the Department of Agriculture is trying to play an important role in the promotion of olives and ensure the production of Olives in every region of the province.

Calling the Olive Festival important for the promotion of Olive cultivation in the province, Haji Ghulam Ali said, "It will help in the promotion of Olive cultivation in the province." Universities have to play an important role, he added.

Member of the National Assembly Nasir Khan Musazai, Provincial Ministers, Shafiullah Khan, Hamid Shah, representative of UNWF, Agriculture Secretary Mohammad Asrar Khan, National Project Director Olive Dr

Mohammad Tariq, Director General Research Dr Abdul Bari, Maulana Amanullah Haqqani, Khaled Qar Chamkani and other relevant authorities and a large number of farmers were present.

At the end of the ceremony, the Governor also presented appreciation shields to the Secretary of the Agriculture Department, other officers of the Agriculture Department and the officers serving in the Olive Department.

## PIC launches new Rotapro system

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Institute of Cardiology (PIC-MTI) became the first National Center in Pakistan to launch the new Rotapro system.

Spokesperson PIC Riffat Anjum on Saturday said that it is proud to announce a single operator smart device which can help in shaving off the calcium within coronary arteries.

She said that an expert team of PIC cardiologists operated upon 60 years old with Rotapro, a latest treatment method.

Dr Abidullah Head of the cardiology department PIC said that latest Rotapro therapy in Pakistan is another advanced treatment procedure where minimum complication rate and high efficiency is linked with Rotational Atherectomy which is a novel technique to treat calcified coronary lesions. It is a tool for complex PCI procedures, which help in plaque modification and vessel preparation, for stenting.



PESHAWAR: Chairman Tehsil Pishtakhara Haroon Siffat briefing Mayor Haji Zubair Ali regarding Och (dried) Canal.

# ARI Tarnab organizes Olive Fair, showcases olive industry

PESHAWAR (APP): Agricultural Research Institute (ARI) Tarnab, Peshawar organized Olive Gala, showcasing the potentials of the olive industry in Pakistan here on Saturday.

The event was organized under the auspices of the Italian-funded project "Olive Culture-Holistic and Multi-Professional Mechanism for a Pakistani Olive Oil Value Chain" and "Promotion of Olive Cultivation on commercial scale in Pakistan."

The Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ghulam Ali, was the Chief Guest of the event. Honorable Chief Guest expressed his happiness at the progress being made in olive cultivation in the country and emphasized the need to disseminate information about new varieties and production technology to ordinary farmers to ensure that the country becomes self-sufficient in edible oil production.

He also added that Italian experts from CIHEAM Bari are doing impressive work in the development of olive crop.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Agricultural Minister, Abdul Haleem Qasuria lauded the efforts of Agricultural Research Institute in promotion of olive oil in Pakistan. He said that Pakistan is spending million rupees in importing edible oil pro-

moting olive will help enable Pakistan to make their own olive oil.

Stakeholders from various sectors, including institutions, businesses, farmers, youth, women, consumers, and entrepreneurs, were able to explore and improve the economic, productive, and quality aspects of the Pakistani olive oil value chain during the Olive Gala.

Speaking on the occasion, Director General Agricultural Research Institute, Tarnab welcomed the participants of olive gala, emphasizing the impor-

tance of the olive oil industry in Pakistan.

He added that the Agricultural Research Institute in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is doing a tremendous job in promotion of olive cultivation and production with the help and support of Italian Agency for their support. He also added that we are receiving positive response from farmers and progressive growth of olives.

The Olive Gala also featured representative from CIHEAM Bari emphasized the importance of enhancing the olive value chain and promoting interaction

among all actors along with the olive value addition.

The Olive Gala was highly informative and engaging, providing stakeholders with the chance to discuss the latest trends and innovations in the olive industry.

The success of the event was a testament to the potential of the olive industry in Pakistan. Its continued growth promises to contribute significantly to the country's economy and promote socio-economic development, employment opportunities, and poverty reduction.



PESHAWAR: Visitors take interest in Olive Gala at Agriculture Research Institute.

# Ag glance School held event to celebrate 23rd March

### E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Deputy Controller Marketing Pakistan Television Peshawar Romana Asad Khan has said that proper education and training of children is the responsibility of both parents and teachers and Ag glance International School is fulfilling this responsibility in the best way. She said this while speaking as the chief guest at the spring celebrations and Pakistan Day event held at Ag glance International School Peshawar.

Principal of the school

Irum Nadeem, teachers, students and parents also participated in the event. The children presented various tableaux on this occasion and received appreciation from the audience.

Speaking at the event, Romana Asad Khan said that the tradition of organizing events on specific days in schools should be made public and Ag glance International School regularly organizes such event which is commendable. She said that this instills love and affection for their country amongst the children.

She paid tribute to the heroes of Pakistan Independence Movement and said that our forefathers made us the owner of a free and independent state in the form of Pakistan and now it is our responsibility to play our part for the development and prosperity of our country.

She also paid tribute to the management of Ag glance International School for the excellent program and excellent training of the children. Later, Romana Asad distributed prizes amongst the best performing students.



PESHAWAR: Deputy Controller Marketing Pakistan Television Peshawar Romana Asad Khan addressing audience at Ag glance International School.

# Minister expresses concerns over violence situations in varsities

PESHAWAR (APP): State Minister and acting President Pakistan People's Party Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha on Saturday expressed serious concern over the violence situation and aggression incidents in universities.

In a statement issued here, he condemned teacher and supervisor killing in Peshawar and violence and

harassment of students belonging to the Hindu community in the universities while celebrating Holi in Karachi and Punjab.

He said that there are religious freedoms so people who are related have choice to perform their religious rituals in the country.

He demanded the Vice Chancellors of the universities and other high authorities to take legal

action against all the miscreants involved in these incidents and bring them to justice.

Minister of State Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha while condemning the killing of Security Supervisor of University of Peshawar Saqlain Bangash and Lecture Bashir by security guards said that legal action should be taken against them.

It is the responsibility of all of us to provide a peaceful educational environment for students to acquire knowledge.

Such incidents are having negative effects on the educational environment in the universities so the government and university management should take notice of the teachers and student organizations seriously, he added.

# Hayatabad: Factories dust threatens residents' health

### Ishaq Khan

PESHAWAR: The Hayatabad Industrial Estate of provincial capital was established in the late 70s and currently more than 550 to 600 units were established, on one hand these factories are providing employments and business opportunities to the local people but on the other hand it created some unavoidable problems to them as well.

Hayatabad Industrial Estate located on the western outskirts of Peshawar, borders the newly merged tribal district of Khyber, formerly Khyber agency of Tribal Areas.

The residents of Shahkas area of Khyber district, adjacent to Hayatabad Industrial Estate and other surrounding areas complained that the Chik board factories in the area makes their lives miserable as these continuously release

the production dust, generated during the manufacturing or production process.

There are eight chick board factories in the Hayatabad Industrial Estate, emitting smoke and harmful particles in the air which cause health problems to the local residents.

World Health Organization report claimed air pollution kills around 7 million people in the world every year and adding 9 in 10 people breathe air containing high levels of unhealthy particulates.

It added that breathing fine particulate matter known as PM2.5 can worsen the chronic lung diseases, lead to higher rates of breast cancer, cause earlier onset of neurological diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's and increase heart attacks and stroke.

Alamgir Afridi, 35 years old local resident informed

that despite submitting several complaints to authorities concerned of taking action against these Chick board factories and making them continue their production without creating health problems to the local people but still no action was taken in this regard.

He claimed that we are consuming this production of dust through our nose and mouth as there is no other way to ensure protection from this dust. All our children were facing severe chest or throat problems especially in the winter season because of these factories and its release of unhealthy particulates in the air, he added.

He further added that they can't leave the children in open air because of the so much dust and unhealthy particulars in the air, adding we have to clean our houses three to four times in a day as all the dust

covering their homes and making in dirty both in looks and hazardous for health as well because of its smell.

Similarly, Safiullah, 53-year-old shopkeeper and resident of Shahkas area said we don't want to shut down these factories as we understand hundreds of people are working in these units and earning their daily bread from it but we also want a healthy life for our children as it is our basic right.

"Our women and children are compelled to stay in the rooms of our houses mostly in the daytime as these chick board factories continuously emit smoke and dust, sometimes it is impossible to breathe because of so many particles in the air", Safiullah said.

He claimed that most of the children and residents of the area are facing throat and chest problems because

of the unhealthy air quality in the air, adding that the doctors advised to change the locale for good health which is not possible for the most of the poor families of the area.

It is true that district administration, other departments had taken action against these factories on public complaints but unfortunately after some days they continued their productions without taking proper measures in this regard for the safety of common people, he said.

Muqtasid Ahsan, Secretary General of Industrialist Association Peshawar criticized the district administration and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for destroying the business activities in Hayatabad Industrial Estate with their unfair actions against the different factories in Peshawar.

The products of Peshawar chick board factories were supplied to different parts of the country and in the province because of its fine quality but unfortunately now most of these factories were closed or they shifted their setup to other provinces because of the authorities behavior towards them, Ahsan regretted.

He said that it is understandable and legally right to address the complaints of the local people if they face any problem working in such factories but the EPA or other department needs to aware and train the factory owners and workers in this regard with the aim to ensure the continuity of production and safety of the residents.

He said on one hand the current economic condition of the terrorism stricken and natural calamity hit province had badly affected

the business activities and now the authorities are also creating problems with different tactics for the industrialists in the provincial capital.

"We are ready to cooperate with the EPA and administration in any manner but that is not a way to impose heavy fines and seal the factories without guiding them in this regard", Ahsan said.

While contacting Muhammad Irshad, Chief Analyst and Deputy Director of Environment Protection Agency Laboratory, he admitted that EPA received several complaints against these factories for creating unavoidable problems to people, adding that EPA had taken prompt action in the better interest of the people and environment.

He said that three chick board factories are currently in working condition and other factories in this area

had stopped production because of their own problems.

EPA official informed these production units were responsible for adding different harmful gases and particles in the air and causing the pollution in the area, adding the short-term standard (24-hour or daily average) of Particulate matter (PM2.5), a non-filterable matter, is 35 micrograms per cubic meter of air (ug/m3) but it crosses the 300 marks in some cases in the surrounding areas of these factories which is very high and could leave negative impacts on human health.

Irshad explained that EPA regularly does inspections in the area and gives notices to those who are not following the rules in maintaining the healthy environment and in some cases we seal the factories according to the rules set by the KP government.





## In brief

### Orientation session held Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: A two-day orientation session on providing technical knowledge to Assistant Commissioners of districts of Malakand division as Principal Accounting Officer was held in Saidu Sharif, Swat. On the first day of the session Commissioner Malakand Division Shahidullah Khan attended and addressed as the chief guest. The session was organized by the Finance Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with technical support from the S u b - N a t i o n a l Governance Program and financial assistance from the UK's Foreign, Common Wealth and Development Office. The purpose of the awareness session was to equip Assistant Commissioners with the necessary knowledge and skills to perform their duties effectively under the new local government system. In his address as Chief Guest, Commissioner Malakand Division Shahidullah Khan appreciated the SNG program of Oxford Policy Management for organizing the session for the assistant commissioners of the division. Commissioner Malakand emphasized the importance of enhancing the quality of governance and improving service delivery to strengthen government institutions. In the session, participants were informed that the Sub-National Governance Program works to provide technical assistance to the government in implementing policies and reforms at the provincial and local levels. The program aims to strengthen democracy, promote economic growth and reduce poverty through governance reforms and improved service delivery. The technical orientation session is an important step towards achieving the objectives of the SNG program which will help in effectively performing its duties under the new local government system in Malakand division.

### Police traces blind murder case F.P. Report

MULTAN: Police has traced a blind murder of an abandoned body recovered a month ago while arrested three culprits allegedly involved in the incident and recovered weapon used in the offense, on Saturday. City Police Officer Multan Mansoor Ul Haq Rana took notice of the incident and ordered the immediate arrest of the accused by tracing the case. On which SHO City Shujaabad Malik Mohammad Saeed, Aslam Sajid SI along with their other team worked hard day and night under the supervision of SDPO Shujaabad Mahar Ghulam Murtaza under the supervision of SP Uzair Ahmed. The accused were arrested after tracing the case. Among the arrested accused are Saeed, Huzaifa and Shahzad, initially, the accused revealed that the accused planned to kill Islam U din with pistol fire and threw the body in a well over a transaction dispute. Police recovered as pistol from the accused. Speaking to the media on this occasion, DSP Mehar Ghulam Murtaza said that Circle Shujaabad Police is working day and night to protect the life and property of the people. Making Shujaabad crime-free is the first priority. SHO Police Station City Saeed Malik said that indiscriminate actions are being taken against the criminal elements. The blind murder was solved through modern methods of investigation.

# Govt commits socio-economic uplift of southern belt: Zahid

F.P. Report

BANNU: Deputy Speaker National Assembly Zahid Akram Durrani on Saturday vowed to continue the struggle for the socio-economic development of the southern districts including Bannu district.

This he said while addressing an inauguration ceremony of the Passport Office, he said that Jamia-ul-Islam(Fazl) believed in practical measures for resolving problems of people and added issues of the area would be taken at all forums to address them at the earliest. He said that issues of people pertaining to Bannu Township including gas would be resolved amicably after taking the issue with relevant officials.

Zahid Akram Durrani said that it had been also learnt that people of North Waziristan could not get passports from this office due to technical issues, adding this issue should also be discussed with authorities of the relevant departments and no effort would be spared to get the issue resolved as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, Deputy Speaker National Assembly Zahid Akram Durrani underlined the need for promoting research-oriented education to successfully meet challenges ahead while addressing as a chief guest at the first convocation Bannu Medical College, here.

He said that those countries which had progressed in the field of medical were mainly focusing on research work, so the culture of research should be promoted by the country's universities to achieve national development. He also lamented that it had been entrenched in the country's politics that development schemes which had been launched by a government come to



halt due to paucity of funds or any other politically-motivated tactics by political opponents when they come to power.

As a result, masses were left to suffer and the pace of development in the country became slow, putting extra burden on the national exchequer in the shape of cost escalations. Zahid Akram Khan Durrani said it was high time we did away with that old system of politics and he had brought a bill to the National Assembly and it was currently pending with a relevant committee, providing for disallowing a next government to put a break on the development projects on which 10 certain work was completed.

Deputy Speaker also appreciated the performance of the Bannu Medical College, saying it had proved to be an exemplary educational institution which has achieved many achievements in a very short period of time. He said the college was planted in 2006, the fruits of which are being seen today in the form of hundreds of doctors graduating, which is a great success. But we should spend our energies so that this organization can progress further.

Speaking on the occasion, Dean Gomal Medical College Bannu Professor Dr. Shabir Hussain said Bannu Medical College had also affiliated with CPSP in seven departments. He said more than 1400 doctors had graduated from the college

and most of these doctors have passed FCPS, which was an honor for this institution. . Apart from this, the final year of Bannu Medical College in Khyber Medical University has also won the honor of hundred percent result. Likewise, Bannu Medical College has collaborated with national and international medical institutions according to its vision and mission.

Agreements were signed and faculty exchange programs were organized between them, under which Bannu Medical College established a strong position among leading medical institutions across the country. Earlier, Deputy Speaker National Assembly Zahid Akram Durrani awarded gold medals and certificates to 68 graduates of Bannu Medical College while Lifetime Achievement Awards were also distributed to former Dean, Chief Executive Officers, Faculty members of Bannu Medical College.

Vice Chancellor of Khyber Medical University Prof. Dr. Ziaul Haque, Registrar Prof. Dr. Salim Gandapur, Supervisory Provincial Minister Sawal Nazir, Chairman Board of Governors Prof. Dr. Saeed was also present in the ceremony. Allah Shah, Member Board Prof. Dr. Abdul Samad Khan Wazir, Dean Bannu Medical College Prof. Dr. Shabir Hussain, faculty members, parents and a large number of graduates were also present.

# Tree plantation drive kicks-off

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Green Day was celebrated in the University of Chitral. In this regard, a simple but prompt ceremony was also held in the auditorium of the university, in which the vice chancellor of the university Prof. Dr. Zahir Shah was Chief guest while the ceremony was presided over by Assistant Commissioner Chitral Dr. Muhammad Atif Jalib.

Heads of Forest Department, Agriculture Department, Water and Soil Conservation Department and other departments also participated in the ceremony. Addressing on the occasion experts said that since Chitral is a dry region where the mountains are often barren due to the lack of monsoon rains, this is the reason why the people of Chitral have a greater responsibility to plant trees everywhere to control the lack of forests in Chitral.

Vice-Chancellor of Chitral University Professor Dr. Zahir Shah welcomed the guests and said that plants are not only essential for human survival, but also fulfill all the needs of life from human being to animals. He urged the participants to plant as many trees as possible to avoid the negative effects of climate change and make them successful.

Divisional Forest Officer Asif Ali Shah also highlighted the importance of plants and trees. He said that natural disasters cannot be prevented until we control the lack of forests. These trees and plants not only provide us fresh oxygen but also act as natural check dams to reduce speed of flash flood.

Director Admin Professor Dr. Muhammad Nadeem thanked all the participants and urged the stakeholders, especially the students, to convey these useful messages to their homes and neighbourhoods and also create awareness among the people about the importance of forests.

Later, all the guests including the Vice Chancellor also planted saplings in the lawn of the university. On this occasion, 3,000 plants were distributed among the students free of cost including 2,000 fruit plants and 1,000 wild plants. Talking with our correspondent, the Vice Chancellor said that after the disastrous flood last year, it was recognized on international level the whole world has seen the negative effects of climate change. Due to this devastating flood, more than fifty thousand dollars was lost in the homeland and many people died and many people were displaced.

Students of University of Chitral while talking to our team said that plants are very important for our life because plants are not only a tree but also a new life. They said that most of the forests are being cutting in Chitral and people are forced to do such because they burn these firewood for cooking and heating purposes as there is no alternative fuel here.

Dr. Nadeem said that whenever a natural calamity occurs, many lives are lost and property worth billions of rupees also damage. And if people are provided electricity on subsidize rate or cheap gas as an alternative fuel, then people will not burn wood and we can avoid natural calamities by reducing the burden on forests. Shields and souvenirs were also presented to the guests during the ceremony.

Lecturer of Botany department Hafeezullah while talking to the media said that we should plant more sapling as charity because the more sapling we plant, we can avoid the negative effects of environment and climate change. A large number of students of Chitral University, teachers, administration officers, representatives of Forest Department, Police, Water and Sewer Conservation and other departments also participated in the event.

# Student orientation day held at girl's cadet college

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Deputy Commissioner Mardan Captain (Rtd) Abdur Rehman was the chief guest of orientation day was held at Girls Cadet College Mardan, on Saturday.

Brigadier (Rtd) Javed Sarwar, Principal of Girls Cadet College, parents of students were also present on this occasion. Various tableaux were presented by the students on the occasion of orientation Day.

Expressing his views, the DC Mardan said that

he was very happy to come to the Cadet College, that Mardan district has this honor and that the students are being provided with such good education and training. He further said that he remembered his student days when he was studying in cadet college, he urged the students to work hard and make the country bright in the future.

On this occasion, the Deputy Commissioner presented a souvenir to the parents on behalf of the Girls Cadet College, while a shield was presented to the Deputy

Commissioner on behalf of the Principal Brigadier (Rtd) Javed Sarwar. A detailed briefing was given by Principal Brigadier (Rtd) Javed Sarwar on various ongoing activities and departments in Girls Cadet College. Deputy Commissioner Mardan said that he himself will supervise the ongoing development work on the new building of the college so that the construction work of college building can be completed within the stipulated time. He further assured all possible support from the district.

## Bar Association observes strike against insecurity

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: District Bar Association has announced to observe complete strike against increasing robbery, theft and other crimes in the city Hafizabad. According to press release issued here, police have failed to perform its duty whereas interference of tout mafia and politicians was prevailed in the police stations.

Press release said that District Bar would observe complete strike to protest against poor performance of the district police on Saturday.

**Land lord killed over rivalry:** Land lord was murdered on old enmity in village Kot Ishaq. According to details, Allah Ditta son of Muhammad Nawaz Tarar was engaged in giving fodder to his animals in his shed. Meanwhile his rivals Naseer Ahmad, Qaisar Bashir etc. reached there and opened fire on him to take revenge. As a result of which, Allah Ditta was killed while accused fled away from crime scene. Vaneke Tarar police have taken dead body into its custody and shifted to hospital for autopsy. Police have registered a case against accused and started investigation.

**Unidentified dead body of girl recovered:** Police have recovered a dead body of unidentified girl from canal near village Shori Chatha and shifted to hospital for postpartum. According to police girl was shot to death after torture and unknown accused throw her dead body in the canal. Police have started investigations.

**Mother, son killed in road mishap:** A mother was killed while his son was injured when a donkey cart hit their motorcycle near Qila Ram Kour. According to details, Suleman so of Imran along with his mother Zubaida was coming to Hafizabad city from his village Valleke on motorcycle.

When they reached near village Qila Ram Kour, a donkey cart collided with the bike. As a result of which, Zubaida was killed on the spot while his son Suleman was injured.

**Planting saplings to combat challenges of climate change:** District 'Nigran Dawat-e-Islami' Hafizabad Chapter Moulana Muhammad Waseem Attari said that Faizan Global Relief Fund Foundation department of Dawat-e-Islami is engaged in planting saplings to combat challenges of climate change and to eliminate pollution in the country on the directions of Central Ameer Dawat-e-Islami Moulana Muhammad Ilyas Qadari.

## Police busts motorcycle lifts gang

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Police has arrested three alleged culprits of motorcycle thief group while recovered 12 stolen motorcycles from their possession in the premises of city police station.

The arrested suspects are wanted by the city police in two cases of motorcycle theft. The police received 02 reports of motorcycle theft from different places, taking notice of the incident, district police chief Najib-ur-Rehman issued special instructions to the city police under the supervision of DSP City Circle Adnan Azam Khan to arrest the elements involved in the incident.

On which SHO Police Station City Muqaddam Khan, ASI Tahir Khan along with the investigation and the city police team, with the help of modern scientific means and professional investigation process, three suspects involved in the incident, Qasim and Hilal residents of Rorya Jaded and Bilal arrested.

Regarding this case DSP City Circle Adnan Azam Khan along with SHO Muqaddam Khan and ASI Tahir Khan gave a press briefing and added that after the confession of the arrested accused, on identification. Recovered 12 different types of stolen motorcycles. More important revelations are also expected, after the completion of the legal process, the arrested accused will be produced in the local court.

# PTI workers demand accountability of party ex-lawmaker in Dir



F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Pakistan Tehreek Insaf Maidan chapter on Saturday demanded of the party chief Imran Khan and provincial president Perviz Khattak to take the party former lawmaker MPA Liaquat Ali into account for their wrong doings. The demand was made during a workers' convention held at Kumbhar which was attended by hundreds of party workers from all parts of Maidan.

The convention was addressed by former MNA Bashir Khan, former district councilor Abdullah Shah, Dr Saleem, Asadullah Durani, Abdul Wahab Bukhari and others.

The PTI Maidan leadership expressed solidarity with the party chief Imran Khan and announced to send hundreds of workers to Zaman Park Lahore for safeguarding him. The workers alleged the PTI MPA Liaquat Ali recruited 30 of his relatives in different government departments and ignored the party workers who had M.Phil and Ph. D degrees. They said the former lawmaker always misbehaved with party workers. They said the party workers would be free to decide if the leadership awarded the ticket again to the former lawmaker. The speakers said

that militants had attacked the former MPA Liaquat Ali vehicle during which he was injured.

They said the militants had also attacked the house of former district councilor Malik Abdullah Shah after which he migrated to Peshawar. The speakers said that other party workers including Shuiab Khan were also targeted by militants. They said the former lawmaker was now cashing the attack on his vehicle and portrayed that he had rendered great sacrifices for the party. They demanded proper accountability with the former MPA. The former MNA Bashir Khan presented himself for accountability and said the party should award tickets for the next general elections on merit and workers' consent should be honoured. He said that he would refuse the party ticket if workers were not happy with it.

**PDM demand:** The Lower Dir chapter of the Pakistan Democratic Movement on Saturday demanded 'first accountability, then polls. The PDM leaders including district chief of the JUI-F Sirajud Din, provincial leader Qazi Ayazud Din, PPP's former provincial minister Mahmood Zeb, ANP's general secretary Malik Muhammad Zeb, PML-N district president Malik

Farooq Iqbal and others while speaking at a news conference at Timergara said that Imran Khan and his party were responsible for the whole mess and political instability in the country.

The PDM leaders said the National Accountability Bureau should first initiate investigations into the corruption made by the PTI leadership before the general elections. They alleged the PTI chief Imran Khan had been defaming national institutions under a planned conspiracy. They said the PDM would not let succeed the nefarious designs of Imran Khan against the Pakistan army and other state institutions. They said the PTI was working on a foreign agenda and the nation would reject it once elections were held. They said the PDM did not run away from the elections but it was not a suitable time as the country faced many challenges. The PDM leaders said that Imran Khan was struggling to create division in the Pakistan army and judiciary. They said the PTI chief was hiding in its Zaman Park house and was not ready to be arrested. He said the political leadership like Nawaz Sharif, Asif Ali zardari, Maryam Nawaz etc happily spent time in jails but Imran Khan had been skipping arrest.

# Education key for social morals: DPO

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: District police officer Tariq Iqbal, who is popular for his education loving attitude, has asked students to give up telling a lie as it is the root cause of all distrust. He was addressing the annual prize distribution ceremony of the Intellectual Schools and College Talash campus as chief guest here.

The function which was attended by mothers, teachers, students, social and political activists and area elders, was also addressed by former provincial minister advocate Muzafar Syed, prominent educationist Muhammad Hafeezullah Khan, Timergara Tehsil chairman Mufti Irfanud Din, school's principal Fazal Wadood and others. The guests distributed shields and medals among the position holder students of the school. The students presented speeches, songs and

tableaus and got applause from the audience.

DPO said that it was a good omen that mothers were supporting their children to get standard education. He said the nation had attached great expectations with the young generation, so they should focus on their studies and should not disappoint the elders. The DPO said that telling a lie was not only a sin but it created distrust in the personality of one who told lies. He asked the students to make books' reading as their hobby and always tell the truth.

The other speakers shed light on the role of private educational institutions and said that it had lessened the burden of government. They said that it was the age of competition and only those students could excel in every field who worked hard. The speakers also asked the parents to keep regular contact with the

educational institutions for the betterment of their children.

**PTI to block road against arrest of party's chief:** The Pakistan Tehreek Insaf Lower Dir chapter threatened to block all roads in the district and other parts of the country if the party chief Imran Khan was arrested.

Talking to local journalists at Timergara the PTI activists Shah Nazar, Ali Shah Mishwani and others alleged the state had been utilizing its resources against the PTI chief Imran Khan and his aides. They said that one of the party workers, Ali Bilal was martyred during a peaceful demonstration in Lahore that showed the government's designs. They said that all political parties could not compete with the PTI if free, fair and transparent elections were held in the country. The PTI activists said that party workers would not let anyone arrest Imran Khan.

# 7th digital census; an important responsibility

F.P. Report

ZHOB: Commissioner Zhob Division Saeed Ahmed Umrani has said that the census was an important national responsibility and absolutely zero tolerance for those found negligent in their census duties.. He has asked the concerned officials to strictly monitor the census process and ensure all the necessary arrangements for the officials carrying out a gigantic task.

Talking to this scribe, Commissioner Umrani said that it was the first time that the Digital House and Population Census program has been launched in the country and the objective behind digital census was to make the process transparent and error-free so that accurate decisions

could be taken on future planning and strategies. He stressed that cooperation between enumerators and respondents was inevitable for a successful conduct of the census.

'Active participation of people in the head count can play a vital role in conducting the census in a transparent manner, because the data obtained from the census would help in resource distribution and future planning. The people should fully cooperate with the enumerators in data collection,' he appealed to the respondents.

Highlighting the importance of the census, the Commissioner said it was a national duty and the role of all stakeholders was very important in its smooth execution. Supervisor Abdul Hanan Hariphal has said that the

census has vital importance that would help in framing economic policies and ensure equitable distribution of resources among all stakeholders for the development of the country.

'The census was a constitutional obligation on the basis of which the government determines the National Finance Com-mission Award and distributes national resources for just development of all areas,' he added.

Meanwhile, political, social and tribal figures belonging to Zhob Division have appreciated the tireless efforts of Commissioner Zhob Davison Saeed Ahmed Umrani and Supervisor Abdul Hanan Hariphal for carrying out the census process in a befitting manner.





Sunday, March 12, 2023

## China condemns Japanese plan to release Fukushima water

BEIJING (AP): China condemned a Japanese plan to release treated radioactive wastewater from the damaged Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea, demanding that Tokyo first receive the approval of neighboring countries. China has made similar complaints on a regular basis in the past, but has not said how it would respond if Japan goes ahead with the planned release.

China, which Japan invaded in the first half of the last century, has been a constant critic of Tokyo and its security alliance with the US, with the ruling Communist Party frequently invoking historical wrongs to rally domestic support and seek to undermine Japan's global standing. Japan's behavior is "extremely irresponsible," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a daily briefing.

"I would like to stress that Japan's release of treated nuclear-contaminated water from the Fukushima plant concerns the global marine environment and public health, which is not a private matter for the Japanese side," Mao said. "Until full consultation and agreement is reached with neighboring countries and other stakeholders and relevant international institutions, the Japanese side shall not initiate the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water into the sea without authorization," she said.



A magnitude 9.0 earthquake and massive tsunami slammed into the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant 12 years ago on March 11, 2011, destroying its power and cooling systems and triggering the meltdowns of three reactors. Massive amounts of radiation were released in the surrounding area. South Korea, several Pacific Island nations and Japanese fishing communities have also objected to the planned release.

Japanese officials and the plant's

operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, say the radioactive elements in the water can be reduced to safe levels. Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Tetsuro Nomura has said he will work to counter any damage from the release to the reputation of the area's seafood industry. "We will convey the safety of the fish caught in the Japanese sea with scientific evidence," Japan's Kyodo News quoted Nomura as saying.

## France's young people stand up against higher retirement age

PARIS (AP): Young people in France — including some who haven't even entered the job market yet — are protesting against the government's push to raise the retirement age. Students plan to block access to some universities and high schools, and a youth-led protest is planned in Paris, as part of nationwide strikes and demonstrations against the pension bill under debate in parliament.

For a generation already worried about inflation, uncertain job prospects and climate change, the retirement bill is stirring up broader questions about the value of work. "I don't want to work all my life and be exhausted at the end," said Djana Farhaig, a 15-year-old who blocked her Paris high school with other students during a protest action last month. "It is important for us to show that the youth is engaged for its future."

People in their teens and early 20s have taken part in protests against the retirement reform since the movement kicked off in January, but student groups and unions are seeking to call attention to young people's concerns. President Emmanuel Macron wants to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64 and make other changes he says are needed to keep the public pension system financially stable as the population ages. Opponents argue that wealthy taxpayers or companies should pitch in more to finance the system instead.

Quentin Queller, a 23-year-old student who attended an earlier round of protests, said, "64 is so far away, it is depressing." He questioned the idea that hard work equals happiness, arguing that "we should work less and have more free time." He and others echoed concerns by older protesters that instead of working to live, France is moving toward a system where people would have to live for work. At one protest, a teenage boy held a placard saying: "I don't want my parents to die at work."

Thomas Coutrot, an economist specializing in health and conditions of work, described a widespread sentiment that "work has become unbearable." "Young people perceive that the conditions of work are deteriorating and that workers don't understand anymore why they work," he said. The young protesters include many supporters of the far-left France Unbowed party and other left-wing groups, but also others. They see it as a fundamental right to be able to live on a state pension, and perceive the bill as a rollback of hard-won social achievements.

Elisa Lepetit, 18, is already working part-time in a bar alongside her studies to become a teacher, and can't afford to go on strike. But she supports the protests. "I want to become a teacher, but I can't see myself working until 64," she said. "The goal after a lifetime of hard work is to be able to spend time with my family."

Some take a more apocalyptic view, saying their time on Earth is already threatened by climate change. "Working until 67 when it will be over 55 degrees (Celsius) makes no sense," joked Anissa Saudemont, 29, whose job in the media sector is related to ecology. While young people are often present at French protest movements, Paolo Stuppia, a sociologist at the Sorbonne and at California State Polytechnic University in Humboldt, said an especially large number are taking part in the campaign against the retirement bill.

## Fierce fighting close to DR Congo's Goma

DR CONGO (AFP): Fighting erupted between M23 militiamen and government troops near the eastern DR Congo city of Goma, where a European mercy flight arrived in the afternoon, sources said. The aid mission is the first in an airlift announced last Saturday by the European Union to help the beleaguered city.

The plane landed, carrying 35 metric tons of material, including tents, mattresses and medical equipment. Standing on the tarmac of Goma airport, EU ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo Jean-Marc Chataigner told reporters that another plane would land next week, with others to follow. The city of over one million people is increasingly threatened by M23 rebels, who have captured swathes of North Kivu province since re-emerging from dormancy in late 2021.

Goma has the Rwandan border to its east and Lake Kivu to its south. The M23 controls much of the territory to the north of the city and is now also encroaching from the west, threatening to cut off all road links to the city. After a day of relative calm, clashes unfolded near the village of Murambi, less than 30 kilometres (18 miles) west of Goma, local officials said. Murambi is the last settlement before the town of Sake, considered the city's last bulwark.

"The population is starting to panic again," Leopold Busanga, a spokesman for civil society groups in Sake. Fighting was also reported further north, around 70 kms (43 miles) from Goma, an official there said. The UN's refugee agency (UNHCR) stated that it was "greatly alarmed" as the conflict has driven hundreds of thousands from their homes. Some 300,000 in North Kivu fled in February alone, UNHCR said.

More than 800,000 people have been displaced in the province since March last year.

Chataigner told reporters that some 600,000 people had come to Goma and its surrounding area in the past several months. Standing by his side, France's ambassador to the DRC Bruno Aubert said: "What's happening in eastern Congo is intolerable". The M23, whose name stands for the March 23 Movement, is one of scores of armed groups that roam eastern DR Congo, many of them a legacy of two regional wars that flared at the end of the 20th century.

In 2012, the Tutsi-led group briefly captured Goma before a joint Congolese-UN offensive drove it out. But fighting erupted again in late 2021 after the M23 accused the Congolese government of ignoring a promise to integrate its fighters into the army. The rebels then started to conquer large chunks of North Kivu last summer, and have continued advancing despite international pressure to down arms.

The DRC accuses its smaller neighbour Rwanda of supporting the group, something that Kigali denies, and regional countries have deployed a joint force aimed at stabilising the region. Independent UN experts, the United States and several other western countries also agree that Rwanda is backing the M23. In recent months, several ceasefires have been attempted, the latest of which was supposed to have taken effect. All have failed. A United Nations Security Council delegation arrived in the DRC for a three-day visit to assess the situation. The team is due to meet President Felix Tshisekedi and fly to Goma on Saturday.

## Lebanon electricity crisis deepens poverty

BEIRUT (AP): Since the collapse of Lebanon's state power grid, many middle and working class families have been forced to spend most of their monthly income to pay shady neighborhood businessmen running private generators.

Still, they go without electricity for nearly half the day, according to a report by Human Rights Watch released. The situation threatens to deepen the poverty of this tiny Mediterranean country embroiled in a devastating economic meltdown. In the report, the New York-based watchdog documented the struggles of over 1,200 lower-income households in Lebanon. Pushed to the brink of bankruptcy, the state-run power company now provides the Lebanese with less than three hours of power a day. Most families told HRW they compromise on food, education, medications and other basic needs to pay for supplemental electricity.

According to the report, generator bills take up about 44% of the average family's monthly income, and twice that for the coun-

try's poorer families. HRW cited as median monthly income in Lebanon \$122, with 40% of the households earning approximately \$100 or less a month and 90% earning less than \$377 per month. Most families surveyed also told HRW that expensive generator bills have impacted their ability to pay for food and pay for medical and other crucial services.

Meanwhile, a fifth of the families cited in the report — the poorest among the interviewed — said they could not afford to pay for generator electricity, leaving them in the dark for all but a few hours a day. The burden of Lebanon's power shortages is "disproportionately borne by the poor," said Lama Fakhri, HRW's director for Mideast and North Africa, said at a news conference presenting the report.

The situation "exacerbates inequality, pushes people into situation that violates their human rights, and hinders their access to food, water, and health," said Brian Root, a senior analyst who worked on the report. Since Lebanon's economic crisis erupted in

2019, following decades of rampant corruption and political and financial mismanagement, over three-quarters of the population of 6 million has been plunged into poverty and struggles to get by amid some of the world's highest inflation rates.

Lebanon's blackouts increased substantially two years ago, when the cash-strapped government could no longer afford importing fuel for its power plants. And while much of the world has looked to renewable sources of energy to tackle climate change, Lebanon relies on noisy, polluting, and expensive private diesel generators to keep the lights on. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and experts have urged Lebanon for years to restructure its electricity sector but authorities have stalled on a host of reforms required for the IMF to approve a bailout program and for the World Bank to put through an electricity deal that would provide natural gas from Egypt through Syria to boost Lebanon's state-run power grid.

## Over the South China Sea, dispute simmers

ABOARD PHILIPPINES COAST GUARD PLANE, South China Sea (Reuters): As a Philippine coast guard aircraft flew over the disputed Spratly islands in the South China Sea, a message came in over the radio telling it to immediately leave "Chinese territory".

Such warnings, from a Chinese coast guard ship, have become an almost daily ritual around one of the world's most contested archipelagos, where China is one of five countries claiming the strategic islands - or at least some of them - as their own. "Calling China coast guard vessel. You are transiting inside Philippine territorial sea," the Philippine pilot radios back. "Request identify yourself and state your intention to prevent misunderstanding," he said.

China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea and has for years permanently deployed hundreds of coast guard and fishing vessels in disputed areas like the Spratlys, where it has dredged sand to build islands on reefs, and equipped them with missiles and runways. Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and Taiwan also have claims in the Spratlys. The Philippines occupies nine features there, and has accused China of aggression and "swarming" by fishing vessels that it says are militia, including near the tiny Thitu island occupied by Manila since the 1970s. A Reuters journalist joined the Philippine flight and observed some of those Chinese boats dotted in the waters

around Thitu, an island of 400 people. The Philippines last week accused the vessels, including a navy ship, of "slowly loitering".

China said it has sovereignty over the Spratly Islands, known in China as the Nansha Islands, and its adjacent waters. "Therefore, it is reasonable and legal for Chinese ships to carry out normal activities in waters under China's jurisdiction," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a regular briefing. The fly-by came amid repeated complaints by the government of Ferdinand Marcos Jr against China's actions, including its use of a laser that Manila said temporarily blinded crew members of a coast guard vessel last month.

## US to hold meeting on NK rights abuses

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters): The United States will hold an informal meeting of United Nations Security Council members next week on human rights abuses in North Korea, a move likely to anger Pyongyang and spur opposition from China and Russia.

"The DPRK's human rights violations and abuses threaten international peace and security and are directly linked to the country's unlawful weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missile programs," the United States and Albania said in a note - seen by Reuters - promoting next meeting. Albania is currently an elected member of the Security Council and is co-hosting the meeting with the United States.

The 15-member Security Council has regularly discussed human rights in North Korea, formally known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, since 2014. But China and Russia object to the issue being raised in the council. Pyongyang rejects accusations of human rights abuses and blames sanctions for a dire humanitarian situation in North Korea. The country has been under UN sanctions over its ballistic missile and nuclear programs since 2006.

North Korea's UN mission in New York did not immediately respond to a request for comment on next week's meeting. The aim of the informal meeting is to spotlight rights abuses and "identify opportunities for the international community to promote accountability," according to the US and Albanian note. They said that during the COVID-19 pandemic North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's government responded with "further isolation and repression, including shoot-to-kill orders."

"The DPRK government has increased efforts to suppress fundamental freedoms and the free flow of information, with reports of thousands of new arrests and harsh imprisonments. Today, a total of 80,000 to 120,000 political prisoners are reported to be in prison in the DPRK," according to the note. The meeting comes amid heightened international tensions.

## Haiti police pursue suspects in presidential slaying

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP): Authorities in Haiti have identified new suspects in the July 2021 killing of President Jovenel Moïse, including a pastor and a well-known gang leader. Police spokesman Garry Desrosiers said in an interview with Radio Télévision Caraïbes that warrants also have been issued for eight police officers.

None of the new suspects have been arrested, and it wasn't clear what alleged roles they might have played. Desrosiers identified the gang leader as Vitiel'Homme Innocent, leader of the Krazé Barye gang, which roughly translates to "breaking barriers." He is also sought by the FBI, which accused him of helping kidnap 17 US missionaries in October 2021. Desrosiers did not provide further details, and he did not immediately return a message for comment.

Before the new arrest warrants were announced, more than 40 suspects had been detained in the case, including at least 18 Colombian ex-soldiers accused of raiding Moïse's private residence in an attack that injured his wife. Another 11 suspects are in US custody, including a

former Haitian senator and other key players. Meanwhile, the medical charity Doctors Without Borders says gang violence in Haiti's capital has forced the temporary closure of its hospital in Port-au-Prince.

It said that patients and staff at its facility in the Cité Soleil district had been put at risk. Haitians looking for treatment had become collateral victims of warfare just metres from the hospital, it said. Gang violence and kidnappings in Haiti have risen sharply since President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in 2021. The Caribbean nation has been facing a growing economic crisis.

The charity, commonly known by its French abbreviation MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières), made the move after heavily armed gangs expanded their territory to new areas in Port-au-Prince and nearby towns. Several schools have also closed as kidnappings increase. Earlier this year, an MSF-backed public hospital located south of the capital also closed after a patient was killed by a bullet as he left the emergency room.

Cité Soleil, an impoverished neighbourhood on the

outskirts of Haiti's capital, now has just one private hospital and one other MSF operation, which is reducing operations. Vincent Harris, a medical adviser for the aid group, said: "We are living scenes of warfare just metres from the establishment. Our hospital has not been directly targeted but we have been a collateral victim of the fighting since the hospital found itself on the frontline."

Field communication manager Alexandre Marcou said a child who was on oxygen had died in a security room, where patients are sent for protection from gunfire around the building. A 70-year-old man had also been found shot as he tried to cross the street to the hospital. Haiti has been led by Prime Minister Ariel Henry since Moïse's death, but he has failed to rein in the gangs which control much of the capital.

Mr Henry has repeatedly called for the deployment of an international force to help police in their fight against the criminal gangs. So far, no country has offered to lead such a force, while Mr Henry says it is key to providing security so that long-postponed elections can be held.

## US to help Moldova fight Russia's destabilization efforts

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The United States accused Russia of seeking to destabilize Moldova and said it would help the Eastern European country fight off such attempts by sharing information and providing other assistance, the White House said.

The United States agrees with Moldovan President Maia Sandu's view that there is no imminent military threat from Russia but shares her concern that Moscow is trying to destabilize her country to install a more pro-Russian government, John Kirby, the White House's national security spokesperson, said in a briefing. "As Moldova continues to integrate with Europe, we believe Russia is pursuing options to weaken the Moldovan government probably with the eventual goal of seeing a more Russian friendly administration in the capital," Kirby said.

"More specifically,

Russian actors, some with current ties to Russian intelligence, are seeking to stage and use protests in Moldova as a basis to foment and manufacture insurrection against the Moldovan government." Other Russian actors, he said, will work to provide training and help manufacture demonstrations in Moldova, a former Soviet republic.

The United States will take a range of steps in response to Russian attempts to destabilize Moldova, including building on the information Moldovan government has and working with the US Congress to provide Moldova an additional \$300 million in energy assistance to address urgent needs because of the war in Ukraine, Russian officials are falsely alleging that Ukraine is planning to target separatists from Transnistria, Kirby said, referring to a Moscow-backed breakaway region of

Moldova.

"Let me be clear, these allegations are unfounded they're false, and they can create baseless alarm," he said. Sandu, whose country borders Ukraine, has repeatedly expressed concern about Moscow's intentions towards her country and about the presence of Russian troops in Transnistria. US President Joe Biden met with Sandu in February during a trip to Warsaw and reaffirmed strong US support for Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the White House said. The United States would continue to "shine a light" on the activities of these Russian actors, including with additional sanctions, Kirby added. "We have shared the information I have outlined as well as additional details with our Moldova and counterparts so that they can further investigate and disrupt Russian plans," he said.

## Turkey's southeast exodus after earthquake puts manufacturing at risk

ANTAKYA/ISTANBUL (Reuters): Mehmet Alkan, a shoe-sole manufacturer in Turkey's earthquake-hit south, doesn't know what will become of his company after some of his 220 employees died and half fled, reflecting the difficult transformation ahead for industry in the region. Forty of his workers and some families sheltered for a while in the undamaged Alkan Taban factory in Antakya after the massive quakes on Feb. 6.

"We only have 110 workers after some died and others left the city, so production capacity dropped," said Alkan, the manager. Turkey's deadliest disaster in modern history struck a region rich in textile production and agriculture that accounts for 16% of total employment and around 11%

of industrial production, a report by the Istanbul Chamber of Industry showed. It forced millions to leave 11 southeastern provinces that were home to some 14 million people. Some say they may not return despite Ankara's plan to swiftly rebuild hundreds of thousands of damaged or collapsed buildings.

Hundreds of businesses that restarted operations a month after the quake face shortages of staff who moved to nearby villages, relatives in other cities or to government-sponsored accommodation of tents and container homes, interviews show. "We turned our showroom into a dormitory" for employees, Alkan said. "Most of their families left the city or moved to safer village areas. They are afraid. We are waiting for others

to come back."

He said the company's shuttle used to drive up to 50 km (30 miles) to collect workers from their homes, but it now drives double that distance to reach the villages. The disaster, which killed more than 52,000 people in Turkey and Syria, is a challenge to President Tayyip Erdogan's plan to transform Turkey into a competitive manufacturing power. Business groups and economists estimate quake fallout costing some \$100 billion and shaving one to two percentage points off the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

Some funding meant to boost production, employment and exports under Erdogan's economic plan will be directed towards aid and rebuilding efforts in the area, they say. To

ease the fallout, the government has rolled out short-work allowances for workers and easier access to loans for affected companies. In Antakya, the hardest-hit city where dozens of blocks were flattened, only around a third of production capacity is being used a month after the earthquake, sector officials and experts say. It could take years to return to normal, bringing about a shift in demography in the area.

"We need urgent government support to start reverse migration for businesses. We are losing qualified workforce. A safe environment with facilities like schools and social spaces needs to be set up," said Hikmet Cincin, the head of Antakya's Chamber of Trade and Industry. More than 600,000 homes collapsed

or were severely damaged across the region, official data shows, while the government promised to build at least 250,000 units of accommodation within one year. "It is very difficult to predict when housing and businesses will return to normal in the region. Permanent accommodations and reopened schools will be crucial," said Serdar Sayan, director of the centre for social policy research (SPM) at Ankara-based TOBB University.

The region could also see industries reshuffled as construction sector workers arrive, Sayan said. "People who started new, permanent lives in other cities are mainly from the middle- and upper-income classes," while those who stayed tend to earn lower incomes and need state aid,

Sayan said. Seher Icici, who handled logistics and accounting at a textile machinery company in Kahramanmaraş, near the epicentre of the earthquake, moved some 250 km to the west with her two small children, to the city of Mersin.

"We are staying temporarily since we do not have a home to return to now. We had to leave the city as we could not find temporary accommodation," Icici said. Families she knew had already left the area and enrolled their children in schools elsewhere, she said, and most won't return at least until the end of the academic year. "I cannot work right now but I am lucky as my boss paid my salary and some support money," Icici said. "We are getting by with it for now."



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JALIL AFRIDI  
Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001  
Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com  
Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com  
Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com  
Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

## Saudi-Iran rapprochement and the next

RECENTLY, Iran and Saudi Arabia have agreed to re-establish ties and reopen embassies within two months. According to the media, the most important development came after Ali Shamkhanin, Iranian General and Secretary to Iran's powerful Supreme National Security Council met with Saudi National Security Advisor, Musaad Bin Mohammed Al-Aiban in Beijing on Friday. The two sides agreed to resume the 2001 security cooperation agreement and promised to boost their bilateral cooperation, respect state sovereignty, and not interfere in each other's domestic affairs. During the joint statement, Saudi and Iranian representatives termed their discussions transparent and constructive while the Chinese Foreign Minister hailed Saudi and Iranian wisdom for seizing this opportunity to revitalize peace and progress in the Middle Eastern region.

The two prominent and influential Muslim nations, Iran and Saudi Arabia, had remained at odds for decades, with fractured diplomatic and political relations, while their mutual tussle generally undermined the unity, trade, and Security cooperation among the Muslim countries in the region and beyond. Historically, Saudi Arabia preached its Sunni Wehabi doctrine while multiple Muslim nations including Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bahrain, remained victims of Iran-backed Shia proxies in the past. The Saudi-Iran rivalry that commenced after the Iran Islamic revolution in 1979, could never be settled permanently but rather a moderate or mild hostility often persists between the two contenders over the past four decades.

The recent Ryidh-Tehran diplomatic breakoff took place after Saudi Arabia executed prominent firebrand Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir Al-Nimr in 2016, which flared up massive public condemnation in Iran and a furious mob invaded Saudi Embassy in Tehran. Meanwhile, simmering escalation in Yemen and Houthis' incessant missile attacks on the Kingdom further fueled the tension between the Saudia-led Arab coalition and Iran in the past years. At the peak of the Saudi-Iran rivalry, the Biden administration launched a campaign for Israel's regional integration and an Arab-Israel Alliance against Tehran but Biden's initiative was tactfully neutralized by China through the recent Arab-Persia accord.

Interestingly, the American and Israeli dream for an anti-Iran Arab Alliance collapsed when the Chinese brokered Saudi-Iran rapprochement deal was struck in Beijing on Friday. The years-long endeavor initiated by the former Iraqi Prime Minister, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, once facilitated by the State of Oman finally landed its destination through the successful lobbying of the Chinese government in the past months. The Chinese role made this regional alignment more important while the strategic nature of this move is likely to redraw a new map of regional friends and foes along with their global henchmen including the United States, NATO, Russia, and China. In fact, Saudi-Iran rapprochement would lead to Iran's integration into the broader Middle East and North African region through bilateral agreements with Saudi allies such as UAE, Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco, and others. Apparently, those positive sentiments will pave the way for a peaceful settlement of the longstanding conflicts in Yemen, Lebanon, and Syria along with a broader interfaith harmony and economic cooperation in the entire Muslim world.

Realistically, the Muslim world had paid a heavy price for the Saudi-Iran rivalry, as a majority of Muslim nations from East Asia to Western Africa remained victims of sectarian violence, clerics' hegemonism, political instability, and foreign intervention throughout history. Now, positive momentum has begun that needs the continuation of policies, political resilience, and a quest for peaceful co-existence, that will ultimately lead to a better future for Muslim Ummah across the world.

AS a new round of presidential elections gets underway in the United States, much of the world looks with exasperation at the possibility of yet another major shift in America's domestic and foreign policy. The mere thought of a Trump comeback in 2024 is nerve-racking for Washington's allies, considering his vengeful eagerness to (once again) wreak havoc in America's democracy and its role in the world.

No wonder most states are reluctant to support Washington's policy towards Russia or China, for fear of another radical change of policy under the next administration as had happened after every administration in the past two or three decades. From the Bush administration's imperialist and messianic overreach to Obama's pragmatic realism, to Trump's America-first nationalism and lastly, Biden's return to strategic posturing, the dizzying change of doctrines has underlined the unreliability (read shiftiness) in American leadership. The strategic erraticism constitutes a major departure from America's steadiness during the Cold War. It also contrasts sharply with the autocratic but stable regimes in Russia and China, which have been largely predictable since their resurgence at the turn of the 21st century. World leaders need not wonder who will be in charge in Moscow or Beijing come next year, but wish they knew who will win next year's American elections.

I thought about this during a recent trip to the United States that took me to Florida, the home of the two leading Republican frontrunners: Donald Trump who announced his candidacy late last year, and Ron DeSantis,

Sunshine State governor and rising star of the party, who is yet to announce his bid, but is widely expected to do so in the coming weeks or months. The octogenarian President Joe Biden is also expected to run, even though many worry about his capacity to lead through the age of 86, when his prospective second term ends. If he decides to call it a day, there is no telling how many

***Biden's economic and national security scorecards will matter little if he starts showing pronounced signs of ageing that undermine the public's confidence in his ability to lead four more years. For his part, Trump is betting on his tight hold on the party's machine and base to win the Republican nomination, notably against his former cabinet members cum presidential candidates like Nikki Haley, Mike Pence and Mike Pompeo. But that may be the easy part. Trump lost the 2020 elections because he lost the confidence of the majority of American voters, including the independent voters, who deemed him unfit for a second term. They became even more certain of their verdict after Trump tried to undermine the democratic process by fraud and even by force on January 6, 2021.***

Democrats will throw their hats in the ring, but if he marches on, no Democrat is expected to take the plunge.

So, as things stand today, a likely scenario is the 2024 presidential face-off becoming a repeat of the 2020 showdown, but the final result will depend on a number of variables - economic, political and personal. Biden has so far fared well in terms of his command of the presidency and the economy, but high inflation and potential recession could weaken his chances. Likewise, he has succeeded in reinvigorating NATO following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but a costly protracted proxy war will not bode well for him or America. Biden's economic and national security scorecards will matter little if he starts showing pronounced

Marwan Bishara

signs of ageing that undermine the public's confidence in his ability to lead four more years.

For his part, Trump is betting on his tight hold on the party's machine and base to win the Republican nomination, notably against his former cabinet members cum presidential candidates like Nikki Haley, Mike Pence and Mike Pompeo.

riddled with sexual, financial and political scandals. He is a straight talker not a compulsive liar; a true believer in the hard conservatism he preaches, not a peddler of soundbites like Trump.

DeSantis is expanding his Florida Republican power base nationwide, and in the process expanding the donor base that can

base. He incessantly jeers against the nation's prestigious universities, the Washington bureaucracy, the hi-tech conglomerates and the "corporate media", all of which he believes are controlled by a liberal cabal, housed in the Democratic party.

DeSantis is authoritarian, angry and vindictive, with a chip on his shoulder. He is all too ready for a nationwide cultural war in

the 2020 elections. All of which raises doubt about whether the governor will be going head-to-head against the former president in the Republican primaries.

Will the young DeSantis wait four more years? Wait until the 77-year-old Trump drops out of the campaign for legal or personal reasons? Or, wait only until it becomes obvious that the former president has no clear path back to the White House? Or, behave in a Trumpian fashion; betray his old ally in order to get ahead under the pretext of saving America from another Democratic presidency, or in his words, "making America Florida"! Either way, Trump is showing no signs of backing down and is in fact gearing up for a confrontation with Ron "DeSanctimonious"; a confrontation that promises to be very personal, focusing on age, experience and loyalty, not policy or ideology. Such a confrontation may be beneficial to Biden, as the two bullies bloody each other in a fight for the Republican nomination. A Trump comeback is sure to produce a vengeful reversal of everything Biden - a return to 2020 to Make America Great Again, again. A triumph for DeSantis is also a return to "MAGA" but without the whole drama.

The fact that both are certified populist nationalists and neither is a liberal democrat will have major implications for America and its role as the world's leading democracy - especially in Europe. Their opposition to liberal interventions and messianic wars will shrink US strategic commitments abroad, including in Ukraine. As for Biden, a victory will ensure a triumphant continuity of his domestic social democratic agenda and a boost for his liberal crusade against Russia and China.

## US-Saudi relationship: What's love got to do with it?

IN an interview with Arab News last Sunday, American financier and former White House official Anthony Scaramucci described the 78-year-old US-Saudi relationship as a "Catholic marriage."

Scaramucci was speaking in Abu Dhabi, his thought-leadership summit - for the second time. He revealed plans to bring a version of SALT to Saudi Arabia, which he applauded for its ongoing reforms with its best years ahead of it. Not far from the UAE capital, another thought-leadership forum was taking place in the historic Saudi city of AIUla. Its focus was a candid discussion of the status of Saudi-US relations. It was sponsored by THINK - an affiliate of SRMG, which pub-

lishes this newspaper - at the Maraya hall, where the AIUla Declaration was signed two years ago.

As with the US-Saudi relationship, the AIUla signatories (Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Egypt and Qatar) demonstrated that they share unbreakable bonds. The declaration ended a 43-month boycott and one of the most dramatic periods in recent Gulf history. Now, had I not known that our interview with Scaramucci was recorded before the AIUla forum, I would have said he was either psychic or had been eavesdropping on its discussions. The marriage metaphor was so repeatedly - and humorously - used that the forum began to sound like a couples therapy session (that those attending were sitting in a large circle might have contributed to that).

Scaramucci has hit the nail on the head: the US-Saudi relationship is indeed like a Catholic marriage. Anyone who argues otherwise is either misinformed or delusional. Readers may

need reminding that, whatever the armchair Middle East experts in DC say, even at the lowest points of Saudi ties with the current US administration, President Joe Biden's team was determined not to "rupture the relationship."

After all, who in their right mind would want to damage relations with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and thereby upset 2 billion Muslims? And who in their right mind would risk disrupting energy markets in a dispute with the world's leading oil exporter? Equally, Saudi officials have repeatedly said that ties to Washington remain ironclad and the US is a priority. So what went wrong? That would require a series of columns to answer in full. But in summary, there has been mistrust on the Saudi side, and miscalculation on the US side.

The Saudi mistrust is well placed; this is an administration hostile to our leadership from the get-

go. It placed Saudi civilian lives at risk when it revoked the designation of the Houthis as terrorists, and withdrew Patriot missile batteries from the Kingdom when the Iran-backed militia were deliberately targeting Saudi cities. The US miscalculation took many forms. The Biden administration underestimated the popularity of Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, hailed by a vast majority of Saudis as a liberator. It also was slow in understanding that it is dealing with a new, progressive and different Saudi leadership. The Saudi view is simple: Treat us as true partners, not lackeys.

It also is evident that Washington has miscalculated its own interests with its constant characterization of Riyadh's relationships with China and Russia as a betrayal. American retailers in the early 20th century created the concept that "the customer is always right." How, then, does the US think Saudi Arabia

should deal with China, its biggest oil customer, purchaser of 1.75 million barrels per day in 2022? China is also a leading global economy and manufacturing hub that is happy to sell its premium and much-needed products without any drama. If the US cannot offer an alternative, what should the Kingdom do? Not upgrade its communications networks, or risk the lives of its citizens? Indeed America itself is so reliant on China that not doing business with it hurts its own interests. China holds \$867 billion in US debt, second only to Japan. It is also tops the list of US trading partners, with American exports to China supporting a million jobs in 2021.

As for Russia, Riyadh's relationship with Moscow is the subject of constant US misrepresentation. The Kingdom condemned the Russian invasion at the UN last year; Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked Saudi Arabia for its support; November's OPEC+ pro-

duction cut led to reduced oil prices, the US aim all along - but despite all that, Washington labeled the Kingdom pro-Russian! The US ignores the benefits of the trust Riyadh has built with Moscow over the years, which materialized in last year's prisoner swap with Ukraine and the release of US citizens. It is now emerging that this same trust might, just might, result in a serious discussion to end the war - a war for which, apart from the ghastly loss of life, the world and the US economy are paying a hefty price. The bottom line? As the AIUla declaration demonstrated, mutual benefits are all that matters; and there are many from which both Riyadh and Washington can benefit, beyond the outdated "oil for security" trope which is no longer valid. As Winston Churchill put it: "We have no lasting friends, no lasting enemies, only lasting interests." Or if the US would prefer something more American, as Tina Turner sang: "What's love got to do with it?"

## Rishi can stop illegal immigration - if he keeps the European court quiet

THE debate about the Channel crossings is as dishonest as with immigration as a whole. The Left has no interest in stopping the waves of migrants who reach our shores, while on the Right some pretend the problem is caused only by a lack of political will. Ministers have no room for the luxury of political postures that will never be tested. Almost 46,000 migrants crossed the Channel last year: a number that without change will be exceeded this year. With the asylum system overloaded and anger building about migrant accommodation, the changes the Home Secretary makes must turn things round fast.

The new immigration bill, due this week, is not, as some say, a repeat of last year's Nationality and Borders Act. That made important changes, such as the distinction in law between asylum seekers who come here illegally and those who do not. The new legislation seeks to go as far as ministers can - consistent with their obligations in international law -

to remove the rights-based appeals that allow migrants to thwart their deportation. To appreciate why this is so important, consider the difficulties in stopping the Channel crossings and removing migrants - failed asylum seekers, foreign criminals and illegal immigrants - from the country.

First, our law enforcement agencies can investigate, disrupt and prosecute the criminal gangs that bring people here, but this cannot alone solve the problem. While migrants can make it through the "forward border" in places like Libya and into Europe, with its borderless Schengen zone, there will be a demand among many to come to Britain. While France could help to close down the routes - by taking migrants back and policing its borders better - it shows limited interest in doing so. Second, we cannot simply "turn back the boats" or the people on them. Australia has successfully turned back migrants at sea by putting them in lifeboats to return to Indonesia without the fuel to reach Australia. This is not feasible in the 21 mile-wide English

Channel. Nor can we return migrants to France or to any other country without agreements to do so legally.

Third, migrants and the gangs who bring them here know that once an individual is in Britain it is next to impossible to remove them. Our asylum grant rates are higher than in Europe. Our human rights laws grant copious avenues of appeal. Our modern slavery legislation allows migrants to claim they have been trafficked to evade removal. Migrants are prepped to destroy their identity documents, lie about their age and nationality and make claims about their religion or sexuality. They know how to play the system. It is important to assess the dishonesties put forward by government critics. Some claim the Channel crossings are the result of Brexit. They say that in the EU, Britain had a returns agreement to send all migrants back to claim asylum in the first European country they had reached. But in the last year we were able to use the Dublin Regulation, as this rule is called, only 105 out

of more than 8,500 requests by Britain were granted - just 1.2 per cent of the total. Others claim the reason for the Channel crossings is that Britain does not have "safe and legal routes" for people to come here. This is obviously untrue: in the last year 89,000 Ukrainians, 28,000 Hong Kongers and up to 21,000 Afghans arrived. What these campaigners mean is they want even more such routes for more nationalities, including those already in safe countries like France. But even if we did this - and sacrificed any semblance of control in the process - it would not stop the crossings, unless these routes were completely unlimited in scope.

The only workable solution, then, is to do what the Government is attempting to do. Along with efforts to disrupt the criminal gangs and make our asylum system more effective, we must break the link between making the journey and getting to stay in Britain afterwards. In other words: migrants should be detained upon arrival and swiftly deported to their own coun-

try or to a safe third country like Rwanda - a country with which we have a migration partnership.

There are logistical challenges, such as the capacity of the detention estate, but they are surmountable. The real difficulty is the maze of modern slavery claims and human rights appeals that migrants use to avoid deportation, and when deportation is not imminent, detention too. That is what the new legislation needs to fix. Ministers know there is no prospect in this Parliament of leaving the European Convention of Human Rights and with it the Strasbourg court that does much to render immigration law unenforceable. So their plan is to do everything they can - pushing international law obligations to the limits - to remove the migrants who come here illegally. It seems likely almost all claims will be made "non-suspensive", so unless migrants can show they will face a real risk of serious and irreversible harm their claim will be heard in Rwanda, and not used to hold up deportation. It is

also likely that claims must be made in one go and straight away to prevent cases dragging on for many months. If measures such as these work, rapid deportation will allow ministers to bar those who enter the country illegally from claiming asylum at all - and cap the number of people claiming asylum here.

This is potent stuff, and if it works it will mean that many more migrants are deported quickly. But the policy faces two tests. First, can migrants be removed in sufficient numbers that we reach a tipping point, when the migrants realise that there is no longer any point in attempting to cross the Channel? And second, can this new approach survive litigation and prove compatible with the European Convention? Ministers have worked hard to design a scheme that is robust enough and able to withstand legal challenge. We must hope they have squared that circle, but if the Convention foils them, Britain will be able to avoid the question no longer. Then, the case for withdrawal from the court will become unanswerable.



# Too hungry to weep. The tragedy of Yemen’s starving children

“We are born dead” is graffitied, in English, on a wall across from the razor-wire sewn bulwark of the United Nations compound in northern Yemen. It is a distillation of the suffering of generational war; a plea from the abandoned and discarded. I recently returned, through my involvement with the humanitarian organization War Child, from the northern reaches of Yemen's Houthi regions. Access is virtually impossible for Americans (especially journalists) and took months of fraught negotiations. Not surprising, as American fingerprints are easily found on this crisis. US military support for Saudi Arabia, an integral player in the conflict, has been constant since its inception seven years ago.

During that stretch, a Saudi-led coalition has tried with little success to crush the Iran-backed Houthi insurgency in a conflict replete with potential war crimes. The effects of the war have been devastating. Yemen, declared by the UN "the worst humanitarian crisis in the world," is too flippantly sometimes described as a "proxy war." Not so. Rather, what is occurring is an act of geopolitical sociopathy that trades the incomprehensible suffering of innocent souls for the martial annoyance of regional and global rivals. It does not have to be this way, but much needs to change and change immediately.

The Global Hunger Index currently ranks Yemen the worst in the world for level of hunger. Millions of Yemeni children, in some areas as many as 95% according to doc-

tors in those areas that I spoke to, suffer from acute malnutrition. The resulting stunted physical development had me convinced that I was in a kindergarten classroom when in fact I was meeting with eight and nine-year-olds. And those children were, as a colleague unnervingly put it, "the lucky ones." Over 2 million Yemeni children are not in school, with far too many of them populating the vast child soldiery one must daily maneuver.

Everywhere is the ache of terminal starvation - the nightmarish effects of which include the inability to regulate body temperature, to produce tears when weeping and then a final decline into ghastly, emaciated, lethargic death. All of which I saw, and which Yemenis endure daily: children's lives snuffed out by globally sanctioned neglect. More than two-thirds of Yemen's population (the equivalent of some 21.6 million people) are reliant on humanitarian assistance for survival, and that assistance can be scarce.

The overwhelming majority live outside of city centers and the heart-rending decisions NGOs make every day of which lives to save in an environment of evaporating resources leaves that majority too often unattended. The imposition of unconscionable mahram restrictions on women, which prohibits them from traveling anywhere without a male family member, further confines and degrades.

It is obvious that more should be done. More can be done. But will it? In 2022, the US committed \$1

Thomas Sadoski

billion to humanitarian relief in Yemen. Maintaining that level given the worsening situation should be a mere formality.

Yet having spent the past week in Washington with members of Congress and the Senate regarding this crisis, it is apparent that political and fiscal calculations flourish when media coverage is fleeting, and outrage muted. As one Senator sterily offered during our meeting, "That's a lot of money." A lot, indeed. Accordingly, to try to describe the near \$110 billion the US has pledged to Ukraine in the last year sends one scrambling for a thesaurus. Discrepancy so vast is a reasonable subject for candid discussion, especially given our military involvement, even tangential, in the monumental suffering of Yemen's women and children. Aid offers the only means to ensure this catastrophe does not become a comprehensive failure of humanity.

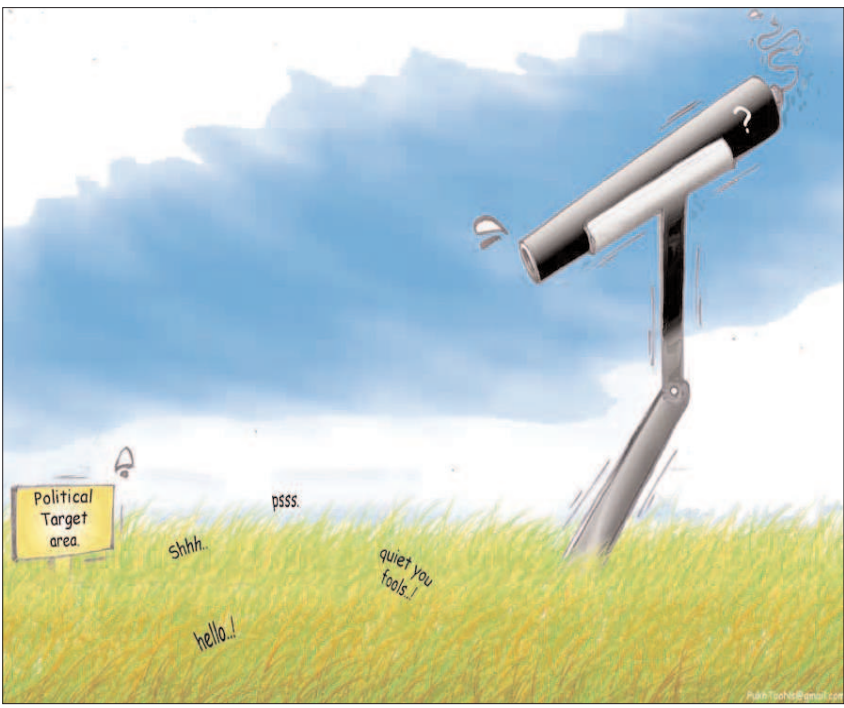
Hyperbole? Not hardly. There is no suitable term for allowing millions of children to suffer the prolonged horror of severe malnutrition until a state of irreversible death-by-famine takes them. To stand callously by and watch indignity lumped upon depravity heaped upon agony is utterly inhuman. Nevertheless, the wheels are steadily in motion for that outcome, as global aid for Yemen is in staggering decline. Announced on Monday by Secretary Blinken, with unfortunate lack of context, the US government is slashing this year's contribution to the UN appeal for Yemen by roughly 25%

- additionally I've been told by multiple sources at USAID that their cuts for aid to Yemen in 2023 could go as high as near 40%, with further cuts planned for 2024.

This is not politically innocuous. A deepening crisis undermines our national interests. Terrorist groups remain active in Yemen, including Al Qaeda affiliates and ISIS. Thousands of American lives have been lost in pursuit of their global eradication and there are more in harm's way on the ground in Yemen today. Escalating civilian desperation in war-torn countries such as Yemen will advance these terror groups' recruitment efforts, contrary to the United States' peace and security goals. And with Iran present in the conflict there exists a regime that understands too well the propaganda value of Western indifference.

Yemen, as a political conflict, is complex and treacherous. The humanitarian tragedy is also difficult, but less so. One pathway is undeniably clear: removing funding, effort and influence is a death sentence for children. I witnessed first-hand the tremendous courage within Yemen's civil society, especially among women who are the country's conscience. They confidentially shared their stories, hoping that their message might resonate beyond borders. What remains is this, delivered by a Yemeni woman and doctor who asked not to be named for her own safety: "We are fighting to survive from morning until night. We fight 24 hours a day, even in our dreams." May we all awaken in time.

CNN



## Ukraine’s secret weapon should terrify Putin

Richard Kemp

**A shocking video has been circulating in the last few days that appears to show a Ukrainian prisoner of war being gunned down by his Russian captors as he utters what he knows are the last words he will ever say: "Slava Ukraini" - glory to Ukraine. This image of heroic defiance against appalling brutality should send a chilling message to Vladimir Putin after a year of butchery in Ukraine: you can murder and torture us all you like, but you cannot defeat our will to fight.**

This defiance is the opposite of what Putin expected when his forces rolled into Ukraine last February. His "special military operation" was not planned as a war at all: it was an armed, psychological action intended to instill fear, install a puppet regime, and bring the country back to heel. That's why he attacked with too few forces to defeat a determined opponent. Putin's intelligence services, led by the FSB, successors to his own KGB, told him that Russian-speaking Ukrainians would welcome the invaders with open arms. Russia's security services had been paid vast sums over many years to ensure that this would happen, and to position collaborators to take over the government and whip opponents into line (or do away with them).

Before the invasion, the FSB knew that they were on shaky ground, with sources giving them a very different picture. But how were they to explain that to the Kremlin after all the

resources that had been ploughed into subverting Ukraine? Indeed, it turned out Russia's intelligence agencies were wrong on all counts. Collaborators in Kyiv and elsewhere did not deliver the goods. Woefully ill-prepared Russian forces encountered a level of resistance that took them by surprise, including subsequently in Russian-speaking areas where partisans have been fighting against them. And it was not only Russia that was left humbled by its initial intelligence failures. The assessment of US agencies, in an inversion of their over-confident predictions about Afghan forces' ability to hold out against the Taliban, was that Ukraine would quickly collapse.

How did the Ukrainians prove both the Russians and the Americans so wrong? The answer to that question takes us back to the murder of the unknown soldier in the Ukrainian woods. Morale, which he symbolised even at the point of death, is the linchpin of success in war. Shaun Pinner, a former British infantryman who fought at Mariupol as a Ukrainian contract marine, says no amount of money, threats or cajoling can force a man to fight, knowing he might die. Morale is achieved by strong leadership, team cohesion that makes you risk your life for the man to your left and your right, knowledge that your family and your country depend on the fight you put up, and the belief that what you are doing is right. Pinner witnessed the infec-

tiousness of high morale. It led him and his comrades to fiercely hold out at Mariupol for so long.

The incompetently led Russian troops, many of whom have no idea what they're fighting for despite the propaganda they are fed, lack any such advantage. There are stories of some being forced into battle at gunpoint. High morale and fighting spirit, however, are not enough on their own, as the French learned to their cost in 1940. Their collapse was due above all to intelligence failure, poor strategic leadership, and operational and tactical inferiority to the Wehrmacht.

Thankfully Ukraine does not have these failings. One of the most important reasons Putin's plans were frustrated last February was Zelensky's leadership, remaining in Kyiv and rallying the country by his own example. His army, trained by the West, has the operational and tactical upper hand over the sclerotic Russians. Ukrainian military intelligence has proved exceptionally successful, thanks in part to direct input from Britain and the US. Of course, Ukraine has also been kept in the fight by Western money and arms. This support, which again Putin failed to anticipate, does not just equip troops to fight but is also fundamentally important for morale. On that, Afghanistan provides a salutary lesson for Ukraine today. Having fought hard for years, in 2021 the Afghan forces disintegrated the minute that the Americans pulled out.

The Telegraph

## The world needs its Uncle Sam back

**WITH the Russian-Ukrainian war now in its second year, more than 8,000 people have been killed across the two parties and no less than 13,000 people are reported to have been injured, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.**

The US Joint Chiefs of Staff stated late last year that Russian military casualties had exceeded 100,000 soldiers, a toll similar to the number of casualties incurred by the Ukrainian military. These are harrowing figures. The human losses are grave, and nothing can compensate for the sacrifices of the roughly one-third of Ukrainian civilians who have left their homes to flee the war and find a haven for their families. Not to mention the unspeakable economic losses.

No doubt that Ukraine is by far the biggest economic casualty of the war. According to the latest estimates, Ukraine's economic output has fallen by as much as 35 percent. The country's infrastructure has suffered severe and long-term damage. Even with international economic assistance in the postwar period, production in Ukraine will not return to its prewar level for several decades. As for the economic losses outside Ukrainian borders, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has estimated that the war might cost the global economy about \$2.8 trillion in production losses. Furthermore, it is still too early to assess the long-term effects of the war on the global economy. Since the start of the war, most NATO and EU

members have provided direct financial, military and humanitarian assistance amounting to more than \$150 billion, of which the US alone has contributed more than \$75 billion.

Signs of resentment have begun to emerge in the US due to the increasing cost of the war to American taxpayers. Even the US media, which was spearheading the confrontation against Russia, has started questioning the war's course. Michael McKenna wrote in The Washington Times this week: "The line between providing 'assistance' and being an actual combatant nation is becoming very, very diaphanous." He added: "It would be one thing if we were one of many countries providing such military aid. The reality is that the Europeans have produced mostly conversation. The United States has given more to Ukraine - about 50 percent more - than every nation in Europe combined."

There is no apparent winner in this war. The picture so far has been dominated by ongoing destruction and bloodshed in a war that could have been nipped in the bud had the parties concerned shown responsibility in dealing with it early on. What is required of US President Joe Biden's administration is to seek dialogue and find a peaceful solution. Throughout history, Uncle Sam has played the role of a big brother in resolving conflicts worldwide. The US administration is required to restore this role to save Ukrainian and Russian lives, and to reduce homelessness

and starvation. The US administration must reconsider its actions and reexamine the possible consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. McKenna pondered why the White House has never "articulated how they imagine this story ends beyond the Disney-like version in which Ukraine 'wins' and everyone lives happily ever after."

As uncertainty prevails, the media will go further in its campaigns against the US administration's policies in the Russia-Ukraine war. Both warring parties will continue to suffer human losses, while the economic losses under which the European and American peoples groan will increase. China has put forward an initiative to resolve the Russia-Ukraine conflict, calling for an immediate ceasefire. However, the Biden administration was dismissive. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban called for direct talks between the US and Russian presidents about the war in Ukraine. Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto also warned that we are no longer in the 24th hour, but the 25th, "and this war must end immediately ... or there could be great trouble." It all adds up to show that we might be on the verge of a great world war that could turn into a nuclear confrontation if peace does not immediately prevail on the Russian-Ukrainian front. Therefore, I call upon President Biden to take a historical position and work to find a solution for the conflict and end the war; otherwise, thousands of intercontinental nuclear missiles will cross the skies and no country, not even the US, will be spared.

### Important Notice

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## Gary Lineker has swallowed the elite’s big lie about mass migration

Allister Heath

**GARY Lineker, the ludicrously partisan Match of the Day presenter, has been given an easy ride for too long by his cowardly BBC bosses. He has shamelessly spewed his Left-wing, anti-Brexit bile for years, making no secret of his dislike for Tories and their values, in flagrant disregard of the corporation's impartiality requirements. He has now gone full redutio ad Hitlerum on the Government's plan to tackle the small boats crisis, claiming that it was not merely "beyond awful" and "an immeasurably cruel policy directed at the most vulnerable people" but used "language that is not dissimilar to that used by Germany in the 30s".**

As the great Leo Strauss was the first to argue in his Natural Right and History, referring to the Nazis in this way is a cheap ad hominem argument, an anti-rational attempt to shut down discussion, a debating scam that logicians call the associative fallacy. It is also staggeringly ignorant, a cheapening of the horrors of the 1930s and a grievous, almost Orwellian, misrepresentation of what the Tories are trying to achieve. Other Leftist demagogues soon joined in, claiming that a government whose relevant ministers are Suella Braverman, the Home Secretary (whose parents migrated from Kenya and Mauritius, and whose husband is Jewish), Robert Jenrick, the immigration minister, whose Jewish children are the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, and Dominic Raab, the Justice Secretary, whose Jewish father came from Czechoslovakia in 1938, would not have allowed the children of the Kindertransport to come to Britain.

This is a grotesque calumny, a

scurrilous attack on ministers seeking to tackle an urgent, complex problem, and an all too typical attempt to veto any rational discussion of modern migration pathologies. There can be no legitimate comparison between the Kindertransport - a wonderful, but tragically insufficient programme under which 10,000 Jewish children were rescued from Nazi genocide - and the small boats arriving from France, a democracy where anybody who is eligible can claim asylum.

The vast majority of small boat arrivals today are young, male economic migrants; many are from Albania, a candidate for EU membership. They are brave and enterprising but they are attempting to break the rules to enter with the help of people-smugglers. There are regular drownings: contra Lineker, it is those who encourage this deadly obstacle race who are guilty of cruelty. Rishi Sunak wants to shut this route into Britain completely. Economic migrants will have to apply in the normal way. There will be a new "safe and legal" route for those seeking sanctuary, with MPs voting every year on how many to let in. Britain has already introduced resettlement schemes for Ukrainians, Hong Kongers and Afghans: arrivals from those three countries alone over the past year have been far greater than all previous records for annual asylum acceptances. Public opinion is strongly supportive of persecuted people but it has no truck with those who falsely claim to be in fear for their lives.

Those who keep shouting down any reform of the migration rules as "fascist", or who point to the num-

bers of refugees absorbed by other countries as proof that we should do more, must look at the overall context. Britain has been extremely open to immigration: 16.8 per cent of the population of England and Wales, or 10 million people, were born abroad. This is similar to Germany (17.3 per cent), higher than America (roughly 14 per cent), and much more than the EU average (10.6 per cent). So why, given all of this, are many Left-wingers so apoplectic? The real reason is that for swathes of elite opinion any restrictions on migration are immoral and "far-Right". They believe in entirely open doors but are too scared to make the argument explicitly, so they oppose all attempts at combating illegal immigration. They pretend to buy into the idea that many small boat arrivals are fleeing modern slavery and support activist lawyers. They cannot admit that the post-1945 institutions dealing with migration and refugees are no longer fit for purpose.

Braverman said this week that "there are 100 million people around the world who could qualify for protection under our current laws", triggering outrage by those who deliberately seek to misconstrue her. Her point is that the West's system now only works because, in practice, many of those eligible to move do not do so, hardly a good basis for policy. In an era of cheapish flights, growing prosperity, demographic shifts, environmental challenges and smartphones, we require modernised rules, conventions, courts and treaties that accept that seismic population movements could become more frequent, that there are limits to how many people

the West can absorb, but that are also humane and committed to saving and harbouring victims of tyranny and persecution. I deeply respect principled advocates of open borders who believe in the oneness of humanity and refuse to compromise on individual liberty. The best modern case is that made by Bryan Caplan in Open Borders: The Science and Ethics of Immigration, a remarkably original non-fiction comic book. Caplan claims world GDP would double by boosting the productivity of hundreds of millions of economically under-utilised people as they move to rich nations, and do more for humanity as a whole than any other possible policy.

While a great read, Caplan's plan for a Westernised, cosmopolitan utopia is unrealistic. Institutions would implode, with small countries, such as Israel, Cyprus or Switzerland, being the first to collapse. Our future lies in democratic nation-states with a strong shared identity, not incoherent technocratic empires. These depend on strict requirements for citizenship and integration and, yes, that means limits on immigration, choosing who we let in, and elites that do not constantly defy, fail or lie to voters on the issue. Sunak's plan is a good first step in rebuilding trust but - given the lack of capacity in detention centres and Rwanda - it will only work if it calls the people-traffickers' bluff. It must also overcome the purveyors of lawfare: this must surely require withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights. Will the Tory party have the courage to make the final break with the failed orthodoxy of the past, pioneering a new generous but controlled approach to migration, or will it allow itself to be bullied into submission by Twitter Leftists?

Michael Fanone

**FOX News conspiracy theorist Tucker Carlson began airing footage this week of the January 6th insurrection, which House Speaker Kevin McCarthy gifted to him exclusively. And just as I anticipated, the footage was manipulated and selectively edited to fit an extreme MAGA narrative espoused by Carlson, former President Donald Trump and the leaders of the new Republican House majority.**

Even his own legal team has acknowledged that Carlson doesn't recite "actual facts" on the topics he discusses on air. And now we have yet another indication that Carlson himself doesn't believe what he talks about on air. Legal filings made public on Tuesday as part of Dominion Voting Systems' \$1.6 billion defamation lawsuit against Fox News, expose Carlson as a fraud. In one private text message two days before the January 6 attack, Carlson said, "We are very, very close to being able to ignore Trump most nights. I truly can't wait." Carlson added of Trump, "I hate him passionately." He also wrote that the four years of the Trump presidency had been "a disaster."

I didn't need to read the reports of his texts to know that Carlson's spin about January 6 is fabricated. I was there. I saw it. I lived it. I fought alongside my brother and sister officers to defend the Capitol. We have the scars and injuries to prove it. But as much as I feel anger and disgust about Tucker, I reserve equal disdain for

McCarthy. His decision to hand over footage of restricted areas of the Capitol to a partisan actor who has routinely and gleefully spread misinformation about the attack endangers everyone working in the building. But it is not out of character: It is a damning reflection of just how extreme - or how opportunistic - the House speaker truly is. The House speaker shared tens of thousands of hours of exclusive footage of January 6 security cameras footage with Carlson, who began airing selective footage Monday night, sanitizing the violence of the Capitol riot and claiming that the edited footage he aired showed that January 6 was not an "insurrection."

For his part, McCarthy has defended the move to give Carlson access to the security footage, telling the New York Times that he did so because he "promised." "I was asked in the press about these tapes, and I said they do belong to the American public. I think sunshine lets everybody make their own judgment," he told the newspaper. In the aftermath of the insurrection, as our nation grappled with the implications of an attempted coup, those of us who had been in the Capitol that day began the long process of mental and physical recovery.

McCarthy acknowledged - at least initially - the role that Trump played in inciting the violence. He spoke about the violence at the Capitol building on January 6, 2021, in starkly different terms

than the narrative Fox News host Tucker Carlson is presenting with footage McCarthy provided to him, which has been selectively used to downplay the violence. In the days following the insurrection, McCarthy said rioters "overtook" the Capitol, speculating that the people who unlawfully broke into his office could have kidnapped or even hung members of Congress. McCarthy rightly decried the attack on the Capitol as "un-American."

But mere days later, he chose political expediency over principle, voting within hours to overturn the results of the election, publicly downplaying the attack and voting against investigating what happened. Months after the attack on the Capitol, McCarthy defended Trump's false claim that the 2020 election was stolen because, according to the New York Times, Trump's support was "essential for his ambitions to become speaker." And when the bipartisan January 6th Select Committee subpoenaed McCarthy, he refused to comply or shed any light on his communication with Trump. The decision allowed him to curry enough favor with the former president that Trump would later whip votes for McCarthy during the House leadership vote, allowing the California Republican to become speaker.

Since long before he took over the speaker's gavel, McCarthy identified MAGA extremists, including Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, as key allies, investing

heavily in his relationship with her, meeting with her weekly and reinstating her on committees. After Greene made violent, pro-insurrectionist comments about what would have happened if she had organized the January 6th insurrection - she says they would have "been armed" and won - McCarthy chose to defend her rather than holding her accountable. The extremism McCarthy intended to fuel in the new House became apparent as soon as his party took the majority. To secure the gavel, McCarthy made a long list of concessions to some of the most extreme members of his conference.

We do not yet know the full extent of the shady deals that McCarthy made that week, but we do know that his decision to release the January 6th footage to Carlson in the first place was the result of a backroom promise he made to Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) - a decision that will have lasting consequences for survivors of the insurrection, like me and our entire nation, as we struggle to make sense of the events of that horrible day.

If McCarthy were truly interested in transparency, his course of action would be simple: Release all the footage to all news outlets or continue the critical work of the January 6th committee. His decision to weaponize one of the darkest days in the history of our Capitol to score political points with Carlson and his audience exposes who the House speaker really is: a MAGA extremist determined to cling to power at all costs.





# Govt to resolve issues of industrialists on priority basis: Minister Sajid Turi

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistani and Human Resource Development Sajid Hussain Turi assured businessmen to resolve their issues on a fast-track basis, saying that the government is taking all possible steps for industrialisation and provision of all facilities to the business community.

The federal minister strongly opposed the industries-hostile actions and initiatives by the government concerned departments.

He viewed all those actions on various pretext completely intolerable, which are causing de-industrialisation in the

province. Sajid Turi was speaking to businessmen on invitation of Industrialists Association Peshawar (IAP) president Malik Imran Ishaq here at industrialist estate Hayatabad.

Apart from the former Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engineer Shuakat Khan, the provincial caretaker Minister Fazal Elahi, Group Leader and former President FPCCI Ghazanfar Bilor, Senior Vice President of Industrialists Association Peshawar Ayub Zukuri, Vice President IAP Ghulam Mohiyyuddin, Executive Members, President of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Muhammad Ishaq, Former presidents IAP Malik Niaz

Ahmed, Zarak Khan, Secretary General, members of the association and industrialists in a large number were present on the occasion.

The IAP president Malik Imran Ishaq in the meeting apprised the federal minister regarding issues of manufacturers who set up their units in Industrial Estate Hayatabad Peshawar, particularly relating to Employees Old-Age Benefits Institute (EOBI), allotment of illegal regi flats, and their unlawful possession, harassment of industrialists during government institution actions and others were among topmost.

The Federal Minister assured that prompt initiatives would be taken to

resolve industry issues. He said harassment, unlawful exercise of authority by EOBI officials would not be allowed in any case.

In this regard, the minister said a meeting with Chairman EOBI would be arranged. Sajid Turi said he will chair a meeting himself to solve issues of industries with EOBI for payment of fee at rate of 170 rupees per month, as decided by the honorable Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The Federal Minister also assured that Federal and Provincial governing bodies should be restructured and equal representation will be given to members recommended by business representative platforms.



SIALKOT: Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif visiting different stalls at exhibition.

## Silkbank continues its growth momentum

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Silkbank continues its upward trajectory in its flagship Consumer segment along with healthy growth on Branch Banking side vividly reflecting its customer-oriented approach. Meanwhile, the Bank has been granted extension in time for holding its Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the year Dec 31, 2021 till April 30, 2023.

This extension will help Bank to materialize its capital injection efforts. It has been Silkbank's consistent endeavor to generate stable revenues through competitive product offerings and enhanced customer experience.

## ‘We Exhibit 2023’ aims to encourage new women entrepreneurs: Mariam

SIALKOT (APP): Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCIS) President Dr Mariam Nouman has said the WCCIS has been serving women entrepreneurs with the mission of assisting them in the commercial sector and creating a conducive environment for all working women.

She stated this while talking to APP after inaugurating the first one-day “We Exhibit 2023” exhibition at Family Park, here on Saturday. She said that women entrepreneurs across Pakistan had been given an opportunity to participate as exhibitors in the event, adding that provision of subsidized stalls had been

made possible by the WCCIS in the one-day exhibition.

She said that cutlery, handicrafts, shoes, leather products, jewellery, furniture, embroideries, gym wear, sports wear etc stalls had been set up in the exhibition.

Dr Mariam Nouman said that 88 stalls had been set up by various women entrepreneurs and companies from across the country in the exhibition.

She said that women entrepreneurs from different cities, including Faisalabad, Karachi, Lahore, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Gujarat, Multan, had set up their stalls in “We Exhibit 2023”.

Talking to APP, Sialkot

Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Abdul Ghafoor Malik said that the launch of a mega event called “We-Exhibit 2023” under the WCCIS was a significant for the women entrepreneurs of Sialkot.

The SCCI president said the “We-Exhibit 2023” would not only give women an opportunity to display their manufactured products at a local level which will also help new entrepreneurs in determining their line-up business.

Malik said the exhibition was the very first event for the women entrepreneurs of Sialkot and its surrounding cities to showcase their potential and excellence.

# Shaukat Khanum Memorial Trust launches Zakat collection drive

## F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Shaukat Khanum Memorial Trust (SKMT) launched its Zakat collection campaign for 2023 in the second week of March. On this occasion, Dr Faisal Sultan, CEO of SKMT said that the campaign theme this year focuses on easing the burden of cancer for families already afflicted with poverty. A loved one's cancer diagnosis brings many challenges, including the financial cost of treatment and associated expenses, such as travel and accommodation.

He explained, “In these circumstances, your support plays a major role in easing the burden of cancer. Over the last 28 years, support of generous donors like you has enabled the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Trust to provide quality treatment to deserving cancer patients, irrespective of their ability to pay.”

Dr Faisal Sultan also commented on the impact of charity given to SKMT last year, “In 2022, the generous



support of people enabled us to provide financially supported treatment worth Rs. 11 billion to over 75 percent of our cancer patients. The proportion of Zakat collection in this was around fifty percent, which will reassure you that Zakat itself is not enough to cover the costs of direct patient care and there is no possibility of Zakat being utilised for any other purpose. Zakat is utilised on the treatment of eligible patients only based on a consistent and fair methodology. Shaukat Khanum Memorial

Trust has also received a Shariah Compliance Certificate, confirming that the framework we follow for collection, utilisation, and management of Zakat funds is Shariah compliant and in line with Islamic principles. The entire amount collected in the form of Zakat is completely exhausted in providing direct patient care within the same year.”

Highlighting the urgent need of support required this year, Dr Faisal said, “For the year 2023, we require Rs. 39 billion, largely expected

from your Zakat and donations, to continue the fight against cancer at our two existing state-of-the-art cancer hospitals and in order to be able to open our third hospital in Karachi by the end of this year. Please donate generously, so that, together, we can ease the burden of cancer. You can use any mode of transferring funds according to your convenience, including cash, cheque, online via credit/debit card, bank transfer, home-collection of donation by calling on 0800 11 555, sending your address on WhatsApp number 0300 0666363, and so on. Your contribution will be acknowledged with an official donation receipt.

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Wall Street stocks ended Friday's session decisively lower as banking shares wobbled on contagion fears, after the failure of regional lender Silicon Valley Bank.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average finished down 1.1 percent at 31,909.96.

The broad-based S&P 500 fell 1.5 percent to 3,861.59, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index slid 1.8 percent to 11,138.89.

The SVB debacle domi-

nated investors' focus all day, with the Nasdaq suspending trade on the stock before the market opened, overshadowing a solid US jobs report.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation announced it was seizing control of SVB and would reopen branches on Monday to allow customers to recover up to \$250,000 in deposits. The move makes SVB the largest retail bank to fail since 2008.

“It's the second day of

concerns around the banking sector and questions whether this reflects any systemic risk,” said Angelos Kourkafas of financial services firm Edward Jones.

“Probably, the answer to that is no. But still, confidence is a bit shaken,” he said.

SVB's problems were sparked by customer withdrawals that led the company to liquidate securities positions whose values had plummeted due to the Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes.

“What today and this week shows is that we are beginning to feel the effect of Fed tightening on the markets and the economy,” Kourkafas said.

The hardest-hit banks included First Republic Bank which slumped 14.8 percent, and Comerica, which slipped five percent. Fifth Third Bancorp was down 4.2 percent.

Larger banks such as JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America -- both of which suffered bruising losses on

Thursday -- either rose or fell modestly.

Among other companies, Boeing advanced 0.9 percent as the Federal Aviation Administration cleared the way for the delivery resumption of 787 Dreamliner planes, concluding that the aviation giant had addressed earlier concerns.

Caterpillar dove 5.8% following a downgrade from UBS, which said the company's weakening outlook was “underappreciated.”

# Steady growth seen in microfinance sector

## F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Quarterly edition of Pakistan Microfinance Network's Microwatch is out highlighting the growth in the microfinance sector for the year 2022. The microfinance industry showed positive signs of growth as it recovers from the impact of the 2022 flood crisis. By the end of 2022, Credit and Savings Microfinance indicators depicted a steady growth trajectory in the post-flood era. The number of active borrowers in the microfinance industry crossed 9.0 million, which is a 3.6 percent increase compared to the previous quarter. The number of active women borrowers also showed a similar trend, with a 13.6 percent increase compared to the previous year, 2021.

In terms of market share

and lending portfolio, Khushhali Microfinance Bank (KBL) led the market with an 18 percent share and a lending portfolio of 89 billion PKR, closely followed by HBL Microfinance bank with a market share of 17.9 percent and a GLP of 87 billion PKR. For active borrowers, Mobilink Microfinance Bank (MMFB) led with a market share of 28.2 percent and a borrower base of 2.6 million, while KBL followed with a market share of 8.1 percent and a borrower base of 737 thousand. On the NBMFCS front, NRSP led with active borrowers of 723 thousand, followed by Akhuwat and KASHF with 692 thousand and 639 thousand, respectively.

Akhuwat led with a Gross Loan Portfolio of 30.7 billion PKR, followed by KASHF and NRSP with

portfolios of 22 billion PKR approximately.

Microsavings indicators also showed positive trends. The saver base increased by 4.7 percent to reach 93 million, and Telenor Microfinance Bank (TMFB) led the growth by 9.5 percent, adding 2.8 million depositors to its saver's portfolio. MMFB and TMFB continued to dominate the market with a total of 77 million active saver bases. While there was a considerable increase in the savers base, there was a noticeable increase of 14.4 percent in savings value, bringing the total to 514 billion PKR at the end of quarter 4, 2022.

This positive growth in the sector shows promise for the future as the microfinance sector continues to recover from the challenges brought on by the 2022 floods.

aggressive interest rate increases to fight inflation are exposing vulnerabilities in the financial system.

Details of SVB's failed response to the prospect of the downgrade, reported by Reuters for the first time, show how quickly confidence in financial institutions can erode. The failure also sent shockwaves through California's startup economy, with many companies unsure how much of their deposits they can recover and worrying about how to make payroll.

The Moody's call came

after the value of the bonds where SVB had parked its money fell due to the higher interest rates.

Worried the downgrade

could undermine the confidence of investors and clients in the bank's financial health, SVB Chief Executive Greg Becker's team called Goldman Sachs Group Inc (GS.N) bankers for advice and flew to New York for meetings with Moody's and other ratings firms, the sources said.

The sources asked not to be identified because they are bound by confidentiality agreements.

SVB then worked on a plan over the weekend to boost the value of its holdings. It would sell more than \$20 billion worth of low-yielding bonds and reinvest the proceeds in assets that deliver higher

returns.

The transaction would generate a loss, but if SVB could fill that funding hole by selling shares, it would avoid a multi-notch downgrade, the sources said.

The plan backfired.

News of the share sale spooked clients, primarily technology startups, that rushed to withdraw their deposits, upending the capital raising. Regulators stepped in on Friday, shutting down the bank and putting it in receivership.

SVB, Goldman Sachs and Moody's representatives did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

As SVB executives debated when to proceed

with the fundraising, they heard from Moody's that the downgrade was coming this week, the sources said.

SVB sprang into action

in the hopes of softening the blow.

The bank lined up private equity firm General Atlantic, which agreed to buy \$500 million of the \$2.25 billion stock sale, while another investor said it could not reach a deal on SVB's timeline, the sources said.

By Wednesday, SVB had sold the bond portfolio for a \$1.8 billion loss.

Moody's downgraded the bank, but only by a notch because of SVB's bond portfolio sale and plan to raise capital.

# MICADR and LAS in collaboration with FPCCI holds conference

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Musaliha International Centre for Arbitration and Dispute Resolution (MICADR) and the Legal Aid Society (LAS) in collaboration with the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has successfully concluded Pakistan's first National Conference; “Dispute Resolution through Mediation: Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and Opportunities for the Industry” at the Serena Hotel in Islamabad.

MICADR was established by the LAS, an organization founded by Justice R Nasir Aslam Zahid. LAS is working in the heart of the rule of Pakistan's rule of law sector providing direct legal assistance to vulnerable individuals and technical support to key civil and criminal justice system actors.

Mediation is a cost and

time-effective, flexible and confidential process where a trained and accredited Mediator facilitates dialogue and conversations between two or more disputing parties, ultimately guiding them towards a settlement which is mutually beneficial. For the corporate sector looking for cost and time effective, confidential means of dispute resolution that sustain business relations, mediation has proven to be the most successful mechanism globally.

The conference aimed to promote mediation as a premier means of dispute resolution in Pakistan. With mediation now legally recognized and enforceable in Pakistan through provincial ADR laws in Sindh (2019), ICT (2017), Punjab (2020), Balochistan (2022) and KP (2020), it offers a confidential, flexible, and private mechanism of dispute resolution that is cost and time-effective. Moreover, settlement agreements mutually

agreed upon by disputing parties can, under respective provincial ADR laws, be submitted in civil courts to become Rule of Courts. As ADR gains traction locally, foreign investors actively seek to invest in countries that have robust ADR systems.

The conference communicated how MICADR offers state-of-the-art mediation, arbitration and negotiation services for organizations, corporate entities, and regulatory bodies. The conference noted that mediation at MICADR is facilitated by nationally and internationally accredited civil and commercial mediators as well as notable Supreme Court judges with several years of experience in multiple thematic areas.

Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid, CEO of Legal Aid Society and Member of Board of Governors at MICADR opened the conference by highlighting the need for mediation to provide expedient and expedi-

tious justice to the people of Pakistan. Haya Zahid said that institutionalization of ADR is as critical for Pakistan as investing in interventions to reverse climate change.

Retired Supreme court Judge Justice Arif Hussain Khilji stated that the purpose of the conference was to provide a platform for members of the ADR community of Islamabad to come together and discuss how mediation can transform the dispute resolution landscape in Pakistan.

Suleman Chawla, Vice President of FPCCI, stated, “The recent establishment of an Accreditation Committee in Islamabad to recognize and accredit ADR Centers and Mediators, and the fact that the composition includes a representation from the FPCCI, is a step in the very right direction. We are grateful to these critical stakeholders for prioritizing this workable solution.”

Zubair Motiwala, Chair-

man of the Trade and Development Authority of Pakistan, supported the need to institutionalize mediation as per international standards and spoke about the kind of issues being faced by Pakistan's industry and particularly highlighted the need for mediation pertaining to cases lodged by foreign buyers of Pakistani goods, and with the relevant Government authorities regarding the delay of release containers being held at Pakistan's port.

Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, Judge of the Islamabad High Court and also a CEDR Accreditor International Mediator, particularly emphasized on the need for regulatory bodies such as FBR to change their bylaws regarding ADR to incorporate the formal mediation process as a dispute resolution mechanism. He gave examples from jurisdictions around the world such as the UK where this has successfully



been piloted.

The conference was attended by the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on revenue Tariq Pasha, Former Supreme Court and High Court judges such as Justice Ather Saeed, Justice Mushir Alam, the Federal Tax Ombudsperson, Presidents of Faisalabad and Rawalpindi Chambers of Commerce and representation from Attock Group of Companies, major telcos, development sector organi-

zations and the Special Technology Zones Authority.

The conference ended with distribution of MICADR membership certificates to newly Internationally Accredited Civil and Commercial Mediators from within Islamabad's legal fraternity who are now licensed to practice mediation across 150 jurisdictions around the world.

The conference was a resounding success, and its

participants left with a renewed commitment to promoting mediation as a means of dispute resolution in Pakistan. With the increasing recognition of ADR in the country and the tireless efforts of organizations such as Musaliha International Centre for Arbitration and Dispute Resolution (MICADR), the future looks bright for mediation in Pakistan as a means of dispute resolution.





## In brief

**Ahmar, Robert, Sajjad, Fazil bag tenpin men's team event**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ahmar, Robert, Sajjad, and Fazil won the title of men's team event of the National Tenpin Bowling Championship at Leisure City Bowling Club, Jinnah Park, Rawalpindi. The final of the men's single and the concluding ceremony of the championship would be held on Sunday. At the end of the finals, members of the National Assembly, Dr Samina Matloob, Zahra Wadood Fatemi, and Romina Khurshid Alam would give away the trophies, medals and certificates to the winning players. Ahmar, Robert, Sajjad, and Fazil won the title of men's team event while Afzal, Sikander, Danyal Shah, and Ali Suria obtained second position, and Ijaz ur Rehman, Muhammad Hussain Chattha, and Rana Shahzad Akhtar bagged third position.

**Multan' Khushdil fined**

RAWALPINDI (PPI): Multan Sultans' Khushdil Shah has been fined 10 per cent of match fee for a level 1 breach of the HBL PSL Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel during his side's match against Peshawar Zalmi at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on Friday. Khushdil was charged for violating Article 2.4 that reads as, "Disobeying an umpire's instruction during the match". The incident took place in the 15th over of Multan Sultans' batting, when Khushdil, twice in the over asked umpires to check the ball. Since Khushdil pleaded guilty to the charge and accepted the sanctions proposed by match referee Muhammad Javed, there was no need of a formal hearing. The charge was imposed by on-field umpires Ahsan Raza and Martin Saggars.

**Harry Kane scores double**

LONDON (Agencies): Harry Kane scored twice in a comfortable victory over Nottingham Forest as Tottenham consolidated their place in the Premier League's top four and relieved some immediate pressure on manager Antonio Conte. Liverpool's surprise defeat at Bournemouth earlier on Saturday means Spurs are six points clear of Jurgen Klopp's side in fourth and seven points above Newcastle, who have played three games fewer. Kane broke the deadlock with a trademark header from Pedro Porro's delivery before netting his 20th league goal of the season from the penalty spot following Joe Worrall's foul on Richarlison. The Brazil international - restored to the starting line-up after appearing to criticise Conte following Wednesday's goalless draw with AC Milan - thought he had given Spurs the lead after just three minutes, but the video assistant referee disallowed the goal for offside. Son Heung-min increased Spurs' advantage in the second half when he steered Richarlison's cross into the bottom corner, before Worrall pulled a goal back for Forest with a powerful header. The visitors were denied a second consolation by Fraser Forster, who saved Andre Ayew's late penalty after Dejan Kulusevski's handball. Forest stay 14th but their cushion over the bottom three has been cut to three points. Dominant Spurs back to winning ways. Speculation over Conte's future intensified following Wednesday's Champions League exit - which came after back-to-back 1-0 defeats by Wolves and Sheffield United in the Premier League and FA Cup respectively.

# Usman's fastest PSL ton, Afridi five-for eliminate Gladiators in runfest

RAWALPINDI (Monitoring Desk): The Rawalpindi leg of the PSL this season has stood out for the surfeit of fours and sixes that have pervaded it, but even by those gluttonous standards, Usman Khan stood out. The former Quetta Gladiators man tormented his previous employers, smashing the fastest PSL hundred as Sultans piled on 262, the highest PSL score in history.

Gladiators, needing a win - and in truth, a comprehensive one to stay alive - battled gamely, half-centuries from Omair Yousuf and Iftikhar Ahmed keeping the scoreline respectable. But despite the placidity of the surface, there were simply too many runs to get. Abbas Afridi showed the bowlers could have their say too with a five-fer that included a hat-trick, and though Gladiators took it much deeper than it appeared they might, they fell short by nine runs.

Gladiators required a

run-rate boosting victory to retain realistic hopes of pipping Peshawar Zalmi to a playoff spot, but the manner in which Multan started put any such notions to bed. It wasn't until the third over that Usman struck his first boundary, but the four he plundered off that Aimal Khan over was very much a harbinger of what would follow. By the sixth over, Multan were purring, and the hapless Qais Ahmed was clobbered for 27 as Sultans posted 91, the highest powerplay score of the season.

The carnage continued with 21 of the next over, and a further 27 off Qais' second. During that over, Usman had brought up his 36-ball hundred, the fastest this league has ever seen. The following over saw the 150 come up, with the innings still in its first half. Nawaz brought himself once more and, to Gladiators' relief, deceived him with the flight as Umar Akmal effected a smart stumping, though, having bludgeoned a 43-ball 120,



the damage had very much been done. Mohammad Rizwan

wasn't exactly plodding along, but he'd been happy to turn the strike over, fac-

ing just 17 of the first 61 balls. He brought up his own half-century off 26 balls, but the carnage often happened at the other end. Tim David was in imperious form and combined with Kieron Pollard to finish strongly after the Gladiators had staged a mini-revival in the middle overs. The fourth wicket partnership between the duo combined for an unbeaten 58 off 33, and while that almost felt snail-paced after Usman's fireworks, it still powered Sultans to the highest PSL total by 15 runs.

Gladiators needed a huge effort from the top three if they were to stage a repeat of the monster chase they achieved against Peshawar Zalmi earlier in the week. But the architect of that triumph, Jason Roy, was dispatched with a slower ball in the second over. Martin Gupill took charge with a blistering powerplay cameo, smoking 37 off 13 balls before a bit

of extra pace from Ihsanullah took the outside edge.

But cameos weren't enough in a chase of this magnitude, and to make up for the lack of one huge innings, Gladiators strung together several small, consequential ones. Seven of the ten who batted registered double figures, none of them at a strike rate lower than 170. Yousuf and Iftikhar appeared to be making a game of it with a 57-ball 104-run stand through the middle overs, with both batters scoring half-centuries. Iftikhar, somewhat bizarrely, gestured to shush the Rawalpindi crowd after getting to the mark in 28 balls, even as his side was well on course to be silenced before the playoffs for the fourth successive season.

It was Afridi who dismissed him with a slower ball to ease any Multan nerves, but to Gladiators' credit, they kept hammer-

ing away. Mohammad Nawaz struck a four off his first ball, while Akmal and Umair smashed sixes of theirs, and though the wickets kept tumbling, the runs were steadily being knocked off. When Akmal smashed two sixes in the 17th to leave Gladiators needing 56 off 22, they might even have been narrow favourites, but Afridi would have the final say.

Three wickets off successive balls straddling two overs were the icing on the cake, as Afridi achieved just the fifth PSL hat-trick, and though Gladiators raged against the dying of the light, the light truly was going out for them. The scoreline might say they fell short by just nine runs, but this elimination is the fourth first-round exit in a row for the 2019 champions. The narrow margin of defeat cannot detract from the gulf between them in a league where most of their competitors have pulled far out of sight.

## KP women, men football teams to visit Argentina in August

PESHAWAR (APP): The women and men's football teams of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would go to Argentina in August on a one-month tour along with team coaches and officials, said former international football player and sports promoter Shahid Khan while talking to the media here on Saturday.

Shahid Khan Shinwari further said that he held meetings with the Ambassador of Argentina to Pakistan Leopoldo Francisco Sahuores in which he invited the KP football Women and Men's teams along with the leading delegation to Argentina.

This visit will last for one month. The selected team of KP would participate in club football as well

during their one-month-long stay for which the ambassador promised to extend all support to the teams and officials.

He said there will be 35 to 40 members' teams' delegations including coaching and trainers so that in every field of the game expertise could be utilized. He said the famous coaches of Argentina would provide training to the players of the KP football team and then matches will be held with Argentine clubs for 20 days.

He said that before the tour, a camp would be set up in Peshawar for the selection of the best teams.

He said the coaches and trainers would also be coming to Pakistan to pro-

vide training and coaching session to the local coaches to promote football in Pakistan. He said the Argentinian coaches would visit Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta.

In response to a question, former national football player Shahid Khan Shinwari said that the Pakistan Olympic Association and the Pakistan Football Federation would work together to make joint efforts for this tour.

"It is hoped that the Pakistan Olympic Association and Pakistan Football Federation will fully cooperate with us in this regard and meetings will also be held very soon to prepare a plan for the tour to Argentina," he added.

## Peshawar to host 'Jr Mr. Pakistan, Mr. Pakistan' title contests on Sunday

PESHAWAR (APP): President of Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation, Chairman Disciplinary Committee Asia and Secretary General Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation Tariq Pervez on Saturday announced that the Junior Mr. Pakistan, Mr. Pakistan, Men's Physique and Masters Contests will be held in Peshawar on March 12, 2023.

For the first time, the fitness challenge Pakistan competitions for young athletes will also be held, he added. He said apart from the four provinces, more than 200 players from Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan Army, Pakistan WAPDA, Railways, Police

and HEC would participate.

The athletes would compete in five different categories for Junior Pakistan. National competitions will be under the supervision of the Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation and managed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bodybuilding Association.

"Mr. Pakistan competition under the supervision of our federation will be held with all the units affiliated with International Bodybuilding Federation (IFBB) and Pakistan Olympics," he apprised.

He said IFBB is affiliated with the Olympic Committee of Asia OCA and had been operational since 1952. He said the winners of the Mr Pakistan

competitions would be given the opportunity to participate in the Mr. Asia competitions which will be held on August 25 in Beirut, Lebanon.

"I am happy with the way the players did their registration in all five categories," Tariq Pervez said.

These national competitions will be organized in a grand manner, he added. It should be remembered that the Provincial Body Building Association has organized national competitions in 2004, 2007, 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2022 in Peshawar earlier and this time such competitions are going to be organized in Peshawar with the same zeal and spirit.

## Athapaththu's 107\* in vain as Amazons win series 2-1

R A W A L P I N D I (Monitoring Desk) : A punishing century by Chamari Athapaththu was not enough to prevent Amazons from registering a 33-run victory over Super Women in the third match that gave them a 2-1 series win in the Women's League exhibition matches at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

Athapaththu hit a strokeful 107 not out from 60 balls featuring 12 fours and six sixes as Super Women finished at 185 for eight after being set a 219 runs target. Athapaththu raised her half-century from 32 balls with six fours and three sixes, while she reached three figures from 57 balls with 11 fours and six sixes.

Athapaththu put on 90 runs for the third wicket with Iram Javed, who contributed 35 from 29 balls with four fours and a six. The Sri Lanka captain dominated the 40-run fourth wicket stand with South

Africa's Sune Luus, whose contribution was six from five balls with one four.

The only time the left-hander was outshone was when Pakistan opener Muneeba Ali scored 12 of the 17 runs for the first wicket with three fours. For

time in the series.

Amazons captain Bismah Maroof followed up her scores of one and 73 not out with a well-crafted 51 not out to top-score for her side. Her 32-ball innings included six fours and a six. Together with Tammy



Amazons, Fatima Sana took three for 34, while Danni Wyatt bagged two for 43.

While Super Women belted 24 fours and seven sixes in their reply, Amazons smashed 30 fours and six sixes to collect 218 for six after electing to bat first for the third successive

time in the series. Beaumont, Bismah put on 67 runs for the third wicket. Tammy's contribution in this stand was a 26-ball 39 with five fours and a six.

England's Danni Wyatt, who scored 22 and 97 in the previous matches, hit 43 at a strike-rate of 215 with seven fours and two sixes

and provided her side a 65-run start in less than six overs with Eyma Fatima (19, 16b, 4x4).

Maia Bouchier and Fatima Sana finished the innings like it started. Bouchier hit three fours and a six in a 10-ball 21, while Fatima's seven-ball 17 not out included four fours.

Scores in brief

3rd match - Amazons beat Super Women by 33 runs, win series 2-1

Amazons 218-6, 20 overs (Bismah Maroof 51 not out, Danni Wyatt 43, Tammy Beaumont 39, Maia Bouchier 21, Eyma Fatima 19; Aimen Anwar 2-40) Super Women 185-8, 20 overs (Chamari Athapaththu 107 not out, Iram Javed 35, Muneeba Ali 12; Fatima Sana 3-34, Danni Wyatt 2-43,

Player of the match - Danni Wyatt (Amazons)

Match 1 - Super Women beat Amazons by eight wickets

## South Africa beats West Indies by 284 runs

JOHANNESBURG (AP): South Africa bowled West Indies out for 106 in a commanding 284-run win in the second test on Saturday to sweep the series 2-0.

West Indies was facing a daunting target of 391 and collapsed under the pressure in its second innings, surviving for just 35.1 overs as South Africa won before tea on the fourth day at the Wanderers.

Gerald Coetzee claimed 3-37 and six wickets in the match to play a leading role in the Proteas' attack in the 22-year-old fast bowler's second test appearance.

Off-spinner Simon Harmer had 3-45 and left-

arm spinner Keshav Maharaj 2-4, although Maharaj didn't get the chance to improve on those impressive bowling figures after injuring his left ankle as he tried to set off on a celebratory run when his second wicket was confirmed on a television review.

Maharaj threw his arms up and took a step as if to run off in celebration when Kyle Mayers was given out lbw, but then immediately slumped to the ground holding his left foot as his teammates stood around him. He was taken off the field on a stretcher.

The bizarre injury didn't affect South Africa's push for victory as minor resistance by Joshua Da Silva (34), Jason Holder (19) and Alzarri Joseph (18) ended quickly.

South Africa's victory was set up by new captain Temba Bavuma's big century on the third day that put the home team in total control of the test and set West Indies its huge target.

Bavuma was 171 not out overnight and South Africa 287-7 in its second innings. And even though Bavuma fell for 172 early on the fourth day and missed the double-century he was targeting, and the home team was all out for 321, the lead was already more than enough to clinch the series.

## Shiffrin wins 87th World Cup to break record

ARE (Agencies): Mikaela Shiffrin became the greatest Alpine skier of all time with her 87th World Cup win - exactly 12 years after making her debut.

Slalom victory in Are, Sweden, saw the 27-year-old American surpass the record of 86 held by Swede Ingemar Stenmark since 1989. She had drawn level with Stenmark in winning the giant slalom on Friday.

Shiffrin, who won her first World Cup in the same resort in 2012, said her achievement was "hard to comprehend". She clocked one minute 41.77 seconds across her two runs, putting her 0.92 seconds ahead of Switzerland's Wendy Holdener in the standings.

"The best feeling is to ski on the second run when you have a lead," said Shiffrin. "You have to be smart but also I just wanted to be fast too and ski the second run like its own race, and I did it exactly how I wanted and that's amazing." Shiffrin, who turns 28 on Monday, was surprised on the finish line by her brother, Taylor, who she did not know was in attendance.

The Colorado native made her World Cup debut on 11 March 2011, competing in the giant slalom in the Czech Republic.

This season she has amassed 13 wins across all disciplines so far and has secured the overall, slalom and giant slalom World Cup crystal globes.

Meanwhile on the men's World Cup circuit, Marco Odermatt wrapped up his second successive overall title with giant slalom victory in Kranjska Gora, Switzerland's Olympic champion finished 0.23 seconds ahead of Frenchman Alexis Pinturault. He leads Norway's Aleksander Aamodt Kilde by 486 points with five races remaining.



B O U R N E M O U T H (Agencies): Mohamed Salah's glaring penalty miss helped Bournemouth climb out of the relegation zone after an excellent win which damaged Liverpool's chances of qualifying for next season's Champions League.

The Reds were brought back down to earth after last week's 7-0 thrashing of Manchester United as the

Cherries, who started the weekend bottom, did their survival chances a power of good. Liverpool were punished for poor defending when the unmarked Philip Billing struck from eight yards for his sixth Premier League goal of the season after fine work by Dango Ouattara.

Virgil van Dijk had a header cleared off the line

at 0-0 and substitute Diego Jota was denied by Neto's fine save before Liverpool won a penalty when the Portugal forward's header was handled by Adam Smith. But Salah, who became Liverpool's all-time top Premier League scorer with 129 goals last week, blazed the penalty wide much to the delight of Bournemouth's fans.

While the win ensured Bournemouth finished the day 17th, Jurgen Klopp's side missed the chance to go fourth for the first time this season after a lethargic display. "This game was a massive knock," said the Reds boss. "You know how it is with knocks, you have to take them and see how big the scars are and go from there."

Having scored seven times in their last match, the Reds failed to register a goal against the worst defence in the Premier League. Liverpool have made strides in recent weeks but this was a step backwards for a team who face a mountainous task to stay in the Champions League when they go to European champions Real Madrid on Wednesday, looking to claw back a 5-2 deficit.

Their patchy away form - just three wins in 13 league games on the road - continues to hold them back. "Concerned? Yes, I see it," added Klopp on his

side's away performances.

"In the home games we are in the top four but in the away games we are not even in Europe, there is always a reason and our away results is for sure [the reason]." With next week's home game with Fulham postponed due to the London club's involvement in the FA Cup followed by the first international break of 2023, this was Liverpool's last game on the Premier League stage for three weeks. They face back-to-back away games at Manchester City (1 April) and Chelsea (4 April) when they return, followed by a home match with leaders Arsenal (9 April).

Klopp will hope his side have washed this defeat out of their system by then.

Bournemouth show they are up for fight

The last time these two teams met, Liverpool won 9-0 at Anfield and Scott Parker was sacked. This was only Bournemouth's second win - and first at home - since Gary

O'Neil was made permanent manager in November after a spell as interim boss.

The Cherries deserve enormous credit for bouncing back after last weekend's emotionally-draining game at Arsenal when they led 2-0 before conceding a winner in the 97th minute.

"To concede the late goal at Arsenal and show what they are made of, I was asked if they would have any hangers on from what happened at Arsenal - that [performance] was your answer," said O'Neil. "The stuff that has gone against us recently, we were due for something to go our way, definitely." Bournemouth still have work to do if they are to avoid a quick-fire return to the Championship following last season's promotion, but this performance will give the team a huge confidence lift.

The Cherries were strong at the back and caused problems going forward with Ouattara a real threat.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 85,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 85,900 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 58,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1436.94 feet and was 38.94 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 23,800 cusecs while outflow as 48,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1103.30 feet, which was 53.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 18,900 cusecs and 22,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 47,200, 37,800, 31,900 and 8,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Seven drug dealers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested seven illegal arms holders, drug dealers and recovered arms, ammunition from their possession during crackdown here on Saturday, informed police spokesman. During course of action Bani police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Bakht Munir. Similarly, Taxila police held Umar Sajjad and recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from his possession and 01 pistol 30 bore from Nazir while 01 pistol 30 bore from Haji Gul and 450 gram of charas from Nigab Khan. Following operation, Saddar Wah police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Gohar Khan. While, Ratta Amaral police recovered 850 gram of charas from Javed. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. SSP Operations appreciated the performance of police teams said that the crackdown against illegal arms holders and drug dealers will be continued.

### 19 kite seller, kite flyers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): The police have arrested 19 kite sellers and kite flyers and confiscated hundred of kites and strings from their possession during a crackdown here on Saturday. According to a police spokesman, during the course of action, City Police Station held four kite flyers namely Arslan, Subhan, Abdullah, and Abdul Wahab and recovered 22 kites from their possession. Similarly, Ganjmandi Police arrested kite flyer, Khash, and recovered four kites and strings from his custody. While Pirwadi Police recovered 25 kites from two kite flyers, Usman and Umair. Waris Khan Police recovered 22 kites and two strings from four kite flyers, Abdullah, Rafiq, Faizan, and Bilal. New Town Police recovered 60 kites from Hasan and Zain, and Sadiqabad Police recovered 14 kites and three strings from Arbaz. Naseerabad Police recovered 35 kites and strings from Saham and Abdul Faheem. RA Bazar Police recovered 20 kites and strings from Arsalan. Taxila police recovered 15 kites and strings from Atif. Gujjar Khan Police recovered 35 kites and strings from Soban. Separate cases were registered against the accused and further investigation was in progress. City Police Officer CPO Syed Khalid Mahmood Hamdani said that the ongoing crackdown will be accelerated against those involved in dangerous sports like kite flying and kite selling.



RAWALPINDI: Visitors having a look on the posters themed on Women's Struggle for Social Change, displayed at Rawalpindi Press Club by Devcom-Pakistan in connection with Int'l Women's Day. —APP Photo

## Denial of security for Punjab, KP elections riles Sheikh Rashid

RAWALPINDI (NNI): Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmad on Saturday lamented a lack of provision of security for elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, recalling Pakistan had been providing security to Qatar and United Nations.

In a series of tweets, the former interior minister said economic, social and constitutional crises continued to deepen in the country.

He said the Supreme Court was the last hope to

protect law and its sanctity. He claimed the ruling alliance of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) had fallen apart with every ally receiving its share from the government. He said Fazlur Rehman's JUI-F had secured ministries of religious affairs and communication while the interim government of KP was given to the relative of Mr Rehman.

He said the survival of Pakistan lied in the holding of elections in 90 days, adding that delay in polls could spark unrest in the

country.

He said the power tariff would further go up till the decision of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on revival of the loan programme.

He also expressed concern over not registration of a case despite issuance of postmortem report of PTI worker Ali Bilal.

The AML chief welcomed the re-election of Xi Jinping as China's president for the third time and restoration of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

## Two more infected with fatal Coronavirus in RWP

RAWALPINDI (APP): Two more people were diagnosed with fatal Coronavirus during the last 24 hours, raising the district's tally of confirmed cases to 47,776. As per the latest data released by the District Health Authority here Saturday, the infected cases included 44,129 from Rawalpindi and 3,647 from other districts.

Among the new cases, one of each case had arrived from Taxila and the Rawalpindi Cantonment area. "Presently, eight confirmed patients are quarantined at homes while no one at any district hospital", the report added.

The report further said that 7,006,011 people, including 44,790 health workers, had jabbed themselves against the lethal Coronavirus (COVID-19) across the district since the vaccination administering drive launched on March 10, 2021.

In addition, District Health Authority updated that during the last 24 hours, 339 samples were collected, out of which 337 were declared negative, while the positivity rate was recorded at 0.60 per cent.

## Javed Latif for formal probe into alleged conspiracy that brought Imran to power

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister Javed Latif has called for the establishment of a parliamentary commission to investigate and hold those, who allegedly plotted to bring Imran Khan to power in the rigged elections of 2018, accountable.

Talking to media, he accused the "facilitators" of carrying out a conspiracy against the then PML-N government, adding that the characters who

established the monarchy through a conspiracy in 2018, have already been exposed and should be held accountable.

He also demanded that the report of the commission should be made public.

Furthermore, the PML-N leader alleged that due to the conspiracy, Imran Khan, along with his spouse "Pinky Peerni" and "front woman" Farah Gogi, became billionaires,

while the price of basic commodities skyrocketed, causing immense hardship for the common people.

"As a result of this conspiracy, two rupees worth of bread is being sold at 25 rupees and the price of one kilogram of ghee has increased from Rs 140 to 700 rupees," he said.

He also accused Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership of spreading lies about the recent killing of a PTI worker in Lahore.

## ANF recovers over 475 kg drugs; arrests 11

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in eight operations managed to recover over 475 kg drugs and arrested 11 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Saturday.

He informed that ANF foiled a bid to smuggle drugs from Peshawar to Punjab and recovered 72 kg charas and 60 kg opium from secret cavities of a car intercepted near Islamabad Motorway. ANF also arrested three accused.

ANF in an operation against drug traffickers involved in selling drugs especially in the educational institutions recovered 2.5 kg charas from secret cavities of a car intercepted near

F-10/2 area. An accused resident of Rawalpindi was also rounded up.

The spokesman informed that in third operation, ANF recovered 305 grams Ice drug from a parcel being sent to New Zealand through a private courier company at Rawalpindi Murree Road. In fourth operation, 10.8 kg charas was recovered from a car checked near Peshawar Bara Road.

306 grams Ice drug was recovered at Karachi International Airport from the possession of a Bahrain-bound passenger resident of Karachi going on flight no GS-753.

In sixth operation, 91.2 kg charas was seized and

two drug smugglers were rounded up near Kuchlak Bostan Cross Quetta, he said and informed that in another operation conducted in Pishin, 231 kg charas concealed in an abandoned house was recovered.

ANF in an operation at RCD Highway Quetta managed to bust an inter-provincial drug smugglers gang and recovered five kg heroin and two kg Ice drug besides netting four accused. The drugs were being smuggled from Quetta to Karachi through a cargo bus service.

He said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

## RDA issues notices to four marketing companies

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of Director General (DG) Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa has issued notices to the administration of four marketing companies namely Anzo Marketing, Wall Real Estate, Titanium Agency and Vital Marketing for illegal advertisements of illegal housing schemes.

Spokesman of RDA told on Saturday that the Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate of RDA had issued notices and directed the marketing agencies to stop advertising the projects of the housing

schemes which were not approved. He said the DG had directed the authorities concerned to take action against advertisements of such housing schemes.

Under the rules, a sponsor could not advertise the projects, involved in sale of plots or housing units in print and electronic media without prior approval of the Authority, he added.

Unless a project gets No Objection Certificate from RDA Rawalpindi, it could not be declared as an approved or legal project, he said adding that even then, the marketing companies were misleading the public and they were investing in

illegal projects. The marketing/projection of such projects were giving impression that the projects were already approved and legal. The companies were warned of strict action in accordance with the law if the advertisements were not stopped.

The DG, he said, had ordered the authorities to take action to stop publicity campaigns of illegal housing schemes at electronic media. He advised the public not to invest in illegal housing schemes and check the status of the housing projects before investment at RDA's official website [www.rda.gop.pk](http://www.rda.gop.pk) or visit RDA office to get information.

## Senator Farooq H Naek's election to IPU human rights committee felicitated

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Saturday congratulated Senator Farooq Hamid Naek on being elected as a member of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and Democracy at the 146th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly held in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain.

Senator Naek, a highly respected lawyer and Parliamentarian from Pakistan, has been recognized for his unwavering commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy.

His election to the important committee is a testament to his expertise and dedication to advancing these critical issues not

only in Pakistan but also around the world.

Expressing confidence in Senator Naek's abilities, the Senate Chairman expressed his belief that the newly elected member would bring his vast experience and knowledge to the vital role and make a significant contribution to the work of the Standing Committee.

## Two-day 'Spring Crafts Festival' kicks off

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-day 'Spring Crafts Festival', an event showcasing traditional and contemporary crafts in Pakistan kicked off here on Saturday. This event is an ongoing collaboration between Nomad Gallery and Serena Hotels.

Ms. Sherry Rehman, Federal Minister for Climate Change inaugurated the show. Pakistani art and crafts have a long tradition and history of a very wide range of skill, human practices of creative expression, storytelling and cultural participation. Both highly dynamic and a characteristically constant feature of human life, they have developed into innovative, stylized and sometimes intricate forms.

This is often achieved

through sustained and deliberate study, training and/or theorizing within a particular tradition, across generations and even between civilizations. The crafts are a vehicle through which human beings cultivate distinct social, cultural and individual identities, while transmitting values, impressions, judgments, ideas, visions, spiritual meanings, patterns of life and experiences across time and space, said Nageen Hyat, Founder Director, Nomad Gallery, Rights and Social Activist and Film-maker.

Nomad Gallery has routinely and holistically supported the economic empowerment of women through its activities. Our focus this year is two-fold:

our Spring Crafts Festival in collaboration with Serena Hotels remains a commitment of our collective belief in the continued pursuit of this endeavor, she said.

Unprecedented rains last year have played havoc across most of the country, resulting in loss of precious lives and massive destruction all around. Dealing with a calamity of such immense magnitude, through emergency relief operations is a challenge difficult to imagine; attending to post-flood damages, innumerable displaced families, prevention of related diseases and so on, is a gigantic task that will require huge resources as well as collective efforts by one and all, and a considerable amount of time.



ISLAMABAD: Children playing under the tree at Federal Capital. —APP Photo

## Doctors' associations vow support to Pakistan Polio Programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned paediatricians and medical associations have renewed full support to the Pakistan Polio Eradication Programme to interrupt wild poliovirus transmission this year.

Office-bearers of the Pakistan Paediatrics Association (PPA), Pakistan Islamic Medical Association (PIMA), Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) and their provincial chapters, and doctors, including paediatricians from the seven polio endemic districts of southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, pledged to promote polio vaccines and routine immunisation at a roundtable meeting held at the

National Emergency Operations of Center (NEOC) for Polio Eradication here.

The meeting was held to rally support from medical professionals to increase vaccine acceptance in parents and caregivers and counter negative misperceptions among communities about vaccines.

Chairing the discussion, NEOC Coordinator Dr Shahzad Baig apprised the forum about the programme's ongoing initiatives to stamp out paralytic poliovirus from Pakistan and efforts to increase community engagement and dialogue.

He appreciated physicians' role in promoting the acceptance

of vaccines among parents and caregivers and urged them to continue to be reliable voices for polio eradication.

"The polio programme in Pakistan serves as a prime example of successful collaboration between the government, healthcare providers, community members, and other stakeholders," said Dr Shahzad Baig.

"With the support of esteemed physicians and doctors like yourselves, we can develop stronger, more resilient healthcare systems by improving access to polio and routine vaccinations."

Pledging full support, Pakistan Paediatrics Association

Secretary General Dr Khalid Shafi said polio eradication is the need of the hour for Pakistan.

"As major stakeholders in child health, it is our aim to make Pakistan a safe place for children to live, for this, both essential immunisation and polio eradication are important," he said.

Former president and executive member of PIMA Dr Abdul Majeed Memon said that PIMA considers it a national duty for doctors to support polio eradication and its members will continue to do so. Noting some of the ways in which PIMA has supported the programme, Dr Memon said that it will continue its advocacy for vaccine accept-

ance and will address religious misconceptions about the vaccine. Pakistan Medical Association Central President Dr Izhar Chaudhry also pledged support to the cause on behalf of his association.

Paediatricians and child specialists from the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were also present for the discussion and apprised the forum about the difficulties of working in the region. Dr Shahzad Baig lauded their efforts and called on them to engage with their colleagues and help shore up support for the vaccine in their communities. A renewed letter of intent (LoI) was signed between

the NEOC, PMA, PIMA and PPA to continue to work together on polio eradication.

The meeting was attended by PMA General Secretary Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro, PMA Central President Dr Hameedullah and PPA Punjab Joint Secretary Dr Kaleem Malhi, and several other renowned physicians.

Pakistan and Afghanistan remain the only two polio-endemic countries in the world. Last year, 20 children were paralyzed by polio in Pakistan — all of them from the endemic region of southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Seventeen of these children belonged to North Waziristan alone.



#### Coins displayed in Baghlan

BAGHLAN (Agencies): On the occasion of the National Day of Cultural Heritage Protection, new 75 discovered coins were displayed in Baghlan. These coins date back to the Sassanian time said local officials of Baghlan. The provincial head of Information and Culture of Baghlan, Maulvi Asadullah Mustafa Hashemi, said 75 coins and a water jar discovered, which date back to 1,800 years, related to the Sassanian time. He said that these coins were found by people.

## The Frontier Post

Shabaan 19, 1444 — Sunday, March 12, 2023

#### Exhibition opened in Herat

HERAT (Agencies): 5-day exhibition was opened with the aim of marketing and growth of the products of women in trades, with the presence of several women and cultural activists in Herat. The head of the Women's Chamber of Commerce, Adiba Waziri says that 45 booths of women's domestic products are displayed in this exhibition. She says that currently five women's markets operating in Herat, and now promising conditions have led to the increase of women in trade.

# 3 killed, 30 injured in blast at press award event



MAZAR-E-SHARIF (Khaama Press): According to the report, a blast targeted journalists' gathering in the Balkh province of Afghanistan; at least three journalists were killed, and 30 were wounded. Afghan News Agency (AVA) belongs to the Tebyan centre, whose offices were bombed on Saturday, in Mazar-e-Sharif, during a ceremony

honouring Journalists.

According to the cultural centre connected to Iran's Islamic government, "three people were killed and 30 others, including a significant number of journalists, were injured in this incident."

The statement also said the incident occurred this morning during a ceremony honouring Journalists in the Tebyan Cultural Center.

Several members of the centre and AVA journalists were killed and injured.

Meanwhile, the ministry of Interior of the Islamic Emirate confirmed the explosion in Mazar-r-Sharif. It stated that one person was killed and eight others were injured in the incident.

Within the last three days, this was the second explosion in Balkh province, the first one was a suicide attack that killed the governor of Balkh, Mullah Dawood Muzmal, and the second explosion targeted journalists' gatherings.

Ava had reported yesterday, quoting Hosseini Mazari, the head of Tebyan Cultural Center, "The government should arrest and punish the perpetrators of the assassination of Maulvi Muzmal, governor of Balkh."

## IEA hailed resumption of diplomatic ties between Saudia, Iran

KABUL (Agencies): The country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, welcomes the resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomes the resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran and deemed this positive step important toward consolidating peace and stability in the region.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan considers the progress in diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran to help strengthen multilateral relations and cooperation in the region.

The country's Foreign Ministry also praises the efforts of the People's Republic of China for hosting talks between Saudi Arabia and Iran for the sake of stability in the region.

## IEA rejects United Nations report

KABUL (Agencies): The Islamic Emirate rejected a report by the UN Secretary-General suggesting that 23 armed groups claim to operate in the country.

The report, titled the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, also said that at least nine extrajudicial killings, at least 17 arbitrary arrests and detentions and at least 9 instances of torture and ill-treatment happened in violation of the general amnesty.

IEA's Foreign Ministry in a statement said that "categorizing unsolved murder cases as extra-judicial killings, criminal cases as arbitrary arrests and physical altercations in the course of arrest as torture and ill-treatment is injustice and misrepresentation."

The statement also said that drawing national level conclusions from a "small sample size of alleged cases and labeling social media propaganda accounts as genuine armed groups is a clear bias to confirm certain narratives or an information gap."

The foreign ministry said that they appreciate that the report has taken note of steps taken by IEA with regards to improved governance, accountability and access to services, continuation of salaries to female civil servants, efforts towards national reconciliation and unity, curbing arms trafficking, and narcotics cultivation and trade, treatment of drug addicts and decline in security incidents by illegal armed elements and Daesh. "We are encouraged that the report urges continuation of constructive engagement between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and international community that puts the needs of the Afghan people first," the statement said.

## UK to help ARCS plans

KABUL (Agencies): The president of the Afghan Red Crescent society, Mawlawi Mutiul Haq Khalis, met with Mrs. Naseera Ashraf, the head of UK Embassy for Afghanistan.

Khalis, in meeting said: "Afghans are in a dire situation and the tragedy of the last 40 years has left many with mental illnesses, and now they need to be treated."

The Afghan Red Crescent has reached out to mentally ill children and children with heart holes and other needy people with its own funding, but due to the large number of such patients, the cost of their care and treatment is beyond the means of the Afghan Red Crescent.

Sharing details on the capacity of treating mental patients and children with a hole in the heart, he asked for the cooperation of the international community, including United Kingdom.

For her part, Mrs. Naseera Ashraf praised the services of the Afghan Red Crescent society as a trusted organization, vowed to stand with the Afghan Red Crescent, to continue their support.

# Kabul's Explosion: Afghan Freedom Front claims responsibility

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghan Freedom Front claimed responsibility for an attack on Friday late evening in Kabul that killed three and wounded four members of the Taliban, the group stated.

The Freedom Front, which is said to be made up of members of the security forces of the previous government of Afghanistan claimed in a statement the responsibility of the attack in the "Spin Kelly" intersection in the fifth district of Kabul city.

According to the statement, the attack occurred around 8:40 local time on

Friday night. As a result, four members of the Islamic Emirate were killed, and three members were injured.

But, the Islamic Emirate confirmed the explosion at the "Spin Kelly" intersection in the fifth district of Kabul city and said that two people were wounded only.

However, Khaled Zadrar, the spokesman of the Kabul police, has not said anything about the attack on Freedom Front but only confirmed the occurrence of an explosion.

The attack has recently been increased on the Taliban-led government by

Islamic State Khorasan and other militant groups, in a recent statement by the Islamic State, claimed responsibility for killing the Balkh governor and two others on Thursday.

Despite repeated assertions to the contrary by the Islamic Emirate rulers, the de facto government of Afghanistan still confronts serious security issues.

The militant Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) group has waged brutal attacks on Kabul, the province capital, and other locations since the Taliban seized power in August 2021.

# Kabul calls on UN to give Afghan seat to IE



KABUL (TOLONews): The Afghan caretaker government called on the UN to give the seat of Afghanistan to its designated ambassador.

It has been more than 19 months since the Islamic Emirate came to power but the seat for Afghanistan in the UN has been held by the former deputy ambassador to the UN who is currently the chargé d'affaires of the Afghanistan Permanent Mission to the UN.

The Islamic Emirate's spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, said that chargé d'affaires of the Afghanistan Permanent Mission to the UN, Naseer Ahmad Faiq, cannot represent the Islamic Emirate and that the seat should be given to the caretaker government.

"Regarding the Afghan seat in the UN, it is our right to be represented in the UN. Also, Afghanistan's assets which are frozen by the US also belong to Afghans. It (US) in exchange for ending its war and invasion is now using hateful policies," he said.

The Islamic Emirate in

September 2021 appointed Suhail Shaheen, who is currently heading up the political office in Qatar, as Afghanistan's ambassador to the UN.

"The Afghanistan seat in the UN should be handed over to the Taliban because the Taliban are ruling in the territory. The UN had a clear message for the Taliban, that if they reopened the doors of the schools for the girls, they would give the seat to the Taliban," said Aziz Maarji, a former diplomat.

But the question is why this seat has not yet been handed over to the Islamic

Emirate.

"In the UN... there are official conditions for recognition of Afghanistan. The rights of women, including their work and education, are a vital part of it and should be implemented in Afghanistan so that the UN can recognize Afghanistan," said Toreq Farhadi, a political analyst.

Earlier, US special envoy for Afghanistan Thomas West said that the issue of Afghanistan in the UN and frozen Afghan assets would not be solved until women and girls' access to schools and universities are facilitated.

# Families of 8 killed in Balkh demand justice



MAZAR-E-SHARIF (TOLONews): Family members of eight people who were shot and killed in Mazar-e-Sharif by Islamic Emirate forces for "being involved in kidnapping," protested in front of the UNAMA compound.

They claimed their slain family members were involved in private sector business and had gone to their relatives' houses in Mazar-e-Sharif.

"I want justice. Whoever gave the wrong information, that person should be questioned about why he/her gave inaccurate information," said Samandar, a family member of the victims.

"They must answer for themselves. Why did they shoot at them? Why were these youth martyred without committing any offense?" said Abdul Baqi, a relative of a victim.

"One of them is deputy of a company and another one is head of the company, and

they are brothers. Their nephews were working as marketing managers because the company was both logistics and construction," said Abdul Jabar, a protestor.

The Interior Ministry's spokesman, Abdul Nafay Takor, said that the Islamic Emirate's forces conducted operations against these individuals and they responded with armed resistance, so they were shot and killed.

"Our security forces conducted an operation in

Mazar-e-Sharif and eliminated 8 kidnappers. The kidnappers were eliminated after they showed armed resistance," he said.

The protestors called for justice.

On Wednesday, the security department of Balkh announced that at least eight people were killed in an operation conducted by the Islamic Emirate.

The Balkh security department said these individuals were involved in abduction cases.

# Carpet weavers face challenges

BADAKHSHAN (TOLONews): In a carpet-weaving workshop located in the city of Faizabad, the center of Badakhshan, nearly fifty women and girls are busy weaving carpets.

These women say that the lack of a carpet processing center, a suitable market for selling, and the lack of a specific place for carpet weaving has made their work difficult.

"We don't have a good place for washing carpets and when they are transferred to Kunduz province it costs us a lot," said Nadia, a carpet weaver.

"We face challenges and we lack some materials," said Fawzia, a carpet weaver. "We don't have a carpet processing market and don't have a specific place to work there," said Farzana, a carpet weaver.

Officials of the carpet

weaver's union in Badakhshan said that currently, four thousand women are busy with carpet weaving in this province.

"Four thousand women are busy with carpet weaving, they work with us for two years and after that, they graduate and we give them a certificate," said Abdul Ali, the head of the carpet weavers union in

Badakhshan.

"When women report their products to us, we are ready and have a plan for them," said Samruddeen Rahmani, head of the industrial park in Badakhshan.

According to officials of the industry and commerce department in Badakhshan, currently 10 carpet weaving workshops are active in Badakhshan.

# ARCS president meets his ICRC counterpart

KABUL (Agencies): The president of Afghan Red Crescent Society, Mawlawi Mutiul Haq Khalis and his delegation met with the president of ICRC, Mirjana Spoljaric in Doha, Qatar. The two sides talked about delivery of aid to the needy in Afghanistan, helping the people suffering from poverty, providing health services, treatment of people suffering from mental illnesses and some other important issues. President of ICRC assured that she would encourage other humanitarian organizations to support the ARCS.

# Afghan govt urged to give exit exam

KABUL (TOLONews): Female medical students from various faculties of private and government universities called on the Afghan interim government to determine their exit examination.

The students said that they cannot make decisions about their futures if the exit examinations are not held. The exit examination for male students at medical universities was held nearly three weeks ago, but the date for the female students' examination has yet to be determined by the caretaker government.

"Because they promised us that they will give our examination, we are preparing, hoping that this examination will take place. So we are hoping that they will give our examination as soon as possible," said

Royina, a student.

The students expressed concerns about their future. "Our examination has not been held and this is our right and I think it is a major wrong against us," said Ana Khani, a student.

The students meanwhile also called on the Islamic Emirate to reopen their universities.

"As long as the gates of universities and schools

have been closed on us, there is deep sorrow and disappointment that we cannot continue our education and this is bothering us," said Firoza Amini, a student.

The Afghanistan Medical Council (AMC) held the exit exam for male students on February 10, 2023. The time for the female students has not been determined yet.

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# 181 Afghan prisoners extradited from Iran: Spokesperson MoFA

KABUL (Khaama Press): The deputy spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan says that Iran handed over 181 more Afghan prisoners to Taliban authorities.

Hafiz Zia Ahmad wrote on Twitter the Afghan prisoners were released after negotiations between the Taliban and Iranian officials. The prisoners were transferred to Afghanistan through the 'Islamqala' crossing point.

The decision comes as Afghanistan's legal and judicial system has collapsed according to the United Nations.

The Islamic Emirate authorities have appreciated Iran and said that such positive steps can result in strengthening mutual cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

The number of Afghan prisoners in Iran has been announced 1728, however, the Taliban have not yet commented on what charges the inmates were imprisoned in Iran.

A Taliban delegation headed by the group's



Chief Justice Abdul Hakim Ishaqzai traveled to Tehran on March 6, and visited with Iranian officials, after which Iran handed over 268 Afghan detainees.

Furthermore, the Taliban on Monday and Tuesday announced that more than 450 Afghan inmates were returned to Afghanistan from Iran.

Following the handover of the Afghan Embassy in

Tehran to the Taliban, many Afghans who had fled the country fearing persecution and death threats from the Taliban, now are concerned about their security. Some of them have said that now the Taliban can easily find their details, residential area, and workplace in Iran.

Over the past months, the Iranian government has taken serious measures to deal with undocumented Afghan refugees in the host

country. They have been continuously incarcerating and forcefully deporting Afghan nationals to Afghanistan through Islamqala and Abrishum crossing points.

Iran maintains good ties with the de facto authorities of Afghanistan and is one of the few regional countries which officially handed over the Afghan Embassy to the Taliban diplomats in Iran.

## MoMP signed

KABUL (Agencies): The country's Mines and Petroleum Ministry, contracted the cement project in Kandahar province worth 100 million dollars.

The contract for the cement project in Kandahar province has been signed on Saturday by Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar, Acting Mines and Petroleum Minister and Chairman of Ahmad Nabizadeh Company, said the Ministry publishing a statement.

The cement project in Kandahar is in the exploration, and processing stage with an investment of about 100 million USD, the annual production of which is about one million tons of cement, according to the Ministry.

With the start of this project will job opportunities will be provided to at least five thousand people in the province.

# 'Police committed maintaining security'



BAMYAN (Agencies): The police chief of Bamyan, Mawlawi Sediqullah Shaheen Masafar, met with Mark Baron, the mobile consultant of "INSO" organization, who works as a coordinator

of international institutions.

The security consultant of "INSO" expressed his satisfaction with the maintain of security, in Bamyan and reminded him that the "INSO" office in Afghan-

istan will continue its cooperation with the people.

For his part, Masafar the police chief of Bamyan committed to maintaining security for international organizations.





**KARACHI:** Consul General of Türkiye addressing the media at the sending off ceremony of NDMA relief consignment.

## Imran has become an epitome of cowardice, fear: Marriyum

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Saturday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan has become an epitome of cowardice and fear. In a tweet, terming Imran a foreign agent, Toshakhana watch thief and cowardly person, she said he had plastered his leg to avoid charge sheeting in Toshakhana case.

Taking a jibe, she said to avoid foreign funding case, Imran became handicapped, security became an excuse to escape from the Tyrian

case, and he became a senior citizen in the case of threats against institutions. She said every day he concocted a new excuse, as he did not want to go to court and be held accountable. He refused to undergo medical examination on the pretext of threat to life, she said. Marriyum Aurangzeb said Imran got relief without a personal appearances. She said one the one side was law whereas on the other side was "Ladla" (darling). The minister said all should be treated equally by the law.

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb also strongly condemned the attack

on media persons by the "goons of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan".

"The attack on journalists and DSNQ operator by the goons of "foreign-funded fitna and thief of (wrist) watch is highly condemnable," the minister said in a tweet. Referring to the PTI, she alleged it was the same "extremist and violent" group that incarcerated the media persons in jail and broke ribs and bones of them, also involved in their kidnapping and shooting during their tenure". Marriyum said the PTI had continued its "legacy" [of violence] even after its ouster from power.

## Wagner demands more ammunition for battle

MOSCOW (Agencies): The chief of Russian mercenary group Wagner has said that his forces are close to the centre of the front-line city of Bakhmut. In a video posted on messaging app Telegram on Saturday, Yevgeny Prigozhin is seen standing on the rooftop of a high-rise building in what he claims is Bakhmut. "This is the building of the town administration, this is the centre of the town," Prigozhin said in the video, pointing towards a building in the distance.

"It is one kilometre and 200 metres away," said Prigozhin, who was clad in full military gear. Al Jazeera was unable to verify the location where the footage was taken. Speaking as artillery boomed in the background, Prigozhin said that the most important thing now was to receive more ammunition from the army and "move forward". He said his forces needed 10,000 tonnes of ammunition each month for the battle. Wagner has been spearheading offensives against cities in eastern Ukraine including Bakhmut, in what has become the longest and bloodiest fight of Russia's year-long assault. Both sides have suffered heavy losses around Bakhmut.

Prigozhin, an ally of President Vladimir Putin, has been entangled in a power struggle with the defence ministry. He has several times claimed battlefield victories ahead of Russia's army, criticised Russia's top brass and accused the military of not sharing ammunition with his ragtag forces. In the video released on Saturday he said he was ready to ask Russia's top commanders for forgiveness but at the same time appeared to mock Russian defence minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov.

He said they were "outstanding military commanders" and added that Russia's greatest military leaders including Georgy Zhukov and Alexander Suvorov "could have learned" from them. "I absolutely – totally – support all their initiatives," Prigozhin added. Earlier this week Wagner said its fighters had captured the eastern part of Bakhmut.

Some military experts have questioned the sense of Ukraine's continuing defence of the ravaged town, but Kyiv officials say that the fall of Bakhmut could lead to further Russian advances in the east. The commander of Ukraine's ground forces, Oleksandr Syrsky, said on Saturday the fight for Bakhmut helps to buy time to prepare for a future counteroffensive.

## Imran to lead PTI's election rally today

LAHORE (Agencies): Former prime minister Imran Khan on Saturday accused the Punjab caretaker government of covering up PTI worker Ali Bilal's death and urged the Lahore High Court (LHC) to constitute a judicial commission to probe the matter.

In his first televised address after the LHC revoked the ban on the PTI chairman's speeches, Imran hit back hard at the provincial authorities, terming the Punjab police as "savages", saying that he could not believe "what they did to a special person (Bilal)". "Police are trying their level best to cover up the case. They put his family members in jail and now they're making people give forceful statements to cover it up."

Addressing the judiciary, Imran said they were the only ones preventing the country from turning into a "banana republic". "I request Punjab's chief jus-

tice to form a judicial commission on this matter today and investigate what happened with him (Bilal)," the PTI chief said, adding that he had no hope from the government.

He also called on the Election Commission of Pakistan to take resignations from the caretaker chief minister, IG and Lahore capital city police officer immediately. "You appointed them ... so take their resignations today," the former prime minister demanded. "I'm hurt over his death," Imran said. "No one had ever spoken ill of him but the way he was tortured in custody is shameful".

The ex-premier said there were "at least 60 marks" on Bilal's body, which he said was an indication that torture was inflicted on him. Imran continued to lambast Punjab caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi for "collabo-

rating with crooks because of the hatred towards PTI".

"They don't think of people as humans. They think they're sheep," he said. "First they blamed my worker's murder on me and now they are terming it an accident." The PTI chief vowed to remember the faces of "these" people, adding that "many police [officers] are telling that they were not behind this incident but 'unknown people' tortured him (Bilal)."

Imran also warned Naqvi that it was only a matter of time that the people sitting beside him in the presser earlier would turn into "an approver" against him in this case. Later in his speech, Imran announced that he will lead an election campaign rally in Lahore on Sunday (today) at 2pm, and urged his supporters and workers to participate in face of the police brutality purportedly committed against the party.

## Nawaz directs PML-N leaders to speed up preparations for elections

LAHORE (INP): Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif has directed the party leaders to speed up preparations for elections in Punjab.

According to details, the former premier issued the directives while chairing a consultative meeting of

PML-N leadership. Nawaz Sharif directed the PML-N leaders to speed up the election campaign in preparation for the upcoming elections in Punjab. "Preparations should be continued whenever the elections are held," he said.

The PML-N supremo directed party leaders to

mobilise people for the election campaign, emphasising that tickets for Punjab Assembly would be awarded to loyalists and strong candidates in their constituencies. On the other hand, PML-N chief organiser Maryam Nawaz met the officials of party's youth and social media wings.

## Iran to buy Su-35 fighter jets from Russia

DUBAI (Agencies): Iran has reached a deal to buy advanced Su-35 fighter planes from Russia, Iranian state media said on Saturday, expanding a relationship that has seen Iranian-built drones used in Russia's war on Ukraine.

"The Sukhoi-35 fighter planes are technically acceptable to Iran and Iran has finalised a contract for their purchase," the broadcaster IRIB quoted Iran's mission to the United Nations as saying in New York. The report did not carry any Russian confirmation of the deal, details of which were not disclosed. The mission said Iran had also inquired about buying military aircraft from several other, unnamed countries, IRIB reported.

Russian President Vladimir Putin met Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran last July, stressing closeness in the face of Western pressure over the war in Ukraine. Iran has acknowledged sending drones to Russia but says they were sent before Moscow's invasion of Ukraine last year. Moscow denies that its forces use Iranian-built drones in Ukraine, although many have been shot down and recovered there.

Iran's air force has only a few dozen strike aircraft: Russian jets as well as ageing US models acquired before the Iranian revolution of 1979. In 2018, Iran said it had started production of the locally designed Kowsar fighter for use in its air force. Some military experts believe the jet is a carbon copy of an F-5 first produced in the United States in the 1960s.

## PM flays violence against journalists

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday strongly condemned the violence by workers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) against journalists in Lahore. In a statement, the prime minister said freedom of expression was the distinction of civilized nations.

"An egoistic person [Imran Khan] spread the culture of non-tolerance in the nation," he said, adding "Imran Niazi poisoned the youth with intolerance and chaos". "The whole nation salutes the journalists who fell victim to the brutality of PTI in Lahore. I salute all journalists who despite challenges are telling truth to the nation," the Prime Minister said.

He said that during the government of "Imran Niazi, the incidents of cruelty against journalists were rampant. "Whoever questions Imran Niazi is tortured," the PM said and assured that the government would take all possible measures to protect journalists.

# Li, Xi confidant, takes reins as China's premier

BEIJING (Agencies): Li Qiang, the former Communist Party chief of Shanghai, took office on Saturday as China's premier, the country's No.2 post, putting the close ally of President Xi Jinping in charge of reviving an economy battered by three years of Covid-19 curbs. Widely perceived to be pragmatic and business-friendly, the 63-year-old Li faces the daunting task of shoring up China's uneven recovery in the faces of global headwinds and weak confidence among consumers and the private sector.

Li takes office as tensions rise with the West over a host of issues including US moves to block China's access to key technologies and as many global companies diversify supply chains to hedge their China exposure due to political risks and the disruptions of the Covid era. The career bureaucrat replaces Li Keqiang, who is retiring after two five-year terms during which his role was seen to be steadily diminished as Xi tightened his grip on power and steered the world's second-largest economy in a more statist direction. Li Qiang is the first premier since the founding of the People's Republic never to have served previously in the central government, meaning he may face a steep learning curve in the initial months on the job, analysts said.

Still, Li's close ties with Xi — Li was Xi's chief of staff between 2004 and 2007, when the latter was provincial party secretary of Zhejiang province — will empower him to get things done, leadership watchers said. "My reading of the situation is that Li Qiang will have a lot more leeway and authority within the system," said Trey McArver, co-founder of consultancy Trivium China. Xi, 69, is installing a slate of loyalists in key posts in the biggest government reshuffle in a decade as a generation of more reform-minded officials retires and he further consolidates power after being unanimously elected president, a largely ceremonial role, for an unprecedented third term on Friday.

On Saturday, Li received 2,936 votes, with three votes against and eight abstentions, according to totals projected on a screen inside the Great Hall of the People in central Beijing. He will make his closely watched debut on the international stage

on Monday during the premier's traditional media question-and-answer session after the parliamentary session ends. Li was put on track to become premier in October, when he was appointed to the number-two role on the Politburo Standing Committee during the twice-a-decade Communist Party Congress.

Numerous other Xi-approved officials are due to be confirmed on Sunday including vice premiers, a central bank governor and other ministers and department heads. China's economy grew just 3pc last year, and on the opening day of parliament Beijing set a modest 2023 growth target of around 5pc, its lowest goal in nearly three decades. Li's top task this year will be beating that target without triggering serious inflation or piling on debt, said Christopher Beddor, deputy China research director at Gavekal Dragonomics.

While China has not signalled plans to unleash stimulus to jump-start growth, potential setbacks such as a collapse in exports or persistent weakness in the property sector could force Li's hand, Beddor said. "The leadership has already accepted two years of exceptionally weak economic growth in the name of Covid containment. Now that containment is gone, they won't accept another," he said. China's post-pandemic recovery has been uneven, with February inflation unexpectedly soft, while Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com Inc warned on Thursday that rebuilding consumer confidence would take time.

Some of Beijing's most successful private firms such as Alibaba have been battered by abrupt crackdowns and regulatory hurdles in recent years, and Li will have to work hard to restore confidence in the private sector. Global business is also wary. For the first time in 25 years of its survey, the American Chamber of Commerce in China said early this month that a majority of responding companies said China is no longer seen as a "top three investment priority". China is trying to present a business-friendly face. The Xinhua news agency reported that an official with China's state planning agency had met with a vice president from US chip giant Qualcomm Inc and conveyed that it will provide a good business environment for multinationals.

## More than 1,300 migrants brought ashore in Italy

ROME (Agencies): More than 1,300 migrants have been rescued in three separate operations off the southern tip of Italy, the coast-guard said on Saturday, two weeks after at least 74 people died when their boat hit rocks near the coast.

Growing numbers of migrant arrivals have piled pressure on Italy's conservative government, which took office last October promising to reduce the flow only to see a sharp increase in such landings this year from both North Africa and Turkey. The coast-guard said one of its vessels had taken 500 migrants off one boat more than 160 kilometres out to sea, and subsequently took them to the city of Reggio Calabria.

A further 379 migrants were removed from a separate vessel in the same vicinity and will be brought to land shortly. "The rescues [were] complex due to the boats being overloaded with migrants and the unfavourable sea conditions," the coastguard said in a statement.

Another packed fishing boat carrying 487 migrants was escorted into the Calabrian port of Crotona,

lashed to a tug to help give it stability. Local officials said a further 200 people had been picked up off the coast of Sicily and would be ferried to Catania later in the day, while the airforce was flying migrants out of a packed reception centre on the island of Lampedusa.

More than 17,000 people have reached Italy so far this year, including around 4,000 this week, compared to 6,000 in the first 2.5 months of 2022. Hundreds have also died trying to cross the Mediterranean and reach Europe. The body of a young girl was recovered on Saturday close to where a migrant boat broke apart on February 26, bringing the death toll from that one disaster to 74. Seventy-nine people survived the shipwreck, but around 30 are still missing, presumed dead.

In all, the United Nations estimates 300 migrants have died in the central Mediterranean so far this year. Prosecutors are investigating whether Italian authorities should have done more to prevent the disaster. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has rejected the suggestion and looked to pin the

blame entirely on human traffickers.

Her cabinet on Thursday introduced tougher jail terms for people smugglers and promised to open up more channels for legal migration. Late last year, it cracked down on charity rescue boats, accusing them of acting as a taxi service for migrants. The charities denied this was the case. The measure has led to a sharp reduction in the number of rescue ships patrolling the Mediterranean, without apparently dissuading migrants from putting to sea.

Enrico Borghi, a senator with the centre-left Democratic Party, accused the government of bungling the crisis. "[It] thinks it can solve such a profound problem through media posturing, the criminal code and fake efforts at appearing tough," he wrote on Twitter. "The result: landings have tripled with the Meloni government." Meloni herself issued a statement on Saturday, saying the only solution lay with a joint European effort to strengthen the EU's borders and enhance cooperation with expulsions.



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# گیس چوری کی سزا

## بدنامی، حیرمانہ، جیل کی ہوا

<p>ذیلی ریڈاری پیشوائی کو نقصان پہنچانا</p> <p><b>10 برس قید اور 30 لاکھ روپے جرمانہ</b></p>	<p>گیس پائپ ڈاکو نقصان</p> <p><b>14 برس قید اور 1 کروڑ روپے جرمانہ</b></p>
<p>تخریب کاری کے ذریعے گیس ڈاکو نقصان پہنچانا</p> <p><b>14 برس قید اور 10 لاکھ روپے جرمانہ</b></p>	<p>کمرشل یا صنعتی سیکٹر کو نقصان پہنچانا</p> <p><b>10 برس قید اور 50 لاکھ روپے جرمانہ</b></p>
<p>گمر بیورو سٹاف کو گیس چوری میں ملوث ہونا</p> <p><b>6 ماہ قید اور 1 لاکھ روپے جرمانہ</b></p>	<p>بدلتی سے گیس کا تیار یا گیس کے ترسیلی نظام کو نقصان پہنچانا</p> <p><b>7 برس قید اور 50 لاکھ روپے جرمانہ</b></p>



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