

Police raid Khetran's house

QUETTA (PPI): Police raided the house of Provincial Minister Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran's house following the terrifying Barkhan triple murders. The policewomen were also in the raiding party as the police searched the residence along with guest rooms and other parts of the minister's house. The police have also sealed all the roads leading to the residence of the provincial minister in Patel Bagh area of Quetta.



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# Protests in major cities after Imran's call

## — police, PTI workers' clash continues outside Zaman Park



LAHORE: Workers of PTI burning various items as they blocked the road outside Imran Khan's residence to prevent police from arresting their leader.

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Protests broke out in major cities on Tuesday at the call of PTI Chairman Imran Khan as police and party workers continued to clash outside his Zaman Park residence in Lahore.

Intermittent tear gas shelling is ongoing at Zaman Park as police is currently camped out at a security barrier outside the neighbourhood. PTI workers, meanwhile, have laid siege to the path leading to Imran's residence as well as Canal Road. Shortly after 2pm, armoured police vehicles had arrived outside Zaman Park with the intention of arresting Imran but a senior Islamabad police official, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) (Operations) Shahzad Bukhari, had refrained from commenting on the case in which officials were acting against the PTI chairman.

While police did not comment an Islamabad district and sessions court on Monday had again issued arrest warrants for Imran after he persistently skipped hearings in the Toshakhana case. The court had also directed police to present the ex-premier in court by March 18. Almost an hour after police arrived outside Zaman Park, police used a water cannon and tear gas against PTI supporters that had gathered outside Zaman Park in droves.

Footage broadcast on television showed police inching toward the residence behind an armoured vehicle that was dispersing PTI supporters with a water cannon. Supporters could also be seen pelting stones

## Imran forms 'emergency body' to overlook PTI matters

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan has constituted a six-member 'emergency committee' to overlook party matters in case of arrest.

The six-member committee – constituted to overlook party matters – included PTI vice chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Senator Saifullah Niazi, Senator Azam Swati, Ijaz Chaudhy, Murad Saeed and Ali Amin Gandapur. The emergency committee will overlook the matters if Imran Khan gets arrested, as per a statement issued by the political party. It is pertinent to mention here that the Islamabad police used water cannons and tear gas to disperse PTI workers gathered outside party chief Imran Khan's Zaman Park residence in Lahore.

In a video message shared on Twitter, PTI Chairman Imran Khan has urged the party workers and supporters to continue struggle for 'real freedom' as the police reached Zaman Park to arrest the former prime minister. The PTI chief urged the nation to stand resolute and fight for 'Haqeeqi Azadi (real freedom) and rule of law'. Imran Khan noted that the government believes the nation will 'not react' if he gets arrested, urging the party workers and supporters to prove the incumbent rulers 'wrong'.

at the policemen. Footage also showed PTI supporters being teargassed once police arrived close to the main gate of Zaman Park. The workers, who had covered their faces with pieces of cloth and were carrying bottles of water, continued to pelt stones at officials. The PTI also shared a video of tear gas shells being lobbed inside Zaman Park. Amid the chaos, Islamabad DIG (Operations) Bukhari — who was leading the police team — was injured. Footage aired on TV showed the senior police official struggling to walk as two other officials helped him.

Later, the Islamabad police provided an update on the DIG, saying that he was doing well. A heavy contingent of Rangers had

been deployed outside Zaman Park. He also said that a helicopter was circling above Zaman Park but it was not immediately clear if it was part of the law enforcers' contingent.

The PTI also shared footage of its workers, some with pieces of cloth covering their face, still gathered outside Zaman Park. Some of the workers were also carrying sticks. The Islamabad police said that five of its officials, including the DIG (Operations) had been injured after stones were pelted from the roof of Zaman Park. "Despite the pelting of stones, police refrained from taking extreme measures," Islamabad police said on Twitter.

(Continued on Back Page)

# Governor decides May 28 for General Election in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali on Tuesday announced May 28 date for holding General Election in the province. In a press statement issued here the Governor said that following the verdict of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and fulfilling constitutional responsibility to give the election date to Election Commission of Pakistan to hold election.

The Governor had held important meetings at the Office of Election Commission of Pakistan Islamabad where he consulted with the election officials for the second time regarding the general elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Governor Haji Ghulam Ali informed the Election Commission about his concerns regarding the overall security situation in the province in the two consultative meetings and said that the law and order situation in the province is not favorable to

hold election.

Terrorist attacks are happening in KP, in such conditions it will not be possible for the candidates to conduct election campaign. The Governor said that we have to provide security to the election candidates, election duty staff and voters due to which there will be difficulties in the election.

The Governor said that according to the decision of the Supreme Court, he completed two consultations with the Election Commission, the sole purpose of which was to present the overall situation of the province before the Election Commission. The Governor said that he has fulfilled his constitutional responsibility by giving the date of General Elections by completing the consultation process and laid the further responsibilities on election commission.

**President, Governor discuss holding of elections in KP:** On the invitation of President Dr Arif Alvi, Governor of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Haji Ghulam Ali, called on him, here at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Tuesday.

They discussed matters relating to the holding of general elections in KP in the light of Article 224 (2) of the Constitution and the order of the Supreme Court (SC) dated March 1, 2023. The President advised the Governor to implement the SC's order in letter and spirit wherein it had been directed that the Governor of KP must, after consultation with the Election Commission, forthwith appoint a date for the holding of the general election to the KP Assembly to avoid any complication as almost a period of two weeks had already passed by.

The President emphasized the need for upholding the Constitution and holding general elections within the given time period, that had been mandated by the Constitution, further affirmed by the Supreme Court, and was essential for strengthening parliamentary democracy in the country.

## PM calls for boosting Pak-Bahrain cooperation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has emphasized the need to enhance bilateral cooperation with Bahrain in the diverse fields.

He was talking to Commander of Bahrain's National Guard General Shaikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, who called on him here in Islamabad on Tuesday.

They discussed avenues of cooperation between the two brotherly countries. Expressing satisfaction over the positive trajectory of bilateral relations, he specifically underscored the need for increased cooperation in Information Technology, medicine, construction, food security, and export of Pakistani skilled and semi-skilled human resource.

The Prime Minister highlighted the historic fraternal ties between the two countries, characterized by common aspirations, respect and values. The visiting dignitary acknowledged the deep-rooted bilateral relations between the two countries and shared aspirations for further strengthening them in all areas of common interest.

Meanwhile, Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

During the meeting, they discussed importance of effective legislation for the development and prosperity of the country. Overall political situation and other matters of mutual interest were also discussed in the meeting. Federal Ministers Ishaq Dar and Azam Nazeer Tarar were also present during the meeting.

## Court suspends Imran's arrest warrants

ISLAMABAD (INP): A court in the federal capital suspended the non-bailable arrest warrants of PTI Chairman former prime minister Imran Khan in woman judge threatening case. Additional Sessions Judge Faizan Haider Gillani suspended the warrants till March 16 after Imran Khan challenged the decision of a district and sessions court. A legal team comprising advocate Naeem Haider Panjutha and advocate Intizar Haider Panjutha represented the PTI chief in the case.

Senior Civil Judge Rana Mujahid Rahim had issued non-bailable arrest warrants for PTI chief Imran Khan over his continuous skipping of court hearings. The case against the former prime minister was registered on August 20, 2022, with Margalla police station in the federal capital over his remarks at a rally in F9 Park where he warned Additional District and Sessions Judge Zeba Chaudhry and police high-ups of dire consequences for what he called their 'biased' attitude towards his party.

Imran alleged that Judge Zeba knew that incarcerated party leader Shahbaz Gill was tortured, but she did not release him on bail. The former premier was booked in a terrorism case on the complaint of Islamabad Saddar Magistrate Ali Javed for threatening the additional sessions judge.

The hearing was presided by Judge Rana Mujahid Rahim, who instructed the police to arrest the ousted premier and present him before the court by March 29. The judge added that the court will hear arguments on a petition seeking Imran's dismissal from the case during the next hearing.

A district and sessions court in the federal capital on Monday restored the arrest warrants issued against PTI Chairman Imran Khan in the Toshakhana case. Additional Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal announed the verdict reserved earlier in the day after hearing arguments from the PTI chief's lawyer.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

# PM sees 'more burden' on masses: Shehbaz

## — Staff level agreement with IMF within a few days

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said the staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would reach within a few days as the government had accepted even the "toughest" conditions put by the global financial institution.

The prime minister, in an interview with a private television channel (Geo News), said joint efforts were being made by both his economic team and other national institutions to make the process a success. The prime minister spoke at length on multiple national issues, including the one-year performance of his government, the economic situation, elections, Toshakhana record, party matters as well as probe into the murder of anchorperson Arshad Sharif.

He said at the time of assuming government, he did not know that his predecessor Imran Khan had agreed on such conditions with the IMF which he later backed out of to undermine Pakistan in the world as well as among global institutions. "This is why the IMF is making us accept those conditionalities and seeking their implementation. No doubt, these conditions have burdened the common man," he commented.

PM Shehbaz said realising the common man's suffering, the government had decided to provide relief through the Benazir Income Support Programme. However, he said, the imported inflation caused by the Ukraine war also hit the country in form of increased fertiliser and oil prices. Moreover, the floods also affected the national economy, and ex-prime minister Imran Khan's "shameful" lies about regime change

by the United States created uncertainty, he added.

The prime minister told the interviewer that friendly countries like China were supporting Pakistan despite the fact that Imran Khan had hurt their brotherly ties. Recounting the baseless allegations leveled by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leadership against him through local television channels as well the United Kingdom's Daily Mail, Shehbaz Sharif said the latter apologised and the UK's National Crime Agency also exonerated him from the charges hurled by that time government.

Asked about the ongoing police attempts to arrest Imran Khan, the prime minister said he had been avoiding the arrest on the excuse of illness or injuries. Despite using foul language against the national institutions, he was given relief every time. He said during the PTI government, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leadership, including himself, Nawaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz, Hamza Shahbaz, Khawaja Asif and Rana Sanaullah, were implicated in false cases and made subject to inhumane treatment in jails.

As regards the registration of around 80 cases against Imran Khan, the prime minister said it was not done by him rather the cases were registered by the citizens and the law would take its course. "He is wanted by courts, not me. The arrest warrants were issued by the courts, not me or the administration. Now what will happen if the administration does not abide by the court orders?" he questioned.

To a question about the implementation of the Supreme Court verdict

on elections, PM Shehbaz said no political party could escape the polls. Being the PML-N president, he had already asked the party men to submit their applications for the party tickets to contest elections for which he was also interviewing the candidates. However, it was for the Election Commission of Pakistan to hold the elections, he added.

Substantiating his point on the government's seriousness for elections, the prime minister said a fresh census was being held to address the reservations of some political parties, particularly in Sindh, and billions of rupees were being spent on the exercise. Coming to the publicizing of the Toshakhana record, he said retaining gifts by paying a specified amount was a legal process. However, Imran Khan got the gift of a precious watch from a brotherly country and sold it out in Dubai whereas he committed a criminal act of getting a fake receipt from a local merchant.

The record of Toshakhana was made public as per the cabinet decision as well as the Lahore High Court's verdict, he added. Prime Minister Shehbaz rubbished the notions of any differences within the party and explained that PML-N Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz had earned the office through her tireless struggle even when Nawaz Sharif was in jail. She said the conventions being addressed by Maryam Nawaz were giving new energy to the party, besides building a narrative. He was confident to say that the party would get stronger as its Quaid Nawaz Sharif would return soon following his doctors' permission.

# Army 'not available' for election duty, ECP told

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was informed on Tuesday that the Pakistan Army will not be available for poll-related duties due to the prevalent security situation within the country and on the borders.

Over the past few months, the law and order situation in the country has worsened, with terrorist groups executing attacks with near impunity across the country. Since the talks with the banned militant group Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan broke down in November, the militant group has intensified its attacks, particularly targeting the police in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and areas bordering Afghanistan.

Separately, provincial elections for the Punjab Assembly are scheduled for

April 30 while KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali said earlier today that he has suggested May 28 as the election date in the province.

A press release issued from the electoral body said that three important meetings were held today under the chairmanship of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja. The press release said that in the third meeting, Defence Secretary Lt Gen (ret'd) Hamood Uz Zaman Khan and Additional Secretary Maj Gen Khurram Sarfraz Khan briefed the CEC and ECP officials on the country's prevalent situation and the military's deployment within Pakistan and on its borders.

"They said that the army attaches importance to its basic duties, in

which the security of the borders and the country is its first priority. They said that the army is not available for election duty at this time due to the present situation in the country," the press release reads. The defence ministry officials said that the current economic situation of the country was also affecting the army.

However, they added that in the end it would be the government's decision whether it kept the military restricted to its primary duties or appointed it for secondary tasks such as election-related duties. "They also clarified that in case of election duty, the army can be deployed in quick reaction force mode but it is not possible to perform duty in static mode," the press release reads.

# COAS visits forward posts

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Tuesday visited forward posts at Pak-Afghan border in South Waziristan and interacted with the troops.

The COAS laid floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada (the martyrs' monument) in Wana and visited Formation Headquarters where he was briefed about the operational, training and security matters

of the formation as well as progress on development works being undertaken in the Newly Merged Districts, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. The COAS appreciated the counter terrorism efforts of the formation and provision of enabling environment for the completion of socio-economic development projects, vital for enduring stability and sustainable progress of NMDs.

The Army Chief reiterated

the resolve of the Army to fight against terrorism till elimination of the menace. He vowed that sacrifices of Shuhada of Pakistan would not go in vain and complete peace would inshallah (by the will of Almighty Allah) return to Pakistan. He highlighted the importance of the synergy between various state institutions and in particular the importance of the people of Pakistan towards the collective fight against terrorism.

Maryam, Hamza to contest polls

LAHORE (INP): PML-N Senior Vice President former Punjab chief minister Hamza Shahbaz have decided to contest Punjab Assembly elections. According to sources, the PML-N Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz Sharif will contest election on PP-146 seat while former Punjab CM Hamza Shahbaz will contest the poll from PP-150 According to party insiders, their nomination papers would be filed on Tuesday.

## Russian warplane hits US drone over Black Sea

WASHINGTON (Agencies): A Russian warplane on Tuesday struck a US surveillance drone over the Black Sea, hitting the drone's propeller and forcing it down in international waters, according to US European Command, which called the Russian forces' conduct "unsafe and unprofessional."

The incident occurred at around 7:03 a.m. Central European Time and involved two Russian Su-27 fighter jets and an MQ-9 Reaper drone that US forces had to bring down as a result of the collision, the statement said. "Several times before the collision, the Su-27s dumped fuel on and flew in front of the MQ-9 in a reckless, environmentally unsound and unprofessional manner," the statement said. "This incident demonstrates a lack of competence in addition to being unsafe and unprofessional."

John F. Kirby, a National Security Council spokesman, said President Biden was briefed about the episode. Mr. Kirby played down the incident, saying that there had been similar "intercepts" by Russian aircraft in recent weeks. Even so, he said this episode was "noteworthy because of how unsafe and unprofessional it was." There was no immediate comment from Russia's Ministry of Defense.







# KP ministers inaugurate spring tree plantation drive

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The caretaker ministers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa inaugurated the spring plantation drive in the Khyber district by planting saplings along with school children and tribal leaders. Provincial Ministers Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi Minister of Labour, Excise and Taxation and Shafiullah Khan Minister of Housing and Jails visited Dora area of Bara Sepah and launched the spring tree plantation campaign there along with hundreds of school children, teachers and tribal elite.

On reaching Dora, a large number of school children, teachers, tribal elders and people of different schools of thought warmly welcomed the provincial ministers and raised the slogans of Pakistan Zindabad and Green Pakistan. The provincial ministers inaugurated the spring plantation campaign by planting saplings in a wide area of Dora. They appreciated the interest and enthusiasm of



the school children and elders in the campaign.

On this occasion, Provincial Minister Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi said that one million saplings have been provided free of charge to locals to make the tree plantation campaign in Khyber a success so that people can plant maximum saplings in their areas to make their surroundings green and clean. He said that 400 students

and tribal elders from different public schools of Bara will contribute to the plantation drive by planting more than 500 saplings including mulberry, peach, bottlebrush, oleander and rosewood. He said that every person should play their role in creating a pollution-free, clean and transparent environment for the coming generations by planting two trees a person.

# VC KMU inaugurates book fair at AMC Abbottabad

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The vice-chancellor Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq inaugurated a 3-day book fair during his visit to Ayub Medical College (AMC), Abbottabad and held an introductory meeting with the faculty of the college. Dean AMC Prof. Dr. Umar Farooq, Medical Director Dr. Alam Zeb Swati, faculty, and a large number of students were also present at the occasion.

Vice-Chancellor Khyber Medical University Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq and Dean Prof. Dr. Umar Farooq visited all the stalls set up in the book fair and expressed their interest in various books.

Talking to the opening ceremony, Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq said that the book fair

will strengthen the habit of reading among young students. Book friendship is the best form of worship, which increases the knowledge and consciousness of a person. He further said that the study of every field has become indispensable for us. Books based on human history, science, and other topics broaden our thinking. Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq congratulated the Islami Jamiat Talba for organizing the book fair and described this initiative as commendable.

After that, vice-chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq held a detailed meeting with the faculty of AMC. He said that KMU is giving special importance to improving the quality of medical and allied health sciences education in its constituent as well as affili-

ated institutions. KMU is pursuing a comprehensive agenda of reforms in all matters related to academics, research, examinations, laboratories, and governance of the institutions affiliated with the university in light of the guidelines of the Higher Education Commission and relevant regulatory bodies. More than two hundred affiliated institutes of KMU are part of our existence and raising their overall quality is our top priority.

Later on the vice-chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq also visited Women Medical & Dental College (WM&DC), Abbottabad, where he and Managing Director WM&DC Dr. Azhar Khan Jadoun signed an MOU for mutual cooperation in research, academics and other scholarly activities.

# Zahid vows to continue struggle for Bannu's uplift

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Deputy Speaker National Assembly Zahid Akram Durrani on Tuesday vowed to continue the struggle for the development of Bannu.

Addressing a gas supply inauguration ceremony, he said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) did not pay heed to uplift the underdeveloped areas of the province despite it remaining in power both in the province as wells in center. He alleged that the opposition members were denied development funds despite the fact it was a set

principle that 40 percent of funds were given to the opposition members while 60 percent of funds were given to members of treasury benches.

As a result, Zahid Akram Durrani said the districts from which oppositions belonged lagged behind in terms of development over the last three and a half years tenure of the PTI. He said that JUI-F had reposed trust in him by assigning him important responsibilities in the National Assembly and today he was completing the unfinished agenda of development which had been initiated by Akaram

Khan Durrani, he added.

He said that supply of gas would be provided to remaining areas of already commissioned localities of phase-i which include Sokari, Amandi, Bazar Ahmad Khan, Hinjaal and Fatima Khel at total cost of Rs21.5 million. He said it was only the JUI-F party that had always worked for the development of masses and appealed to people to not put trust in opportunities. Speaking on the occasion, the local people expressed gratitude to the National Assembly Deputy Speaker for taking keen interest in the development of their area.

# Clean & green drive kicks off

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: 10-day long Clean & Green Campaign formally launched in the provincial metropolis here on Tuesday, Commissioner Peshawar Division, Mohammad Zuabir planted a sapling in a local park to inaugurate the campaign.

Besides, Special Assistant to KP CM, Malik Meher Elahi, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, Shah Fahad and Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Sania Safi, a large number of traders, government officials, students and people various walks of life also attended the ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Peshawar Division, Mohammad Zubair and Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, Shah Fahad briefed the participants in detail about the Clean & Green Campaign and a special cleanliness drive in the district.

## National Undergraduate Research moot held

Kashif Ullah Khalil

PESHAWAR: National Undergraduate Medical Research Conference held at Prime foundation in which researchers and academicians from various medical fields participated in large number, on Tuesday.

According to details, the conference was arranged with the aim to provide the other opportunity to discuss heavy developments challenge. Former Minister for Health Dr. Zafar Mirza also the conference. The conference at poster, research quiz, and research paper review at competitions, will also research skill stations, and presentation. Poster and oral presentation in basic and clinical sciences, public health, social sciences medical education.

The participants announced to held another conference to arrange competition of videography. Research skill station will cover the use of SPSS design, use of the Medley program, literature search and data analysis. Professor Dr. Muhammad Irfan give a lecture on 'Research a choice'.

The special guest was Prof. Anees Ahmed, Vice Chancellor of Rafah University. He said that the conference has provided opportunity for researcher to share their researches and exchange of ideas. It has also provided opportunity research to their research from each and make new collaboration.

## Serving people is my mission: Mayor

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali on Tuesday said he believed in the politics of serving the people and hoped that he would come up to the expectations of the people by providing them every possible facility at their doorstep.

Talking to various delegations from his constituency at his hujra here, the Mayor said he considered the problems of people as his own and will never leave any stone unturned to resolve the same. He said he felt satisfaction by addressing the people's problems.

He said he was always ready to serve his people adding that his mission of providing selfless services to the people will continue. On the occasion the Mayor listened to the issues of visitors and issued on-the-spot directives on some of the applications.

## 5-day rain spell expected

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) on Tuesday predicted five-day rain spell from March 16-20 in KP. A westerly wave is likely to approach western parts of the country on Thursday (March 16) and may persist till Monday.

Rain-wind thunderstorm and hailstorm are expected in Chitral, Lower and Upper Dir, Malakand, Swat, Buner, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, Hangu, Karak, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, Dera Ismail Khan, North and South Waziristan districts.



PESHAWAR: APM Engr Amir Muqam addresses huge public gathering at Inauguration of 132 KVA Col. Sher Khan grid station.

# Workshop to develop National Health Financing Framework held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination, with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO), on Tuesday taken the initiative to develop a Health Financing Framework to achieve the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) target and the health and poverty-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Pakistan.

As part of this initiative, the 3rd Consultative Workshop was held here and was focused on approaches to developing the National health financing framework and drew on a body of recent work regarding health financing. Dr. Sabeen Afzal, Deputy Director Federal Ministry of Health, Dr. Babar Alam, Head of WHO Sub-Office KP, Dr. Shaheen Afridi, Chief Health Sector Reforms Unit KP health department, along with representatives of Khyber Medical University and several other relevant de officials attended the workshop.

Dr. Sabeen, while leading the workshop, emphasized the need for a national framework on health financing and the adoption of global best

practices of financial expenditure that can be exercised to achieve the goals of the Ministry. The workshop aimed to lead to a consolidated health financing framework. Dr. Ziaul Haq, Vice Chancellor of Khyber Medical University, suggested that students perusing their public health degrees can conduct fruitful research on this topic. The Health Financing Framework is the main pillar for the self-sustainability of an institute.

However, Hospital Director Dr. Shehzad stressed the need for sensitization over health financial management and lamented that the directorate general of health services participating in the workshop would have made it a more appropriate activity. He suggested that such activities should be carried out frequently to sensitize the relevant authorities, and financial autonomy and powers should be rightly vested and exercised.

Dr. Babar Alam, Head of WHO sub-office KP, emphasized the urgent need to strengthen and strategize financing health and healthcare in the country to make concrete progress in advancing health financing. Universal health coverage means that all people have access to the full

range of quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship, and progress towards UHC will contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

## Ex-Nazim, Daud Khattak decides to join JUI-F

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Former District Nazim Nowshera, Daud Khattak has decided to join JUI-F. He will announce formal joining of JUI-F during a press conference scheduled on March 17 (Friday).

In this connection, he met with the provincial ameer of JUI-F, Senator Maulana Atta-ur-Rehman and general secretary Atta-ul-Haq Darwaish here in Mufti Mahmood Markaz on Tuesday. Daud Khattak is the brother of Lt General (Retd) Alam Khattak. He contested the general elections of 2013 against the PTI leader Pervaz Khattak and remained runner up.

# Afghanistan's strategic maneuver: Using PTM as a hedge against Pakistan

Faizan Ahmed

PESHAWAR: Over the past month, at least 100 soldiers have been killed as a result of an increase in violence in Balochistan and the amalgamated regions of KP (the erstwhile FATA). Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) proxy groups have five-fold intensified their attacks. Notwithstanding the sacrifices, according to the PTM narrative, "Pakistan Army is (supposedly) accountable for the violence and terrorism" in these separated communities based on ethnicity. A growing groundswell of animosity towards the Army has sadly been secured by the PTM's methodical narrative storytelling and listening.

Recent events have made it very clear that the PTM platform has been taken over and used into a weapon in larger geopolitical conflicts against the state of Pakistan and its security institutions. For instance, Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) assert that "Afghan government for the first time funded a powerful public exhibition in South Waziristan using PTM". They claim that "there is no doubt" regarding Afghan security establishment members funding and backing the PTM. The PTM held the protest in support of the Kabul government, not Pakistan, which is losing three soldiers on average every day to Afghan proxies. Participants accused the Army of brainwashing the populace in Afghanistan as well as for the rise in terrorism in Pakistan.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has also been targeted by the PTM. Its leaders have openly demanded that China stop working on the CPEC a baseline project for Pakistan's potential heft in geo-economics. The PTM as a de facto propaganda offshoot for the Afghan government serves two objectives, a) indirectly legitimizes the TTP/BLA terrorism and, b) sustains the Indian narrative against the state of Pakistan. In the meantime, the PTM got sup-

port from strange quarters. The Pashtun elements within Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leveraged the platform against the Army. Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN)'s top leadership facing trial used the forum to blackmail the establishment. Foreign-sponsored NGOs, including types of abortion and gay rights advocacy groups, joined the PTM, as they could not, otherwise, promote their agenda for various reasons.

This irony is yet another. The left-leaning and liberal group supported the PTM instead of attempting to moderate its radical tendencies, tactics, narrative, ideological tendencies, and support from other groups and regional nations. They had no love lost for Pashtun welfare and were upset by previous state policies.

PTM calls itself Afghan first and promotes the narrative of Kabul government on claiming the geography of Pakistan – implicit under the slogan "Upper and Lower parts are united Afghan nation). While India received a gift from God in the form of PTM for its long-standing policy of exploiting the state's developing fault lines. In light of this, it should be noted that the state has given the PTM a pass since its beginning. Secondly, its claim that the Army is to blame for outrageous accusations like the APS attack in Peshawar, a false flag operation, and introducing terrorism to FATA was left unchallenged. Second, no alternative narrative was presented to refute the movement's dreamers who made irrederent assertions about a larger Afghanistan.

Still, the state allowed the PTM to informally participate in the elections without being registered as a political group; the Army did not indulge in rigging in FATA contrary to the claims of the opposition, letting the two MNAs from the PTM make it to the parliament in 2018 elections. Unlike any other group, the government for long tolerated the PTM who has brought out to life two dead ideologies: the one which romanticism

Afghanistan at the cost of Pakistani territory of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan's Pashtun belt; and the other envisions Pashtun exclusionary/regressive political chauvinism bordering racism. (Jan Achakzai)

Outside the bounds of free speech, the PTM's use of strong language pits impressionable Pashtun youth against the government. An analogous instance was the TLP, which provoked the fury of security agencies by encouraging mutiny among its ranks. All of the aforementioned actions—or the majority of them—are being taken in the name of portraying legitimate Pashtun "human rights" demands.

It is a fallacy that PTM is defending Pashtun interests. The two MNAs of the PTM supported drone attacks in North Waziristan alongside Afghan politicians. Around 3,000 civilians were killed as a result of 500 missiles fired by the US. As hundreds of people are killed by NATO and Afghan security forces every day in Afghanistan, the PTM never denounces these atrocities.

Pashtuns are an integral part of the Pakistani state and its mainstream society, including the bureaucracy, government, and military. For instance, the Pashtun population made up over 40% of the Kakul Academy cadets who recently graduated.

Yet, the PTM is deftly turning Pakistan's war on terrorism's wounds into weapons by planting an enemy narrative in the minds of the ethnic community. It continues to give India and Afghanistan the ability to target the Pakistan Army and stoke tensions between the populace and the security forces by using the far left as a negotiating chip. It becomes virtually impossible to genuinely defeat the violent proxies (like TTP and BLA) giving a veneer of victimhood in the face of such a dynamic. The bottom line is the PTM is a challenge to the state: its policy must change gear from patronage to containment of the group.

# Election must for establishing democracy

Ziaur Rahman Tajik

**THE election is considered the foundation of democracy and provides an opportunity to establish democracy. Election guarantees that no govt is elected for an indefinite period. In an election citizens of the country chose their representatives for a fixed term and hold them accountable for their performance. Elected representatives make important decisions for the welfare and betterment of the country and its citizens. The election also ensures a peaceful transition of power from one govt to another govt.**

Holding of election within the specified time is the beauty of democracy but the economic emergency and financial crises justify the postpone-

ment of the election. An economic emergency is an occurrence that results in a temporary financial consequence over which an institution has no control. Economic emergency left no place for democracy, national sovereignty, living standard of the citizen, transportation, or electric system and endanger life and property. Floods, riots, earthquakes, corruption, mismanagement, and absolute power in the hands of an institution are the common contributory factors towards economic emergencies and financial crises.

Due to economic crises in Pakistan prices of daily life commodities like gas, oil, electricity and food etc have risen and progressively moving towards further increase. And such an increase in price hikes has affected the lives of everyone and the said

crises have also devalued the Pakistani currency.

The Constitution of Pakistan provides 3 types of emergencies under articles 232,234 and 235 which are National, provincial and economic emergencies. An economic emergency is the worst kind of emergency provided by article 235 in which salaries and allowances of all classes of persons are reduced. In case of economic crises, the resources should not be allotted towards an election and the election can be postponed till the regaining of economic stability.

Holding of election is an essential feature of politics and democracy. But during economic crises election can be postponed otherwise it would lead to compromising election management quality, and the opportunity for deliberation and consultation.

Under Article 105(3) of the Constitution the Governor shall appoint a date for the election of not later than 90 in case of dissolution of the provincial assembly from the date of dissolution. Similarly, article 112 also provides 90 days for the general election when the assembly is dissolved by the governor on the advice of the chief minister. Article 224(2) also provides 90 days for holding the general election from the date of dissolution of the National or provincial assembly.

Non-holding of an election within the specified time of 90 days would of no adverse effect because under article 254 of the Constitution when any act required to be done within a particular period shall not be declared invalid or ineffective by the reason that it was not done within the pre-

scribed period.

Under section 57(1) of the election act 2017, the president has the power to announce the date of the general election after consultation with the election commission but under article 105(3) only the governor has the power to appoint a date for the general election in case of dissolution of the provincial assembly. And in case of conflicts between the constitution and the Act of the parliament, the constitution would prevail. Hence the date fixed by the president of Pakistan has no legal value and lawful existence.

Holding of election under the new census is the mandate of Article 51(4) of the constitution and as per the report of the federal govt, the census has not been finalized and will be finalized by April 2023 which is con-

sidered another ground for delay. In the holding of the election. Holding of election under the old census would deprive considerable populations of their due representation in the provincial assemblies and the senate. Under Article 218(3) the election commission is bound to make necessary arrangements for the election and conduct a fair, honest, impartial and just election by the law. But the financial crises make the holding of election Practically impossible. For the present economic crisis and financial degradation, the previous govt of PTI is solely responsible and they have no valid justification to demand the holding of an election within 90 days. If they are so interested in the govt then why advise the governor to dissolve the provincial assemblies?

Ziaurrahmantajik123@gmail.com





## In brief

### DBA elects new cabinet F.P. Report

BUNER: District Bar Association (DBA) Buner elected new cabinet unanimously for session 2023-24 including Rafiq Ahmed Khan advocate as president and Hazrat Husain advocate as general secretary respectively, on Tuesday. The new cabinet comprising of Mohibullah advocate as vice president, Sardarat Khan advocate as joint secretary and Mohammad Ayaz advocate as librarian for the session. The elections board chairman Israr Ahmed Advocate with members Mehboob-ur-Rehman advocate and Tariq Nazir advocate announced the names of the unopposed office bearers. The chairman elections board shared 18 of this morning nith was fixed for elections but on 13 this month all other contestants withdraw their nomination following the consensus cabinet announced while formal function to be held at district bar room hall on 18 this month.

### Human rights to be ensured F.P. Report

BANNU: Commissioner Bannu Pervaiz Sabatkhel has said that the provision of basic human rights to the people is among the priorities so that the current and future generations of the country can go on the path of development. He said that no violation of human rights has been found in Bannu division so far. If human rights violations are found in Bannu Division, they will be investigated and action will be taken so that it is possible to end the backwardness of the society and walk on the path of development and bright future. He expressed these views on Tuesday while presiding over a meeting held with the officials of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan on provision of human rights to the masses of the area in his office. Additional Deputy Commissioner Bannu Islahuddin, Secretary to Commissioner Noor Ul Amin, Chairperson of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan Hina Jilani, Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and former MNA Jamila Geelani, Member and Vice Chairman Prof Ijaz, Provincial Coordinator Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahid Mahmood and Manager Islamabad Maryam Rauf were attended the meeting. Meanwhile, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan Chairperson Hina Jilani said that there is no report of human rights violations in Bannu Division. Steps can be taken to improve the provision of basic human rights in any sector of the society. The Officials of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan expressed their heartfelt thanks to the Commissioner Bannu Division Pervaiz Sabatkhel and Commissioner assured them full support in the provision of human rights.

### Mining workshop kicks-off F.P. Report

KHAR: A week long mining workshop is commenced in collaboration with security forces, Construction and Technical Training Institute at Bajaur. The workshop aims to educate and train the youth of Bajaur in the field of mining and improve their practical skills for better employment opportunities in the future. 173 students are attending the workshop, including 20 persons from Mohmand. The organizers have made elaborate arrangements for the reception, guidance and conduct of the workshop, ensuring a smooth and productive learning experience for all the participants.

# JI announces candidates from Lower Dir

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami chief and former senator Sirajul Haq will contest the next general elections for the national assembly seat from his hometown constituency NA-7 Lower Dir. This was announced by the JI provincial chief Prof Ibrahim while speaking at a news conference at the Ahyal Uloom Balambat here on Tuesday. He also announced the names for the two national and five provincial assembly seats in Lower Dir district.

The JI nominated candidates were also present on this occasion. Prof Ibrahim said that the party Chief Sirajul Haq would contest the next general elections for the national assembly from NA-7 and Maulana Ismail, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief khateeb from NA-6. He said the JI had nominated its former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan to contest from PK-13, Azizullah Khan from

PK-14, Shad Nawaz Khan from PK-15, former MPA Izazul Mulk Afkari from PK-16 and former MPA Saeed Gul from PK-17 in Lower Dir district.

The nominated candidates were also present on this occasion. Prof Ibrahim said that all the candidates were nominated by the party registered members through a secret ballot. He said the workers' choice was sent to the JI central organization which approved the names. He said the JI would fully participate in the next general elections for which the workers had been directed to speed up their door to door electioneering drive.

The JI provincial chief alleged that both the PDM and the PTI governments had badly failed to govern the country. He said the nation had seen their real faces and it was the JI only that could provide an honest, Pakistan-made and devoted leadership to the nation. The JI leader said they would contest the next

election with its own election symbol the 'scale'. He expressed pleasure that none of the JI former law-makers and leadership's names were included in the Toosha Khana beneficiaries. He said that almost all parties were equally benefited from it. He said the national wealth was badly plundered and Pakistan's image was ruined in the comity of nations.

Responding to a query the JI leader said that all decisions within his party were made through consensus and with due consultation of workers. He said the party members' consent in decision making was highly honoured. He said that the rest of political parties lacked this real democracy. He said that it was the responsibility of the election commission of Pakistan to allow only honest and pious candidates to contest the general elections. He demanded the ECP to ensure the implementation of article 62 of the constitution.

## Legal fraternity continues strike

### Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Lawyers of District Bar Association Hafizabad staged a complete strike on the second day against the increasing incidents of theft, dacoit-robbery and promotion of tautism and mafia groups in the city and took out a protest rally against the alleged police brutality. District Bar President Malik Waqas Raza and Secretary General Muzamil Aziz Gujjar said that the police promoting drug-selling and tautism throughout the district, while increasing political interference in the police has made the public insecure.

The police do not register FIRs for incidents involving lawyers. Private individuals roam with arms around the court premises all day, while many armed individuals even go to the courtrooms, causing serious danger to lawyers, any untoward incident can happen at any time. They demanded IG Police Punjab, RPO and Registrar High Court Lahore to take immediate notice of police brutality across the district and take actions against those respon-

sible. Meanwhile, the incidents of robbery and banditry have reached at peak in Hafizabad. Some unknown bandits looted Muazzam Ali son of Abbas Ali resident of Bhoon Kalan, who was working at a nan-shop at the outer gate of the city, the dacoits took a mobile phone and fifteen hundred rupees in cash and ran away.

On the other hand, unknown suspects escaped from Imran Medicine Company in the dark of night by breaking the locks and looting lakhs of rupees at Koosuki Road, two unknown armed suspects attacked Asadullah son of Nasrullah near Mona Mendher. They stopped and looted a mobile phone and fifty thousand rupees in cash and fled. Unidentified bandits stole solar plates worth lakhs of rupees from the house of Zeeshan Ahmed in Mehdiabad village near Hafizabad. The city circles have their grievances over such increasing dacoities and robberies.

**Medical camp held at district jail:** A 5-days med-

ical camp has been setup at District Jail for providing treatment facilities to prisoners of the jail on the directions of the Punjab government. Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warraich and Superintendent Jail Muhammad Abu Bakr Abdullah inaugurated the camp. CEO Health Dr. Fareeha Malik, DO Health Dr. Ishfaq Meer, DDOH Dr. Zaheer Ahmad, nurses and other paramedical staff was also present on the occasion.

DC said that medicines, vaccination, screening, ultrasound, and other diagnostic facilities would be provided to more than 900 prisoners in the jail. Earlier, DC along with Superintendent visited different departments of the jail including barracks, kitchen, telephone room and play area etc.

Superintendent informed the DC that with collaboration of TEVTA, vocational training of motor cycle mechanic, carpenter and other trades was being imparted to prisoners so that they could enable to earn their own livelihood in respectable manners after releasing from jail.



ABBOTTABAD: DHO Dr. Faisal Khan addressing to participants during World TB Day.

### Ali Ahmad

**DREAMS are the ones that don't let you sleep. Dreams are the ones you dream with open eyes. To Stop dreaming is to stop living. Dream is life-force rather driving force. When we set goal, our life revolves round the goal. For, to remain without goal is like to be a ship without destination.**

The holiest goal of man is to perform the actions that pleases the creator. Vowing to do good to others varies like; treating others having a smile on face which is an immediate or cheap medicine, providing catering for the poor, paying money in charity or extending precious moments of time so as to help others or picking up an obstacle from the way that might trip a passer-by. But save them, there are some noble deeds that may be par excellence and felicitate sad music of humanity. Moving an injured to hospital, Such holy deeds also lead to Almighty Allah's consent. These deeds are the echo of spiritual resolution and commitment.

When you perform an act of good, you feel morally accountable to your good self and the creator. It creates a wave of self-actualization. You feel like continuing the sacred cause of virtue somehow. It's like domino effect, it makes you do other goods also. Donating blood is

one of the highest degrees of compassion and benevolence one can do to others.

The name of blood donation makes us afraid of sometimes, but it is a mere pinching of needle for a moment then the pricking pain is no more there. Blood bank dealer takes only 300 CC blood sometimes 200 or 2.5 cc as per need. This process takes just 10 to 15 minutes. That bag of blood can save three lives. It's a holy cause indeed. But generally the eighteen and above are considered healthy and mature enough for donation. To save a human is equal to saving all mankind.

There are benefits of donating blood. It alleviates blood phobia. It deviates hypertension, similarly the risk of cardiac arrest is reduced. It triggers one's courage to become the part of social community. It's vigorous for our psyche. It shakes off stress. Harmful calories and toxic chemicals are also eliminated from our body. It provides you an opportunity to know about your medical health. Doctor feels your pulse, blood pressure and iron level before blood transfusion. Contributing in donation of blood is the most selfless thing you can do. It improves heart's health. It's the promotion of social well-being. The most important benefit is that you are saving a life. Albert Einstein said, "Only a life that

lived for others is a life worthwhile". A blood drawing procedure is less painful than the individual who were having blood drawn for personal medical purposes. Some are on their critical stages like that of blood cancer, major surgical operation or Thelasma.

The title mentioned above, is the name of a book written by Barack Obama that made me remember the burning dream of my father. He has this vision and is still working on that. Hats off to him who has donated blood more than one hundred and forty times and to us he taught the same. By the grace of Allah Almighty, he is in good and sound health Alhamdulillah. He donates blood after a certain period of time, setting a world record with a never-say-die passion. I have also submitted my ordinary contribution in this stream forty four times. Alhamdulillah I am quite well and sound as any individual in society. I feel no negative of it.

The spiritual relief you are blessed with while donating, beggars description. Happiness or emotional solace of this kind can never be found in any materialistic action, worldly pleasures, or in being self-centered. Anything that is shared, in the better interest of people, is increased by

heavens whether it is knowledge, money, time or any form of help you extend. The blessed ones of good-driven never conduct any virtue for the sake of reward or appreciation. Good is however victorious and blessed.

If you judge blessings with the touchstone of wealth you are misunderstanding the concept of good and blessings. Acceptance is no rule. Being blessed is also diverse in shapes. Some have the wealth of knowledge, some have the wealth of pious siblings, some have the wealth of name and fame, some have the wealth of true friends, some have the wealth of good health. Good is the child of selflessness. The way the character of Parson in the Canterbury tales of Chaucer was doing the social service, that is one of the appropriate examples of selflessness. He was doing social service without any thought of appreciation or reward. For, the consent of Allah Almighty is the greatest reward they ever have.

Those whose mission is doing good on the surface of earth need not any motivation, rather they are self-motivated. They are always blessed in one or the other shape. Wordsworth said, "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her". My father has a dream that the con-

tribution in donating blood may be increased in the good interest of mankind and there should not be any want of blood to patients whenever an emergency occurs out of sudden.

This blessed culture ought to be spread like stream so that the children of Thelasma and patients of blood cancer who are expecting us to visit and assist them, be helped out. This is what the music of good calls for. When new blood is transfused into the bodies of kids, suffering from blood cancer, their ailing faces bloom again. That encourages the donor. Donors are like a life-line to them. This culture of medical aid requires empathy which is the chief quality of mankind.

We ought to ask ourselves that what we are giving to our coming generation. We are handing down a history as well as future to our generation. One learns from various disciplines: discipline of nature, discipline of superior force, discipline of culture. It comes in both discipline of culture and superior force that whatever we do or uphold in surroundings of our emotional life or social milieu, our children and juniors imitate us. In other words our children are the future of mankind thus a future is being created.

However, Good is perpetual and the opportunity of doing good is a blessing. The holy deed that we perform, bring spir-

itual solace that lies nowhere but in virtue and virtue is its own reward. If we start donating blood at least once in a year, it will rule out the risk of rapid mortalities in the wake of fatal diseases like blood cancer and Thelasma.

Life is uncertain and may be shorter than our expectations. Everything is in the state of locomotion and subject to decline. Nothing remains in this world but the good actions we do out of our faith. Performing a good action is becoming a part of good action that will be continued on the surface of earth for long. So, good is eternal in nature and double in temper. Good blesses the one who receive it and also the one who performs it. Virtue is immortal and it is saved in the heavenly books of Almighty Allah. Why the sages of the ages are still alive in world literature and in our hearts and memories? On the account of their achievements. Life is not counted by years but by achievements.

Let's Practice it more with the belief that this virtue of ours is saved in our account with Allah Almighty. With the belief that if good is not performed, the existence of good will vanish with the march of time then how good will be recognized. For, this is how we are laying down the foundation for good of tomorrow. For the best way to predict future is to create it.



GHALANAI: Commandant Cadet College Muhammad Gatt, Brig. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal giving away trophy to a cadet during a ceremony.

## Technical orientation held for LG members F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Department of Finance, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with the technical assistance of the Sub-National Governance Program (SNG) and the financial assistance of the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom (FCDO), about the technical orientation of the elected local government representatives of the merged districts of Bajaur and Dir lower on the rules of the new district government.

The purpose of this awareness session was to equip the elected local government representatives with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively perform their duties under the new local government system. The session was attended by 33 elected representatives including women and minority representatives from Dir Lower and Bajaur districts.

On this occasion, Chief Guest Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower Iftekhar Ahmed Marwat appreciated the SNG program of Oxford Policy Management for providing support in the capacity building of elected representatives. Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower emphasized the importance of strengthening government institutions, enhancing the quality of governance, and improving service delivery.

Participants were informed that the SNG program provides technical assistance and capacity-building to the government in implementing policies and reforms at the provincial and local levels.

## Role of media key in all fields

### Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: A one-day training workshop was organized for the local media representatives under the supervision of the Rehab HS program supported by USAID on Tuesday. The theme of the media workshop was "Role of Media in Promoting Disability Inclusion and Access to Rehabilitation and assistive technology".

In the workshop, the media representatives were taught to portray the positive image and true reporting in the media regarding disabled people, choice correct use of words and how people can relate to disability in the society. Awareness was provided to show them as a target group and to ensure their rights.

Communication Specialist Asad Abbas Malik, Waqar Ahmad Qureshi Project Manager spoke and said that it is not possible to deny the role of the media in every field because of its positive role in the society. He said that if disabled people are suffering from problems themselves, then people also remember them with various inappropriate names, special words should not be used for these people, according to the United Nations Charter, they are also common.

They should be called by their real names like other citizens, they should be given facilities in various institutions and public places, they should be considered as a purposeful member of the society. He said that according to the World Health Organization, there are

more than two billion people in the world who are suffering from some kind of disability. Persons with disabilities should be provided with all appropriate facilities.

On this occasion, he said that journalists can play an important role in creating awareness in this regard. When giving special coverage to these people, journalists should not present them as helpless and forced in the society, nor should they be seen as different from others. They said that there are flaws in the survey system for persons with disabilities, identity card and census should be used to collect different types of information in a good way for their survey. It was said in the seminar that these people are also a normal person in life like us and have the right to live if they are seen like other people and given facilities to live a better life with disabilities. At the end of the seminar, certificates were distributed among the journalists who participated in the media workshop.

**Ongoing census in Malakand reviewed:** Commissioner Malakand Shahid Ullah Khan held review meeting regarding the ongoing census in which Deputy Commissioners from the districts of Malakand Division participated online in the meeting. House enumeration, self-enumeration and other census matters were reviewed in detail in the meeting.

Regional officials of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics briefed the meeting on general progress and issues. Shaukat Ali

Khan, Divisional Census In-charge of PBS, said in a briefing to the meeting that the work of pilot census, self-enumeration, household listing has been completed. He said that the phase of household enumeration has been started and satisfactory progress is being made.

In the briefing, it was informed that experienced census staff's consisting of 4479 personnel are present in the field and the work is going on. It was told in the meeting that reaching the populations in the remote snow-covered mountainous areas is proving to be a challenge for the teams, for which the district administration is taking special measures and providing special support to the teams. The issue of big blocks in densely populated areas and inclusion of local languages in the list was also discussed in the meeting.

While presiding over the meeting, Commissioner Malakand Division Shahidullah Khan appreciated the overall performance of the teams and especially the performance of the Deputy Commissioners for ensuring timely access to snow-covered areas in Chitral Upper. Commissioner Malakand Division issued orders to appoint additional teams on the Big Blocks issue. He said that the self-enumeration phase and the household listing were completed on time, which is gratifying.

Commissioner Shahidullah Khan said that census is a very important work for which all resources should be utilized and full support should be provided to the teams.





# Activists urge UNSC to refer Myanmar to court

UNITED NATIONS (AP): Human rights activists urged the UN Security Council to refer Myanmar's military rulers to the International Criminal Court and urged neighboring Southeast Asian countries to support the opposition pro-democracy movement. The leaders of two women's rights organizations spoke to reporters ahead of a closed council meeting on Myanmar. Members heard briefings by UN special envoy for Myanmar Noeleen Heyzer and Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, whose country chairs the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

May Sabe Phyu, director of the Gender Equality Network, a coalition of organizations promoting women's rights in Myanmar, accused Myanmar's military of conducting "a terror campaign" and committing "heinous acts" that constituted crimes against humanity. She said the Security Council should refer the junta's actions to the International Criminal Court for prosecution. Myanmar's military has long been accused of human rights violations, most notably during a brutal 2017 counterinsurgency campaign against Rohingya Muslims in the western state of Rakhine. International courts are considering whether that crackdown was genocide.

In 2021, the military ousted Myanmar's elected civilian government, then moved to violently suppress public opposition to the takeover. Some experts now consider the situation in Myanmar to be a civil war in which the army has conducting major offensives against widespread armed resistance. ASEAN adopted a five-step consensus on restoring peace in April 2021 to which Myanmar agreed but has not



implemented, leading to Myanmar's exclusion from some top-level ASEAN meetings since then.

The Security Council approved its first-ever resolution on Myanmar in December, demanding an immediate end to violence, urging its military rulers to release all "arbitrarily detained" prisoners including ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi and to restore democratic institutions. It also reiterated a call for dialogue and reconciliation and urged all sides "to respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law."

The activists called for an arms embargo, for the UN special envoy to have public engagements with pro-democracy actors, and for accountability for crimes perpetrated by the military. Phyu, who left Myanmar after the takeover and is now based in the United States, asked the Security Council to pressure Myanmar's neighbors not to support the government but to publicly support democratic forces, including the National Unity Government, which she said has the support of the people of Myanmar.

And she criticized UN envoy Heyzer for meeting Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing but not meeting publicly with pro-democracy groups including the National Unity Government, which operates underground and calls itself the country's legitimate government. Naw Hser Hser, head of the Women's League of Burma, said supporters of democracy feel forgotten by the international community.

Before council meeting, Britain's UN Ambassador Barbara Woodward said the Security Council fully supports ASEAN and the five-point council, but stressed that it's time for progress now. "The people of Myanmar have been suffering for too long," Woodward said. "Myanmar is the second deadliest place in the world for civilians and the people of Myanmar really can't wait."

France's deputy UN ambassador Nathalie Broadhurst told The Associated Press after the council meeting that Marsudi presented the implementation plan which calls for action on all five points in parallel, not sequentially. "They say they don't want megaphone diplomacy," Broadhurst added, expressing hope that the ASEAN effort will eventually lead to a national inclusive effort and end the "desperate situation" in Myanmar. Brazil's UN Ambassador Ronaldo Costa Filho told AP that council members supported ASEAN, and some said the Security Council should be prepared for further action, but no new council action is expected "for the time being." The Security Council in New York has been increasingly divided due to a major rift among its five permanent members: China and Russia on one side, Britain, France and the United States on the other.

## UN implicated in Syria aid failures after earthquake

GENEVA (Reuters): The United Nations, as well as the Syrian government and other actors, are responsible for delays in getting emergency aid to Syrians after the earthquake, a UN-appointed commission of inquiry said. The allegations add to a growing chorus of criticism of the global body for its role in the immediate aftermath of last month's earthquake that killed some 6,000 people, mostly in the rebel-held northwest near the Turkish border.

"Though there were many acts of heroism amid the suffering, we also witnessed a wholesale failure by the Government and the international community, including the United Nations, to rapidly direct life-saving support to Syrians in the most dire need," said Paulo Pinheiro, chair of the commission, in a statement. The statement further said that the above actors failed to agree a pause in hostilities and to allow life-saving aid through any available route, leaving Syrians feeling "abandoned and neglected by those supposed to protect them, in the most desperate of times". Syria's information ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A UN humanitarian office (OCHA) spokesperson did not immediately provide a comment since the report was not yet public when asked.

## Biden expects chance to speak to Xi

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE (Reuters): The United States wants to re-establish regular communications with China and President Joe Biden expects to speak with Chinese leader Xi Jinping by phone sometime after government returns to work from the country's parliamentary session, US national security adviser Jake Sullivan said.

The end of China's annual National People's Congress happens to coincide with an expected announcement by the United States and its Australian and British allies in San Diego of details of their so-called AUKUS pact to provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines. AUKUS is aimed at countering China in the Indo-Pacific and Beijing has condemned it as an illegal act of nuclear proliferation.

"Competition requires dialogue and diplomacy," Sullivan told a small group of reporters in reference to China while discussing AUKUS. "We encourage the PRC (People's Republic of China) to have regularized patterns of communications at senior levels," Sullivan said. Biden said in mid-February he expected to speak to Xi about what the United States said was a Chinese spy balloon that flew through American airspace, worsening already tense relations.

No such call has yet been announced and when asked when it would happen, Sullivan replied: "When the People's Congress is over and the government, including the president, return to work in Beijing the (US) president anticipates the opportunity to engage in a phone call." "Over the course of 18 months we have communicated with (China) about AUKUS and sought more information from them about their intentions," Sullivan said, referring to China's military buildup, including nuclear powered submarines. Xi plans to speak with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for the first time since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Wall Street Journal reported. That call was likely to take place after Xi's visit to Moscow next week to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the report said.

The US's Sullivan told reporters en route to San Diego that Washington has been publicly and privately encouraging Xi to talk to Zelenskyy so that they hear "not just the Russian perspective" on the war.

# PML-N delegation meet Nawaz

## F.P. Report

LONDON: A four-member delegation led by Khawaja Irfan, the central leader of the Muslim League Nawaz United Kingdom PML-N UK met with the Quaid of Muslim League Nawaz Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif in his office the other day.

On the occasion PML-N Quaid Sharif praised Irfan's party services in Britain and said that all the workers in general and Irfan in particular deserve congratulations for the manner in which the people living in UK organised the party. Sharif said that he will go back to Pakistan very soon and along with other political parties will take the country out of the current economic crisis.

He said that the country needs patriotic people at



this time so that the Pakistan can be returned to a high position in the ranks of the international community. Sharif also appreciated Irfan's party services in UK and told him that the people living in UK deserve congratulations for the manner in which the PML-N was organised.

Besides others Khawaja Iftikhar Hussain, Arshad

Mahmood Chaudhry, Nasir Butt and former senior retired bureaucrat of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Farhat Ali Mir were also present during the meeting.

On the occasion, Mir officially announced in the presence of Khawaja Irfan to join the PML-N and expressed full confidence in the leadership of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.

# Colombian president accuses criminal group

BOGOTA (Reuters): Colombian President Gustavo Petro said the Clan del Golfo, the country's largest criminal organization, has broken a ceasefire and there is no possibility of negotiations with the group if they continue attacks. The ceasefire with the Clan - also known as the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces (AGC) - was part of efforts to end the group's part in Colombia's internal conflict, which has killed at least 450,000 people.

In a radio interview, Petro accused the group of destroying a municipal aqueduct in Antioquia province amid roadblocks connected to protests by informal gold miners. The roadblocks have affected up to 300,000 people across 12 municipalities in two provinces, resulting in shortages of fuel, food and medicine. Police lifted the majority of the roadblocks

last week. "By breaking the pipes, they have left Taraza without drinking water. The Clan del Golfo versus humble people," Petro said in a Twitter message. The group "has broken the ceasefire," he said. In a separate radio interview, Petro said there was "obviously no possibility of negotiation" with the group if they were not capable of setting aside illegal business interests.

The group did not immediately respond to Petro's statements. Gold miner Mineros SA has suspended operations in the region until it can guarantee security, it said in a statement. Petro's government has asked Congress to pass a law approving surrender for gangs, including reduced prison sentences, in exchange for halting operations and paying reparations to victims. Meanwhile, the miners'

protests are ongoing, with attacks on medical facilities, property destruction and roadblocks, with encouragement from the Clan del Golfo, according to the military, police and government.

The protests intensified after the military has stepped up operations and soldiers destroyed 13 excavators in the last fortnight, aiming to clamp down on illegal and informal gold mining. The practice is considered an environmental disaster due to the destruction it wreaks on numerous ecosystems, including mercury contamination in rivers. Negotiations between the government and the miners have not yet resulted in a deal. The government's National Mining Agency (ANM) last year said it would create a public company to help informal miners and put a dent in Colombia's illegal gold trade.

## Ex-Jordanian official hospitalized

AMMAN (AP): A former top Jordanian official imprisoned in an alleged plot against the Western-allied monarchy was rushed to the hospital over the weekend after a three-week hunger strike, the man's American lawyer said. Bassem Awadallah, who is a dual Jordanian-American citizen, was suffering from low blood pressure and sugar levels when he was hospitalized, his representatives said.

They said he was given glucose intravenously but refused further intervention once his condition stabilized. He has since returned to prison and remains on his hunger strike. "My client's life remains in danger as his health declines daily," said Michael J. Sullivan, Awadallah's attorney. He said Awadallah's family has urged the US government to "take immediate action" to secure his release and holds Jordan's King Abdullah II responsible for the harm to Awadallah.

A Jordanian security official called the claims of a hunger strike "inaccurate," saying Awadallah has been drinking liquids regularly. "He was hospitalized at the recommendation of the medical team and later discharged after receiving the necessary treatment," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity under security guidelines. "He is now in good condition." The official said there was no obligation for Jordanian officials to notify the American Embassy because Awadallah is a Jordanian "first and foremost." But he said that Awadallah is entitled to US consular visits, including this week.

In a statement, the US State Department said it was monitoring Awadallah's situation closely, and that one of its priorities was to assist US citizens who are incarcerated abroad. "We take allegations of mistreatment seriously," it said. "We at every instance raise the importance of humane treatment directly with the host government." It said the embassy met Awadallah this week, the latest in a string of monthly visits over the past year. Jordan is a close Western ally that hosts hundreds of thousands of refugees and has long been seen as an island of stability in a volatile region. But the rare palace feud exposed deep-rooted economic and social challenges in the country, which borders Israel, the occupied West Bank, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Awadallah, who once served as a top adviser to the king, and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a member of the royal family, were found guilty of sedition and incitement two years ago and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

# ‘Cold, hard facts’ should guide climate policy: UN

BERLIN (AP): The head of the United Nations called for scientists to serve up "cold, hard facts" to push governments into making policies that curb climate change before a key global warming threshold is passed. His comments came as experts and officials from around the world gathered for a week-long meeting in the Swiss Alpine town of Interlaken to finalize the last of seven reports issued by the global body's panel of top scientists since the Paris climate accord was forged in 2015.

In a video address to delegates, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change "could not come at a more pivotal time." "Our world is

at a crossroads - and our planet is in the crosshairs," he said. "We are nearing the point of no return; of overshooting the internationally agreed limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) of global warming." That threshold, agreed in Paris almost eight years ago and measured against average temperatures during pre-industrial times, has become the yardstick for climate scientists who warn of the dangers of an ever hotter planet.

Guterres cited recent IPCC reports showing that while some impacts of global warming are already unavoidable, "it is possible to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees with rapid and deep emissions reductions across all sectors of the global economy." Some sci-

entists disagree, noting that the rate at which greenhouse gas is being pumped into the atmosphere makes this limit almost impossible to keep to. The UN chief said the final installment in the IPCC's sixth reporting cycle - known as the synthesis report because it brings together insights from six previous papers - should provide governments with "solid, frank, detailed scientific guidance to make the right decisions for people and planet" when they gather for the annual world climate conference in Dubai at the end of the year. Guterres stressed that speeding up the phase-out of fossil fuels is "tough but essential." "Show the urgent need to end global heating with cold, hard facts," he told delegates.

# Storm Freddy: Malawi recovers 60 bodies

LILONGWE (BBC): More than 60 bodies have been recovered in Malawi's main commercial hub of Blantyre after Tropical Storm Freddy hit southern Africa for the second time in a month. Strong winds and rains continue to cause severe destruction. "We have rivers overflowing, we have people being carried away by running waters, we have buildings collapsing," police spokesman Peter Kalaya told BBC Focus on Africa radio.

Malawi was "overwhelmed" he added. Relentless rain and strong winds have hampered overstretched emergency teams in the country's southern and central regions, which are worst affected, Mr Kalaya said. Victims taken to a hospital in Blantyre had injuries caused by

falling trees, landslides and flash floods, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) country director Marion Pechayre told Reuters news agency. "A lot of [homes] are mud houses with tin roofs, so the roofs fall on people's heads," she is quoted as saying. Casualties were still arriving from affected areas, said Chipiliro Khamula, spokesperson for Malawi's department of disaster management. Officials expect the death toll to rise as some areas remain cut off.

Freddy is the strongest tropical cyclone on record and could also be the long-lasting one, according to the World Meteorological Organization. The storm struck Mozambique as a cyclone - for the second time in a less than a month after battering the island

nation of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean, causing severe destruction. It has been difficult to determine the extent of the damage caused in Mozambique and the number of deaths as power supply and phone signals were cut off in some parts of the affected areas. The timing of the storm could exacerbate Malawi's cholera outbreak, the UN and other agencies have warned, as the country battles one of its worst public health crises.

Experts say climate change is making tropical storms around the world wetter, windier and more intense. Freddy had broke records for the strength it has accumulated over the 8,000-km (5,000-mile) path it travelled across the Indian Ocean from north-western Australia.

# Egypt withheld documents of dissidents abroad: Rights group

CAIRO (AP): Egypt's authorities refused to issue or renew passports, birth certificates and other documents for more than two dozens journalists, critics and lawyers living abroad, a leading rights group said. The US-based group Human Rights Watch said the refusals are a sign that Egypt is widening its clampdown on dissent. "The government is ramping up efforts to punish and silence those abroad," said Adam Coogler, deputy Middle East and North Africa director at HRW.

The group said it spoke to 26 Egyptians abroad, including dissidents, journalists and lawyers, whose requests for essential documents were

rejected by the Egyptian authorities. Those affected live in Turkey, Germany, Malaysia, Qatar and two countries in Africa and the Gulf. Egypt's authorities did not immediately respond to a request by The Associated Press for comment. Since coming to power in 2014, President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi's government has overseen a wide-ranging crackdown on dissent, jailing thousands. Authorities have targeted not only Islamist political opponents but also pro-democracy activists, journalists and online critics. Thousands have since fled the country.

Those interviewed by HRW said challenging Cairo's refusal to provide

documents was "nearly impossible," while some were told to return to Egypt to solve their issue. Several interviewees said Egypt's refusal to do so was inhibiting their ability to live and travel abroad. HRW did not reveal the identity or occupations of the 26, but said most of them had no pending criminal cases against them in Egypt. In 2019, HRW estimated that as many as 60,000 political prisoners are incarcerated in Egyptian prisons, although Egypt's government has rejected this claim. The Committee to Protect Journalists ranks Egypt third, behind China and Turkey, in detaining journalists.



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## Presumptuous Mantra and needs of a stable Pakistan

**PAKISTAN Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI) kicked off its election campaign from Lahore's Zaman Park to Data Darbar on Monday. The Party Chairman and former Prime Minister Imran Khan led the rally and addressed party workers from inside his vehicle. The PTI Chairman vowed that he was not striving for his personal sake but for the people. He alleged that the big criminals in power were attempting to run away from the elections and registering cases against him and PTI officeholders to disqualify them from elections. Imran repeated his accusations against the Police and the caretaker government regarding the alleged killing and torture of PTI worker Zill-e-Shah at the March 8 rally that was blocked by the Police. According to Khan, a gang of thieves has been imposed on the country, and the nation would have to come out for real independence and accountability of the gangsters.**

The Pakistanis are a lucky nation, which has an abundance of pro-public leaders who are all time ready to serve their country rather many of them including military generals, civil bureaucrats, and feudal cum politicians bulldozed the country's constitution and sabotage democracy in the name of public service, later those self throned champions enjoyed authoritarian rule for decades in the past. Earlier, the PTI Chairman got a magnificent mandate for his imaginative anti-corruption dogma, a quest for the rule of law, merit, and transparency, but the so-called nation reformer not only failed to implement his ambitious manifesto but a majority of social ailments including misuse of authority, nepotism, institutional corruption, blackmailing and settlement of personal revenge in name of accountability became the order of the day during the three and a half year rule of Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI). The PTI Chairman is currently facing the same charges of corruption, misuse of authority, trading of precious state gifts, and misleading the Country's electoral watchdog as those he is persistently leveling against his opponents. Yet, the self-claimed nation's rescuer portrays legal issues as biased and politically motivated cases and is on a run-off from courts to avoid his conviction.

Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf remained in a neck-to-neck fight with the ruling coalition government and was still reluctant to negotiate the electoral reforms and the conditions for general polls in Punjab and KP when the dates had been announced for the elections. In fact, our political leaders must demonstrate seriousness and political wisdom if they have a genuine interest in public well-being, national survival along with political and economic stability in the country. This is high time for an inter-party dialogue and national consensus regarding future electoral reforms so the upcoming general election could be made transparent, and equally acceptable for all political stakeholders. So, the nation moves toward a peaceful transition of power instead of bracing for another phase of chaotic politics and a blame game in the aftermath of forthcoming elections.

Realistically, the country's politics has been badly spoiled by rigid political behavior, hate, and imperious sentiments that reduced space for constructive dialogue and positive engagement between the parties. The nation is not obliged to any leader and no party is essential for the survival of the nation. Therefore, leaders must not attempt to harass the judiciary and other state institutions in the garb of popularity and social media rating. Apparently, the government and opposition both have no sympathy for the public and pursue their political agendas selfishly. After all, the public must take up a regulatory role by rejecting rigid politics, regretting the abuse of public mandate, and berating disrespect of public institutions, so Pakistani leaders behave responsibly and remain mindful of public approval in the future.

# Post-Brexit Britain slams its doors on the outside world

**THE UK government has determined that because it doesn't share borders with failed states such as Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan, it is not required to share any humanitarian burden for addressing the global refugee crisis - or even abide by its elementary legal obligations.**

**Post-Brexit Britain appears resolved on retreating within its island shores and trying to forget altogether that the outside world exists.** The UN High Commissioner on Refugees has said that Britain's proposed new legislation barring entry to asylum-seekers arriving in small boats "amounts to an asylum ban, extinguishing the right to seek refugee protection in the United Kingdom for those who arrive irregularly, no matter how genuine and compelling their claim." Of the 90 million people forcibly displaced across the world, the UK granted asylum to 13,000 in 2021 - a tiny fraction of the numbers accepted by many other European countries. States such as Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan, which lack the minimum infrastructure to grapple with such influxes, have nevertheless absorbed well over a million refugees each.

The response of the British public to Ukrainian refugees was largely compassionate, despite the government throwing countless administrative obstacles in the path of

potential arrivals. Around the world I encounter many who question why the response was so radically different for those fleeing equally brutal conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan and the Congo - or why desperate families travel thousands of miles, risking their lives on unseaworthy boats, only to be locked up and stigmatized as criminals and potential terrorists. Relentless fearmongering and hyperbole by politicians and the right-wing media, often playing on negative religious and ethnic stereotypes, have turned this issue into a British national obsession. Home Secretary Suella Braverman's assertions that "100 million" or even "billions" of asylum-seekers could soon be heading for Britain are naked demagoguery.

Braverman's repugnant solution for those who have fled torture, war, ethnic cleansing and repression is to pack them off to a nation such as Rwanda, with a disastrous human rights record, dysfunctional infrastructure, and a complete lack of qualifications for managing refugee concentration camps on behalf of the UK government.

The reality is that only through the grace of God are any of us not born in war zones, compelled to throw ourselves at the mercy of other nations to avoid our children facing starvation, or worse. A succession of Conservative governments has calculatedly engineered a "hostile

environment" for all migrants. Consequently, Home Office infrastructure for processing asylum cases is, by design, perversely unfit for purpose, with immense backlogs. Instead of processing applicants quickly and repatriating undeserving cases, arrivals are locked up in indefinite limbo. Over 117,000 people were awaiting an initial decision on their asylum case as of mid-2022. This includes doctors, teachers, builders and nurses who could pay taxes and make much-needed contributions to the economy.

While many recent arrivals have been from Albania, this should be addressed as a specific phenomenon, rather than stigmatizing all arrivals as "illegal" and "undeserving" economic migrants. In 2022, 76 percent of cases that were processed were found to be legitimate and were granted asylum. High-profile ex-footballer Gary Lineker triggered a media frenzy with a tweet comparing the government's rhetoric on migrants with the language of 1930s Germany. The comparison was not unjustified, given the systematic manner in which government ministers have dehumanized and criminalized refugees, to the extent that many Europeans express the view that it would be better to let immigrants drown at sea. Scandalously, several hundred child asylum-seekers simply disap-

peared, sometimes abducted directly from hostels, probably into prostitution, abuse and forced labor.

The point is not whether Britain currently resembles Nazi Germany, but rather that Europe risks pursuing the same trajectory. Populist far-right politicians calculatedly whip up fears about immigration, and being "deluged" by non-Christian, non-white foreigners. Neo-fascists and populist authoritarians are today in power in nations such as Italy, Israel and Hungary, with likeminded factions on the ascendant in most European states. Many of these parties praised Britain's measures against refugees. Threats of terrorism and organized violence from far-right extremism now greatly exceed that from Islamist groups. The right-wing media cynically manufactures these moral panics to sell newspapers, disingenuously feeding audiences an insatiable diet of exceptional cases in which refugees are portrayed as thieves and delinquents. Donald Trump notoriously launched his US presidential campaign with a diatribe against refugees: "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists..." Recent disclosures from Fox News highlighted how the channel relentlessly peddled falsehoods, knowing they were lying to their audience. Particular hosts deliberately propagated

white supremacist narratives, with explosive social consequences.

Neo-isolationist, post-Brexit Britain is a greatly diminished nation, with many sectors badly impacted by the self-harming decision to wrench the national economy out of the European single market. Efforts to consolidate new trade deals have floundered. The halting of the annual influx of tens of thousands of European seasonal workers, the impossibility of exporting perishable goods under cumbersome new regulations, and the fragmentation of supply chains have forced food producers to slash output, giving rise to empty supermarket shelves and rampant inflation. Yet a government that has spent the past 13 years demonizing refugees isn't going to suddenly look to these arrivals as potential positive contributors to major gaps in the workforce. I am immensely grateful for the welcome we and our young daughters were given in 1980s Britain when we fled the Lebanon conflict, and I hope that as taxpayers and law-abiding citizens we can be seen as having made a net positive contribution to our host society. Britain's prime minister, home secretary and several other ministers are themselves from migrant families.

The government abolished the Department for International Development in 2020. Aid to many of the poorest countries was slashed by

over 60 percent. About half the much-diminished remaining "overseas development" budget is spent domestically on detaining refugees. As well as being morally indefensible, this and Brexit have caused Britain's global influence to plunge. Britain appears unable to comprehend that when aid budgets are curtailed, greater numbers are forced into exile. Leading nations have meanwhile abandoned their conflict-resolution role.

Refugees will keep coming. Numbers of worldwide displaced demographics have relentlessly increased. Conflicts intensify, states disintegrate, governance deteriorates, and worldwide democracy is in retreat. Climate change is rendering sizable regions uninhabitable. By letting the xenophobia genie out the bottle through incessant dehumanization of refugees, politicians created a rod for their own backs, coming under inexorable pressure to bring net migration toward zero - an impossible goal that would precipitate economic meltdown.

Instead of such self-defeating isolationism, Western governments must take a farsighted approach to factors driving mass migration, so people around the world can enjoy the infinitely preferable option of looking forward to a bright future in their own homelands.

Arab News

## Israel protests are not the salvation of Palestinians

**AS hundreds of thousands of people joined anti-government protests throughout Israel at the weekend, questions began to arise regarding how this movement might affect, or possibly merge with, the wider struggle against the Israeli military occupation and apartheid in Palestine.**

Pro-Palestine media outlets shared, with obvious excitement, statements made by Hollywood celebrities, including actor Mark Ruffalo, who tweeted that there was a need to "sanction the new hard right-wing government of (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu." Netanyahu, who sits at the heart of the current controversy and the mass protests, struggled to find a pilot for his flight to Rome last week for a three-day visit with the Italian government. The reception for the Israeli leader in Italy was equally cold. Italian translator Olga Dalia Padova reportedly refused to interpret Netanyahu's speech at a Rome synagogue.

One can appreciate the need to strategically use the upheaval against Netanyahu's far-right government to expose Israel's

fraudulent claim to being a true democracy, and supposedly "the only democracy in the Middle East." However, one has to be equally careful not to validate Israel's inherently racist institutions, which had been in existence for decades before Netanyahu came to power. The Israeli PM has been embroiled in corruption cases for years. Though he remained popular, Netanyahu lost his position at the helm of Israeli politics in June 2021, following three bitterly contested elections. But he returned on Dec. 29, 2022, this time with even more corrupt characters - even by Israel's own definition - such as Aryeh Deri, Bezael Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir.

Each one of these characters had a different reason for joining the coalition. Smotrich and Ben-Gvir's agenda ranges from the annexation of illegal West Bank settlements to the deportation of Arab politicians considered "disloyal" to the state.

Netanyahu, though a right-wing ideologue, is more concerned with personal ambitions: maintaining power as long as possible, while shielding himself and his family from legal problems. He simply wants

to stay out of prison. To do so, he also needs to satisfy the dangerous demands of his allies, who have been given free rein to unleash army and settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, as has been the case in Huwara, Nablus, Jenin and elsewhere. But Netanyahu's government, the most stable in years, has bigger goals than just "wiping out" Palestinian towns. It wants to alter the judicial system, allowing it to transform Israeli society itself. The reforms would grant the government control over judicial appointments by limiting the Israeli Supreme Court's power to exercise judicial review.

The protests in Israel have very little to do with the Israeli occupation and apartheid, and are hardly concerned with Palestinian rights. They are led by many former Israeli leaders, the likes of ex-Prime Minister Ehud Barak, former minister Tzipi Livni and former PM and leader of the opposition Yair Lapid. During the Naftali Bennett-Lapid stint in power, between June 2021 and December 2022, hundreds of Palestinians were killed in the West Bank.

Ramzy Baroud

Last year was described by UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland as the "deadliest" in the West Bank since 2005. During their time in office, illegal Jewish settlements expanded rapidly, while Gaza was routinely bombed. The Bennett-Lapid government faced little backlash from Israeli society for its bloody and illegal actions in Palestine. The Israeli Supreme Court, which has approved most of the government's actions in the Occupied Territories, also faced little or no pushback for certifying apartheid and validating the supposed legality of the Jewish colonies, all illegal under international law. The stamp of approval by the Supreme Court was also granted when Israel passed the Nation-State Law, identifying itself exclusively as "a Jewish state," thus casting off the entirety of the Arab Muslim and Christian population that shares the same mass of land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

Rarely did the Israeli judicial system take the side of Palestinians and, when little "victories" were

recorded now and then, they hardly altered the overall reality. Though one can understand the desperation of those trying to fight against Israeli injustices using the country's own so-called justice system, such language has contributed to the confusion regarding what Israel's ongoing protests mean for Palestinians. In fact, this is not the first time that Israelis have taken to the streets in large numbers. In August 2011, Israel experienced what some referred to as its own "Arab Spring." But that was also a class struggle within clearly defined ideological boundaries and political interests that rarely overlapped with the parallel struggle for equality, justice and human rights.

Dual socioeconomic struggles exist in many societies around the world and conflating them is not unprecedented. In the case of Israel, however, such confusion can be dangerous because the outcome of Israel's protests, be it success or failure, could spur unfounded optimism or demoralize those fighting for Palestinian freedom. The stark violations of international law, arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial executions and everyday violence meted

out against Palestinians mostly take place within Israel's legal framework and all of these acts are fully sanctioned by Israeli courts, including the country's Supreme Court. This means that, even if Netanyahu fails to hegemonize the judicial system, Palestinian civilians will continue to be tried in military courts, which will carry out the routine of approving home demolitions, illegal land seizures and the construction of settlements.

A proper engagement with the ongoing protests is to further expose how Tel Aviv utilizes the judicial system to maintain the illusion that Israel is a country of law and order, and that all the actions and violence in Palestine, however bloody and destructive, are fully justifiable according to the country's legal framework. Yes, Israel should be sanctioned, not because of Netanyahu's attempt to co-opt the judiciary, but because the system of apartheid and military occupation constitutes a complete disregard for and utter violation of international law. Whether Israelis like it or not, international law is the only law that matters to an occupied and oppressed nation.

## Costly Iraq intervention must never be repeated

**THE consequences of the Anglo-American decision to go to war on Iraq 20 years ago this month have haunted that country and the region ever since. The conflict diminished the standing of these two countries and led to the US losing influence not just in the Middle East, but across the globe.**

Only the denizens of cloud cuckoo land fail to acknowledge that the invasion and subsequent occupation were not a disaster. Many of those who favored war have admitted as such. Some politicians have publicly regretted their votes. The rights and wrongs of the Iraq war may never end. Its bitter legacy pollutes discussions about the country. It is pointless rehashing this debate. Various inquiries have done this for us. The British Chilcot Report produced a stunning indictment in its 2.6 million-word analysis of the Anglo-American failures. The 150-page executive summary is worth a careful read.

One novelty stands out about the Iraq war that has tainted subsequent decisions on military action and may do so again in the future. Rightly, legislatures have acquired a greater say in going to war. The 2003 vote in the British House of

Commons was the first time ever that Parliament had given prior authorization for war. It set a precedent that the Commons should debate and vote on military action, save for in emergency situations. Elected politicians in the UK and elsewhere now have the onerous duty of making these determinations. In Britain, they voted for force against Libya in 2011 and Daesh in Iraq and then Syria, but rejected it against Syria in August 2013. Many MPs feel the burden of the Iraq vote. They are no longer prepared to blindly follow a prime minister who informs them of an imminent security threat to the country.

But how can ever-busier politicians devote the necessary time to understanding conflict zones like Iraq, Libya and Syria? Congressmen and MPs cannot just become last-minute experts. Let's face it, none of them get elected for their deep and learned understanding of international issues, especially the Middle East. Those days are long gone. Politicians have to devote their time to constituents' interests. Politics is becoming ever more local. This was the case back in 2003, but arguably the trend has intensified.

Clearly, Congress and the House of

Commons failed to effectively scrutinize the executive, to devastating effect. Congress authorized the use of force in October 2002. Many, particularly in the US, made up their minds about invading Iraq years before, often in the naive belief that exporting democracy to Iraq would lead to a domino effect in neighboring states like Iran and Syria. Too few questioned the basic assumption that the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein still had an active weapons program. Back in 2003, Sen. Robert Byrd, a West Virginia Democrat, was critical of the Senate for spending so little time debating Iraq.

It was the UK Parliament that hosted the fiercest, bitterest debates over Iraq. Prime Minister Tony Blair won the vote, but against the backdrop of millions of people protesting in the streets against war. Yet, when you revisit the hours and hours of debates in 2002 and 2003, one thing truly stands out - an element that is rarely covered in reviewing this era, even in the Chilcot Report. It is the quite stunning lack of interest and knowledge about Iraq itself. The debates centered on weapons of mass destruction, the legality of the issue

Chris Doyle

and whether Al-Qaeda might be cooperating with the Iraqi regime. What would happen to Iraqis, trying to survive after 13 years of brutal sanctions and decades of Saddam's rule, did not figure.

Where was the debate about becoming an occupying power? Within weeks, the US and UK were in belligerent occupation of a sovereign state with no clarity as to the role of the UN. This entailed major legal and ethical responsibilities, above all to 25 million Iraqis. References in the debate were made to aid, but rarely if ever to post-conflict governance. How were the US and UK going to run the place? Is it any wonder, therefore, that proper plans for the security of key facilities, including the Iraq Museum, which was looted, were not considered? The decision of Coalition Provisional Authority chief Paul Bremer to disband the Iraqi army and pursue a policy of de-Baathification was not an issue in the legislatures in Washington and London.

A widespread assumption was that Iraqis would welcome the invading armies with open arms and celebrate their arrival. Some did, but the thrill soon wore off as the occu-

pying forces failed to restore basic services. Anyone with an ounce of knowledge of Iraqi history would be only too aware that the Iraqis are a proud people who will not readily accept being under foreign occupation.

The leader of the British opposition at the time, Iain Duncan-Smith, claimed: "I promise that no one will shed a tear over the departure of Saddam Hussein." Many Iraqis may not have loved Saddam, and for good reason, but they also feared what would happen after the fall of the regime, who would rule next and the dangers of anarchy. Regional experts feared this but were ignored, especially Arabists. Six academics briefed Blair in November 2002 about how challenging it would be to occupy Iraq. They and others warned that both Iran and Syria would see it as being in their interests to undermine the Anglo-American invasion and occupation, which they did very effectively. Iran was given to Iraq. Once again, politicians failed to appreciate this and the other challenges involved in nation-building.

Another feature was the failure to consult and trust experts from those countries. Back in 2003, too many wedded themselves

to the likes of Ahmed Chalabi, an Iraqi with an overt agenda. Plenty of other Iraqis, who also loathed Saddam, would have been capable of explaining the intricate challenges of occupying Iraq. Even today, Syrian experts are not in the room when their country is debated.

Non-Middle Eastern powers should learn their lessons. Arguably, the subsequent debates on interventions in these legislatures have improved a touch. Politicians recognize their responsibility. It weighs on them. Regarding Libya, more questions were asked about an exit strategy and what the end goal was. However, it was still insufficient to prevent another disastrous intervention. At the root of it was once again a profound lack of understanding of Muammar Qaddafi's Libya.

If elected politicians in the US and Europe debate and vote on interventions in other areas of the world, it is incumbent on those legislatures to devote proper time, effort and resources to scrutinize the basis for war and plan for any aftermath. Iraqis paid and are still paying an extraordinary price for the poverty of debate and lackluster scrutiny in 2003. This should never be repeated.



# Canada’s spies and the hypocrites who adore them

Andrew Mitrovica

**A** long time ago, I was known as the "spy guy" in the insular orbit of Canadian journalism. I earned the irritating moniker for a couple of reasons. I spent much - too much - of my career as an investigative reporter keeping a jaundiced watch over Canada's secret services. I am the author of one of two books of any consequence written about the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), the nation's equivalent of Britain's MI5. My 2002 exposé, *Covert Entry*, revealed a rogue agency rife with laziness, incompetence, corruption and law-breaking.

Sadly, too few reporters, editors, columnists or editorial writers in Canada have made the effort to understand how CSIS functions with impunity and hold it to account. I am sharing this history and context because, lately, there has been a geyser of leaking of "top secret" stuff going on in Canada that is causing quite a tizzy. Who is doing the leaking remains, of course, a mystery. Why they are doing it and who they are giving the "top secret" stuff to, is not. Taken together, the leaks suggest that China and, in particular, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), may have interfered in at least two recent Canadian federal elections. The leaks and accusations about China brought back distant memories. As I said, a long time ago, when I was the "spy guy" working at the national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, I wrote several stories exploring how Beijing was allegedly working in cahoots with criminal gangs and other surrogates to inject its tentacles not only inside Canadian politics, but business and culture, too.

The series culminated in a front-page story divulging the unredacted contents of a joint, hush-hush probe by the CSIS and Royal Canadian Mounted Police - the country's national police service - called "Project Sidewinder".

In an astonishing decree, the then

CSIS director ordered every copy of the politically explosive 23-page report destroyed because he considered it a "rumor-laced, conspiracy theory". Someone saved one and gave it to me. Now, when I got a hold of the Project Sidewinder report, I have to admit, it was a bit of a thrill. The giddy moment evaporated quickly given three important things I knew about "intelligence" services like CSIS. First, they are large, myopic bureaucracies filled with glorified bureaucrats who generate reams of paperwork. Some of that paperwork may be accurate; a lot of it is not. Second, intelligence officers gather information. But being described as an intelligence officer is a lot more impressive than being described as an "information officer". Having met and interviewed an unremarkable gallery of CSIS "information officers", I can assure you they are not an impressive lot.

Third, simply because a piece of paperwork churned out by an "information officer" with a CSIS badge is marked with any sort of security classification - by the way, "top secret" is standard - does not make it true. So, while Project Sidewinder named prominent, "compromised" tycoons and companies operating in Canada and abroad, it would have been irresponsible to publish their identities relying on a piece of inside paperwork authored by some cops and "information officers".

My careful and judicious editors, who were devoted, like me, to making sure we got it right, agreed. The happy "friendlies" getting the fresh paperwork, culled largely from public sources and marked "top secret" have not been so wary or reticent. Instead, like stenographers, they have published allegations as gospel that have questioned the loyalty and allegiance of sitting and former members of the Ontario legislature and the federal parliament based, in part, on stuff produced by "information officers"

who carry rather common security clearances.

This is dangerous. It is also not surprising. These "friendlies" have in the past relied on anonymous "security" officials to insist that Maher Arar - a Canadian father, husband and software engineer - received training at the same al-Qaeda camp in Afghanistan as convicted terrorist Ahmed Ressaam. All of it was a lie. The "friendlies" include editors sued for defamatory libel in 2015 by a former Ontario cabinet minister of Chinese descent after he was accused of being an "agent of influence" for China and a "threat" to Canada. This is all to say that Canadians should be cautious about accepting as fact stuff that is leaked to "friendly" journalists and news organisations who are not as cautious as they should be - despite having the imprimatur of an "intelligence" service stamped on it.

Meanwhile, a number of more thorough investigations have been struck to look into the allegations, even though China's "interference" is already said to have had little or no influence on the outcome of any federal election. Unfortunately, there are only two reporters in the country whom I would count as having a keen and, more importantly, a critical appreciation of how CSIS exercises its covert roles and responsibilities: Jim Bronskill at the Canadian Press wire service and Matthew Behrens, a prolific freelance journalist.

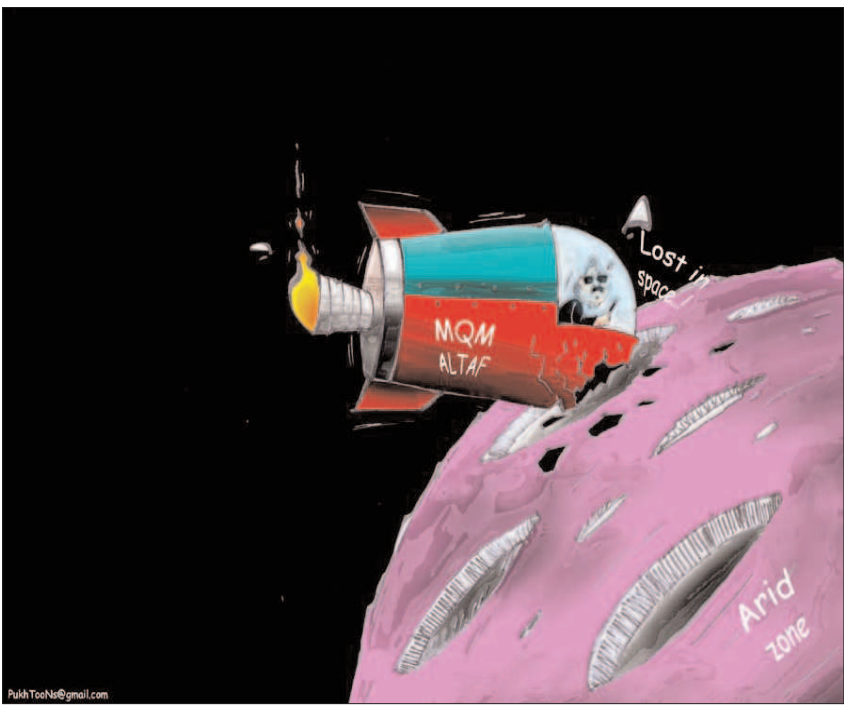
Like me, Jim and Matthew, have, throughout their dogged snooping on the snoopers, resisted the easy temptation to become conduits for the so-called "intelligence infrastructure" whenever it leaks a juicy morsel meant to establish that CSIS is doing its job and doing it well. Like me, Jim and Matthew have never been considered "friendlies" whom CSIS or any part of Canada's sprawling "intelligence infrastructure" can count on to hand "top secret" stuff to and then publish that stuff in the journalistic

equivalent of ventriloquism.

Far from being the proverbial puppet, my reporting and book made me persona non grata among the banal, pedestrian men who ran CSIS. Here is the other, grating aspect of the China story - that has dominated Canadian politics for the past few weeks - which reeks of hypocrisy. The consensus among a preening batch of grandstanding reporters, columnists, editorial writers and politicians is that China's "interference" in Canada's elections is bad because China is a "bad actor" on the international stage. I missed all the hyperventilating outrage when Canada's deputy prime minister, Chrystia Freeland, joined those Alexis-de-Tocqueville-like paragons of democracy, Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro and former US President Donald Trump and tried to engineer what amounted to a coup d'état and install their man, Juan Guaido, as the president of Venezuela. Freeland was praised by the same apoleptic columnists and editorial writers for interfering - openly and secretly - in Venezuela's domestic affairs since, like China, the country's president, Nicolas Maduro, is a "bad actor". This is a news story oozing with congratulatory glee, published widely among sympathetic Canadian news outlets, heralding Freeland's "key role" in playing a "behind the scenes" part in a failed attempt to depose the socialist leader.

When Canada interfered in Venezuela's right to choose who will be president, most Canadian establishment columnists, editorial writers and politicians applauded. Canada is, they agree, a "good actor". The sanctimony is as galling as it is instructive. But, these days, you won't hear so much as a whisper about Canada's not-so-secret record on the "interference" score since a capital city and newsrooms filled with amnesiac, spy-adoring hypocrites are too busy pointing an accusatory finger at China.

Aljazeera



## Arabs won't win America's respect by rebranding as MENA

Ray Hanania

**N**O ethnic group in America suffers more than Arabs. Why do I say that? Because all other groups - such as African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans - are protected by anti-discrimination laws and are included in the US Census.

There is a small group of Arab Americans, working with Asian and other ethnic groups, who are pushing to replace "Arab" with "MENA" - people from the Middle East and North Africa - as a compromise to get their ethnicity added as an option in the census. But MENA represents discrimination that goes far beyond Arab. If MENA truly represented Arabs, why not just propose that the word "Arab" be the focus of these efforts? Arabs and Muslims are not attacked because they are "MENA." If they are attacked, it is because they are Arab and/or Muslim.

Muslims have a broad identity in America. The majority of ethnic minority Muslims are African American and African Americans have many legal protections from discrimination, including an entire array of civil rights laws. Relatively few are Arab, so it is wrong to assume that, when legislation is adopted to confront Islamophobia or when American officials denounce Islamophobia, they

are addressing discrimination against Arabs.

Confronting discrimination against Arabs by mainstream America is necessary because it is Arabs and Muslims who are the targets, not "MENA." Creating a MENA category in the census would only derail efforts to protect Arabs, because their actual ethnicity would still not be defined. However, I understand why some people are pushing for MENA over Arab, as it is a broader category that is interpreted as including Africans, Asians and others.

Recently in Chicago, a small group of Arabs convinced newly elected Illinois State Rep. Abdelnasser Rashid to introduce a law to direct the state to conduct a disparity study into discrimination faced by the MENA community. Once the study is done, and if MENA is added to the legal definition of minority persons, it could allow MENA individuals - whatever that term means - to qualify for the Minority Business Enterprise scheme. That means they would be eligible for a portion of the billions of dollars in contracts set aside for various minorities, currently including Blacks, Hispanics, Asians and women. But the move is more about politics than improving the rights of Arabs in Illinois.

State Rep. Cyril Nichols

last year introduced legislation to designate Arabs as a Minority Business Enterprise category. It has the support of the American Arab Chamber of Commerce, the Arab American Democratic Club and the National Arab American Journalists Association. It also has the support of African American legislators, who put aside any concerns that opening the door to Arabs would dilute the funding African Americans would receive. However, Nichols was concerned when he saw the Arab community "divide itself" and choose politics over Minority Business Enterprise equality.

Anti-Arab discrimination and political rhetoric happen often, as has already been documented in several studies conducted in Illinois. Another study is not necessary. It is merely a political ploy to divide the Arab American community and separate its members from the word "Arab," which is considered more offensive to Americans than the milder, more innocuous "MENA." No one ever attacked me and called me a "dirty MENA." Anti-Arab racism will not be ended by rebranding Arabs as MENA. That can only happen when Americans recognize and respect Arabs as Arabs. But Arabs will not get that respect if we attempt to empower ourselves using the diluted term MENA.

## Travel under the influencers

Belén Fernández

**A**MONG the remaining bits of photographic evidence of a 2005 hitchhiking trip through Turkey is a shot of me lying in the back of the cab of a Turkish freight truck, clad in the same pink corduroy pants and blue sweater that I had been wearing for months. My hands are folded across my stomach, my eyebrows are raised, and the background is grey. The photo is blurry, having been taken while the truck was in motion by my hitchhiking companion Amelia, who had gotten the passenger's seat for that portion of the trajectory.

It is not, in other words, a picture that would elicit any interest whatsoever in the current social media age - in which Instagram, Facebook, and the like have assumed the realm of reality and converted existence into a marketing competition to see whose life looks better on screen. Travel influencers and other digital personalities expend all manner of time, resources, and photo-editing tools to produce images that are supposedly spontaneously and organically enchanting. Often, the images come accompanied by captions and hashtags underscoring the projected perfection of it all.

And yet that Turkish truck photo, despite its sparse plainness and lack of aesthetic appeal, does so much more for me personally than contemporary travel shots that are almost monotonous in their staged vibrancy. For one thing, it takes me back to a time when you could just see and do things without obsessing over how to properly curate the moment for diffusion on social media. The value of that moment in 2005 was not determined by the quantity of Facebook likes, as I had neither Facebook nor a phone at the time, and my experience and recollection of the hitchhiking trip was not clouded by digital interference.

Looking at the photo now, it signifies for me so much more than its components - unleashing memories of all the many Turkish trucks Amelia and I travelled in during our hitchhiking years and all of the roadside breakfasts we shared with truck drivers, seated on plastic stools around a portable stove. I remember hitchhiking into Syria, where two complete strangers spent the better part of their day vouching for us to the border guards in order to facilitate our entrance into the country. And I remember thumbing our way across Turkey's Black Sea region and Cappadocia, where a woman allowed us a room in her pension in exchange for a bag of hazelnuts that someone had gifted us.

Nowadays, as any glance at the internet will confirm, Cappadocia is known for its "most Instagrammable spots" and similarly alluring travel advice that calls into question the very point of travel in the first place. After all, there is nothing magical or educational about going to another country to take the same selfie as everyone else. But capitalism is good at casting vacuous homogeneity as happiness.

In the digital distraction that passes for life these days, a veritable industry has arisen to accommodate a spectrum ranging from nano influencers to mega influencers. The latter category features travel "social media entrepreneurs" with bazillions of followers who boast their own brands and hashtags, and who tell you what outfits to buy for the perfect selfie in Santorini. Unfortunately, triteness sells - and one popular travel influencer brand has capitalised on the encouraging slogan: "Do not waste a minute of your life!" Indeed, there is no better way to not waste your life than by binging on fairytale-type travel photos of glamorous

people and feeling wretched about yourself.

And the social media travel landscape is only getting more cringe-worthy by the day. Last year, Forbes magazine tripped over itself in celebration of the "new travel trend": influencer-hosted trips" - which enable lowly humans to accompany influencers on "photo-worthy" jaunts and experience the sort of "bucket-list itineraries that you lust after on your social media feeds". According to the 19th-century American author Mark Twain, travel was an antidote to "self-conceited" attitudes - a cure for "prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness". But in this day and age, travel under the influencers would appear to be nothing more than an exercise in self-conceit - the pursuit of an ever more narrow-minded, insular, and selfie-oriented view of the world. I suppose I consider myself lucky to be old enough to have predated the Instagram-TikTok-YouTube era, when it was still possible to believe - at least for those of us endowed with the obscene privilege to traverse international borders at will - that the very essence of travel had not been impossibly corrupted.

In 2006, one year after the boring Turkish truck photo, Amelia and I spent various months hitchhiking around Lebanon - where, thanks to a 34-day murderous summer rampage by the United States-backed Israeli military, the "photo-worthy" opportunities were rather few and far between. But at least I learned something about how the world works. Now, as picture-perfect views of the world are increasingly commodified and monetised, it is not the most ideal backdrop for humanity. And as an industry predicated on utter falsity and the reduction of reality to empty images continues to flourish, it's about time to get out from under the influencers.

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## Tories could raise billions in this budget and not spook markets - but they haven't got guts

**W**AS it that Mayfair launch of bottles of Bollinger at £350 a pop? Was it flicking through glossy newspaper supplements with their pages of hideous watches costing hundreds of thousands? No, surely last week's top shocker was watching both Shell and BP CEOs' pay double to about £10m each, profiting from the slaughter in Ukraine.

These budget-week reflections, amid a wave of overdue strikes, echo a recent report by the FT's astute data-cruncher John Burn-Murdoch, that "Britain and the US are poor societies with some very rich people." The tyranny of averages hides the way we live now, though any reader of this paper, or indeed the FT, will have a weary sense of déjà vu about our grotesque and economically dysfunctional inequality: earnings for the top 1% have accelerated since the start of the pandemic. UK plutocrats rank proudly fifth in the world for mega-wealth, but our poor have 20% less than the poor of Slovenia.

That's the context to think about when our multimillionaire chancellor and a prime minister richer than the king unveil their budget on Wednesday. Expect a spot of epoxy to fix a few of their most politically damaging social breakages. But don't accept "there's no more money" when rational reforms of our grotesquely unjust tax system could harvest considerable sums to salve the most egregious social crises.

Britain has got a lot poorer, partly due to economic own goals such as Brexit. There is less of everything following "the most dramatic period of spending cuts in modern history", so taxes must rise unless voters are ready to see public services disintegrate further. That's the choice - and

the sharp message from Paul Johnson, Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) director, in his new book, *Follow the Money*. He has killer facts: no politician dare challenge IFS figures. His analysis of our warped tax system, riddled with reliefs for rich people and penalties for the rest, offers irrefutably fairer options. "Government's dirty secret is that it chooses not to do the right thing," he writes. That's through fear of voters (he has the advantage of not needing to woo them or confront the Daily Mail). Vastly more money could be raised by squeezing rich people and ending their tax reliefs - but he warns that truly economy-changing sums to invest in long-term growth and public services mean asking everyone to pay more. However, read this eye-opener to see the cornucopia of low-hanging fruit a chancellor could gather.

How much more should we pay in tax? That's up to us, because "there is nothing in economics that says we can't have a bigger state", Johnson writes. Look how similar countries that raise far more tax to buy far better services, while investing in growth, succeed better than us: France, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands all raise and spend far more, pulling away from us at a faster pace as we sink down the G7 in growth. Incomes in France grew in a decade by 34% and in Germany by 27%, while typical UK income dropped by 2%, reports the Resolution Foundation.

In no particular order, look at our erratic tax system. Take council tax, now almost as outrageous as the poll tax it replaced: with its cap on top rates it defies every rule of tax justice, so zillionaire mansions pay just three times more than the humblest bedsit - sorry, "studio flat". Land

value tax, backed by the FT's Martin Wolf, would be fair, while capturing developers' profits to spend on public projects.

It's lucky few people understand pensions: the state gifts earners in the 40% bracket a much more generous amount for every £1 they save than it does those in the 20% bracket. Why not a 25% flat rate for all, says Ros Altmann, former Tory pensions minister? Expect Hunt on Wednesday to further boost top-rate pension tax relief, to keep high earners from retiring. Don't expect him to make pensioners pay national insurance, even though they are less likely to be poor than the rest. Logically, the meaningless NI should merge with income tax, but if the optics of the headline rate look too frightening, at least Hunt could charge NI on all unearned income received by rentiers and shareholders. No harm would be done to the economy, Johnson says, by raising the basic rate income tax to 25%, the higher rate to 45% and the top rate to 50%: that would bring in a useful £50bn.

Proof that the government never meant to level up is in their capital gains tax, levied at a mere 28% for higher earners, and only 10% for others, rather than being equalised with hard-earned PAYE rates: ending this avoidance by private equity chizzlers would bring in billions. Labour is committed to this, and to closing many tax loopholes. Here's a counterintuitive idea: VAT exemptions aid rich people more than poor people, as they spend more. Abolishing all zero and reduced-rate VAT, such as on food, energy and children's clothes, would raise so many tens of billions, says Johnson, that you could greatly raise all benefits levels to cover the cost to poor

people and compensate other lower-earners several times over.

Why didn't Hunt immediately restore the much-needed health and social care levy, abolished by Liz Truss? Nor did he bring back the cap on bankers' bonuses; their pay will soar thanks to high interest rates pouring cash into their vaults from mortgage payers. Tax-free Isas benefit well-off people: make sure that the £70bn that could be raised is invested in green government bonds, says tax expert Richard Murphy. Rich people love the largely mythical Laffer curve, which pretends that high top-tax ends up yielding less revenue, but Prof Danny Blanchflower skewers it: Donald Trump's "\$2tn tax cuts for the rich left \$2tn of debt". Tax deters harmful things such as tobacco, but on carbon this government does the reverse: it listens to lobbyists, meaning the decade-long petrol tax freeze will continue, costing £6bn. New ultra-low air passenger tax next month cuts the price of domestic flights just when we need people back on trains: flying is taxed less than driving.

All of these are random examples, but there are many other ways to ensure taxes fall on the broadest shoulders while generating more to pay public staff decently, rescue public services, ensure livable benefits rates, invest in green growth and more. That's without considering more radical ideas, such as the LSE's Wealth Tax Commission, which proposes a one-off tax of 5% on wealth above £2m, yielding £80bn. Truss may act as a warning against spooking the markets, but these reforms would be no-brainers if only the public knew what could be done. A wise thought from Paul Johnson: "Government needs to be brave and so do we."

The Guardian

## The SNP hierarchy is in meltdown over independence

Tom Harris

referendum until a significant and stable majority in favour of change has materialised. The challenge to the SNP post-Sturgeon, therefore, was to seek to build that majority, incrementally and with patience.

Yousaf, being the more mercurial of the two and the one viewed by some as having less intellectual ballast, was the first to blink and to seek to cater for those in the SNP membership who have no time for patience (as it were). Taking a mature, thoughtful approach was all very well: it might make for good governance and less division, but it would hardly appeal to that large and vocal section of the membership who believe that tomorrow is too long to wait for their "freedom". Yousaf is clearly nervous that despite having the enthusiastic support of the SNP establishment - including that of Sturgeon herself and her deputy, John Swinney - he may yet be pipped at the post by Forbes's unexpectedly robust recovery after her false start to the campaign.

And so he has gone - to coin a Scottish phrase - "full zoomer", hoping to win the support of the party's Braveheart tendency by

promising to destroy the Union "by any means necessary". This might mean the prospect of a snap Holyrood election which would be used to seek a mandate for independence. But "by any means necessary" must surely include all those scenarios that certain nationalists only dream of, like a unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) and stealing the Stone of Scone before it makes its way southwards for King Charles's coronation. In other words, he's playing to the mob, just as Jeremy Corbyn played to the worst instincts of his own party when he won Labour's leadership contest in 2015. The main difference is that Corbyn meant it, whereas Yousaf has already demonstrated that he's willing to champion whatever policy gets him the maximum number of votes.

He's playing a dangerous game, for his country as well as his party. As Labour found to its cost, signing the party over to extremists makes you unelectable. Sturgeon herself paid the price for over-promising and under-delivering. Yet here is her putative successor, not only refusing to learn the lessons of her defeat, but eagerly duplicating them for his short-term





# Pakistan, Canada discuss ways to promote cooperation in trade, investment

ISLAMABAD (APP): The High Commissioner of Canada, Ms. Leslie Scanlon and Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday exchanged views on enhancing bilateral relations in various avenues and cooperation in a number of fields including trade, investment and climate resilience.

During a call on meeting of the High Commissioner with the Finance Minister, both the sides discussed overall global economic situation as well as economic policies and programmes of the government in Pakistan.

According to press

statement issued by finance ministry, Ishaq Dar said both the countries were having friendly relations and commended the support of Canadian government for flood affected people.

He briefed the envoy about the economic outlook and the challenges being faced by the country, coupled with huge losses due to the devastating floods last year.

He further shared that the government with its pragmatic policy decisions had not only arrested the economic decline but was also steering the economy towards stability and growth.

He also shared that the government had taken difficult decisions in key

sectors, including energy in order to reduce budgetary and current account deficits and increased the revenue generation.

The minister also informed about the talks held with International Monetary Fund (IMF) Mission and reiterated the commitment of the government to complete the existing program with the fund and fulfill all the international obligations.

The minister appreciated the Canadian investments in Pakistan and extended full support and cooperation of the government to enhance the economic relations between both the countries.

On the occasion, Ms.

Leslie Scanlon also shared sentiments of deep rooted friendly relations between Pakistan and Canada and said, both the countries enjoyed excellent relations and these needed to be further promoted especially on trade, investment and Climate resilience.

The High Commissioner of Canada, Ms. Leslie Scanlon informed about the newly developed strategy for the region through which Pakistan would be able to access facilities for climate resilience and re-building.

She supported the policies and programs of the government for socio-economic development and economic growth.



ISLAMABAD: H.E Ms. Leslie Scanlon, High Commissioner of Canada calls on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Finance Division.

## \$4.5 mln fertilizer right project launched

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) in collaboration with United States on Tuesday launched \$4.5 million "Fertilizer Right Project", aiming at to enhance fertilizer use efficiency through innovative practices as well as to address climate, environmental and economic challenges.

As part of the US-Pakistan "Green Alliance" framework, the project prioritizes cooperation to overcome agricultural challenges caused by climate change, with a shared objective of reducing carbon emissions that contribute to climate change.

This innovative four years project also aims to

help local farmers to enhance fertilizer use efficiency through innovative practices, said a press release issued by PARC.

The launching ceremony was held at National Agriculture Research Center, which was attended by the Ambassador of United States to Pakistan, Donald Blome and the Chairman of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, Dr Ghulam Muhammad Ali.

Speaking on the occasion Chairman PARC said that with this vital initiative, the United States and Pakistan are committed to build a sustainable future, supporting farmers and communities to overcome the complex

environmental challenges of the future. He lauded the support extended by the United States to the agricultural sector of Pakistan for decades and also highlighted various collaborative initiatives between USDA and PARC.

"Pakistani scientists are being trained under United States capacity building programs and these scientists are continuously contributing to the agricultural development in the country", he added.

Dr Ali highlighted that irrational use of chemical fertilizers to increase agricultural productivity and meet the food demands of growing population and said that it was leading to

environmental degradation and health hazards.

He said that efficient use of fertilizers was crucial for sustainable agriculture and food security in the country. The Fertilizer Right" initiative would develop the capacity of Pakistani farmers' in utilizing fertilizers effectively, which would lead to increased crop yields without negatively impacting the environment, he added.

On the occasion, both sides expressed a strong commitment to further collaborate for boosting agricultural sector of Pakistan through joint research and technical support with the ultimate goal of creating a strong economy.

## MoU signing ceremony between KPEZDMC and USAID-ERDA

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: MoU signing ceremony was held between KPEZDMC and USAID's Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA) Implemented by Associates in Development (AID) Pvt. Ltd. at the Head office of KPEZDMC in Peshawar.

The aim of the MOU was to formalize the collaborative efforts by identifying areas of common interest for joint and synergistic efforts to ramp up the development and operations of industrial estates/economic zones in the NMDs, particularly by

engaging the private sector under Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

KPEZDMC was represented by CEO KPEZDMC Mr. Javed Iqbal Khattak while Chief of Party Mr. Shah Muhammad led the USAID-ERDA Team.

The MoU calls for the parties to work together on a pre-feasibility study for the Development, Operationalization, And Operation & Maintenance of the Mohmand Economic Zone under the PPP model. The study aims to explore the potential opportunities and challenges of the project and pave the way for successful PPP partnership.

Both parties believe that

the partnership will bring together their expertise and resources to ensure the project's success. The PPP modality will enable the Government to leverage private sector resources and expertise to deliver high-quality infrastructure and services to the public.

The Mohmand Economic Zone Project is set to stimulate economic growth and increase job opportunities in the Newly Merged Districts and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. This initiative is expected to attract both local and foreign investors, promote investment in the area, and enhance the region's competitiveness.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships, namely, MSC Rida, Evridiki and Al Areesh carrying containers, mogas and LNG, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, FOTCO Oil Terminal and E n g r o E l e n g y Terminal respectively the other day.

Meanwhile, three more ships, MSC Denisse, YM Saturn and Kano carrying containers, palm oil and LNG also arrived at the outer anchorage of the port on Tuesday morning.

A total of five ships were engaged at Port QasimA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, MSC Rida and Wooyang Dandy, are expected to sail today.

A cargo volume of 120,827 tonnes, comprising 110,406 tonnes of imports cargo and 10,421 tonnes of export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 1,073, containers (460 TEUs imports and 613 TEUs export) was handled at the port during the last 24 hours.

There are five ships at the outer anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, four ships, MSC Anchorage, MSC Denisse, KANO and YM Saturn, and another ship, Maersk Atlanta carrying containers, LNG and palm oil are expected to take berths at QICT, PGPC, and LCT respectively later today.

## Doodlers assemble to celebrate ‘Phy-gital’ art at Red Bull Doodle Art Pakistan national finals

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The doodling season is upon us and with it, doodlers are out in droves to compete in the Red Bull Doodle Art 2023. Out of 3000 entries from across Pakistan, only 20 entries made it to the national finals of the international contest.

On Sunday, March 12, 2023, at the Islamabad Arts Gallery at F-9 Park in Islamabad, the 19 finalists presented their work and doodled away in order to not only win the Red Bull Doodle Art national finals, and with it, the NFT trophy, but also an opportunity to represent Pakistan in the Red Bull Doodle Art World Final in Amsterdam later this spring.

After an entire day of a showcase of mind-blowing creativity and doodling techniques and ideas, the jury evaluated the entries based on three criteria: creativity, artistic skill and the way the doodle express a 'love for life'.

Subsequently, the panel decisive ly declared Umer Nadeem the winner of the Red Bull Doodle Art Pakistan 2023. Iqra Qureshi and Mominah Arif were the first and second runners-up respectively. "I expected to be in at least top five, but never thought I'd win. So, this is very encouraging," said Nadeem, who is an architect by profession and an artist "by birth", as he defines himself on his LinkedIn profile.

For his entry in the national finals, Nadeem doodled an artwork that

wowed the jury and the audience alike. He said, "My design was inspired by my home country, Pakistan. I wanted to represent my own country and so I made it the focal point of my doodle."

The winner Nadeem will now spend four weeks collaborating with an industry-leader professional artist to create a new doodle NFT to present at the Red Bull Doodle Art World Final in Amsterdam in May. He will compete with national winners of over 60 countries and take part in a series of workshops and creative sessions over the course of a three-day "phy-gital" experience of the World Final where both physical and digital realms of art meet in the artistic hub of the Netherlands.

"For the World Final in Amsterdam, I hope that I'll nail it and bring the trophy home to Pakistan," said Nadeem.

The finalists came from all age groups and backgrounds and brought with themselves their unique doodling styles influenced by their unique life experiences, culture and inspirations. The top 19 who made it to the finals were Aliyan Salam, Ameer Hamza, Hayyan Harmann, Iqra Qureshi, Maria Khalid, Maria Khan, Minahil Noor (the only participant with two entries in the finals), Mominah Arif, Noor ul Ain, Rabia Zafar, Rafia Abid, Rafia Ashraf, Rahat Shakeel,

Rumaisa Jabeen, Sami Ullah, Shahnoor Ejaz, Taqdees Sher, Umer Nadeem and Unzila Idrees.

The jury panel included Mr. Imran Ali Dina, graphics designer, founder of GFX Mentor, Media Science teacher and YouTuber with over 22 years of experiences; and Ms. Amna Shah, Director at Hunerkada, an institute where she also studied sculpture. Shah has held multiple exhibitions and events for Hunerkada, and is constantly working to promote arts and culture in Pakistan.

"People here have so much potential and they are creating wonders," said Dina. "Red Bull Doodle Art is amazing; it gives everyone freedom to express themselves. I'm loving every aspect of the participants' creativity and skills. It's very impressive."

Hunerkada, College of Visual & Performing Arts Islamabad campus is the venue partners of Red Bull Doodle Art, National Finals 2023. Best Western Premier Hotel, as the exclusive hospitality partner, provided accommodation and transport to all finalists reaching Islamabad from across Pakistan & had their food stall set up at the event. Peshawar Zalmi's apparel brand, The Zalmi Store, was the apparel partner for the national finals of Red Bull Doodle Art and the reason all the finalists looked photoshoot-ready.



## Rebuttal of FBR

An article was published in some section of the media on 12.3.2023 bearing the title "FBR project gets poor rating from lender". The piece is factually incorrect on numerous accounts and quotes statistics without proper context which makes it misleading. To begin with, the very title of the article is misleading in that the article itself states that the World Bank had accorded "moderately satisfactory" rating to the Pakistan Raises Revenue Program, whereas the title calls it "poor" – a rating which does not even exist in World Bank's project performance ratings code book.

It is pertinent to mention that this code book has six categories in the rating scale and "moderately satisfactory" is at number three on this scale. The article, in clear contradiction to its own title, goes on to admit that "the World Bank has kept overall project development objective rating at "satisfactory". Another example of this glaring and out of context reporting is that the "moderately satisfactory" rating was accorded to the smaller component-II of the PRR Program which is only worth \$80 M out of the total Program size of \$400 M. As per the World Bank's Aide Memoire "overall, the progress on Component I is satisfactory and improving". Important to note that Component I is worth \$320 M and thus makes 80% of the total \$400 M PRR Program. The author didn't track the progress that took place since World Bank completed its Medium Term Review (MTR) mission in October

& November 2022 and based his story on stale data. FBR was able to successfully complete a host of DLI based policy actions under Component I that led to additional disbursement of \$41.568 M in February 2023, bringing total disbursement to \$ 250 M i.e. 62% of the total Program size and, to be correct on disbursement design, 78% of Component I allocation. The article, on the other hand, reported the old disbursement figure of \$210 M under Component I.

The article also misrepresented FBR's plans to extend facilitation to taxpayers' doorstep through Mobile Facilitation Stations (MFS). This twist on facts is based on using provocative words like "luxury vehicles" which damages taxation efforts in two major ways: frustrating taxpayer facilitation efforts of FBR and creating public's mistrust in government institutions which results in dilution of revenue generation efforts during these hard economic times. Since this is the second time this issue has been misrepresented by the same author, FBR would like to provide the context to the readers so that they are aware of the whole story and not just cherry picked points. The World Bank team conducted a Mid-Term Review (MTR) in Oct-Nov 2022, in order to review the progress and to determine any restructuring requirement of the Program. The article in question based its points, albeit selectively, on the reports of this MTR mission. The World Bank mission recommended project restructuring in two phases. As a result of rapid struc-

turing phase, FBR was able to achieve DLI targets and, consequently, get the disbursement of USD 41.568 M under Component I. For the second phase of restructuring, the MTR mission agreed with the need for the revision of Component-II's PC-I due to price escalation of the IT equipment/system upgrades that FBR requires and changes in organization's needs to achieve Component I policy actions. Under revised PC-I, the primary initiative designed to support Component I policy actions was undertaking the tax compliance initiatives and behavioral nudges through enhancement of FBR's outreach through Mobile Facilitation Stations (MFS) in areas where outreach is less due to difficulty of access and resource shortage. Each of these stations was to be housed in a vehicle retrofitted with IT equipment (with all requisite FBR systems installed on it), internet connection, printer/scanner, walkie-talkie, biometric device, bank card machines and GPS system. The mobile stations intend to perform various facilitation functions under the law at taxpayers' doorstep for instance registration, return filing, broadening of tax base, POS invoice verification, correction of taxpayers' data, CPR correction and Track & Trace related support, just to name a few. It was these 155 Mobile Facilitation Stations that the article incorrectly mentioned as "luxury vehicles" merely on the basis of their engine capacity which was proposed for the different terrains/ areas these were to be used on. For urban

areas low engine capacity stations were to be made operational and for rural & hilly areas higher engine capacity stations were to be deployed. Moreover, the MFS initiative was to be implemented in phases with the initial pilot of 25 stations made operational in phase 1 after World Bank's approval. At present only FBR is creating a provision in revised PC-I. This was to be followed by an in-depth study into the successes of phase 1 and phase 2 was to be adjusted based on the learnings/ recommendations of this study. This initiative was to be funded from the ongoing \$80 M Component-II of the Pakistan Raises Revenue Program without any additional funding. This initiative has to be undertaken by 30th June, 2025 i.e., the end of the PRR project. It is worth noting that neither the word "luxury" was ever used in any MFS proposal nor was any function other than facilitation and compliance was conceived for this initiative.

Similarly, the article also attributes the decline in tax to GDP ratio from 13% to 10% since June 2018 to the performance of FBR & provinces whereas the change is due to rebasing of GDP. FBR, being the primary revenue collection agency of the Federal Government, is fully cognizant of current economic challenges facing the country. It is, thus, fully committed to delivering on its statutory role and, in the process comply with all requisite rules and regulations of the Government. (PR)

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets sank Tuesday, with banks bearing the brunt of the selling on fears of contagion in the sector after the collapse of two regional US lenders.

The swift closure of Silicon Valley Bank on Friday, followed by Signature Bank days later, forced US authorities to immediately pledge support for other lenders and depositors. The move by the Federal Reserve, Treasury Department and Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. provided some reassurance to investors, but shares in several US banks were hammered on fears of a run by customers.

That came despite Joe Biden giving assurances that the nation's banking system was sound, while European leaders similarly tried to soothe investor worries. The collapse of SVB, which specialised in venture-capital financing and largely in the tech sector, was largely the result of the Fed's sharp interest rate hikes aimed at

quelling inflation, which hit securities hard.

Now several commentators and leading banks say the Fed might need to pause its tightening campaign to provide some stability to financial markets -- with some even suggesting it could cut borrowing costs.

That sent the dollar tumbling Monday, though it clawed back some of those losses in Asian trade.

Yields on government bonds around the world have tumbled in light of the crisis, and analysts warn the risk of recession has grown. "Global bond markets are suggesting a global economic slowdown, which is not great for Asia," said John Vail of Nikko Asset Management.

Equity markets were well in the red in early Asian trade Tuesday, with Tokyo, Sydney and Seoul almost two percent down, while Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore and Taipei suffered hefty selling. Among banks in the region, Mitsubishi UFJ Financial and Sumitomo

Mitsui Financial Group each shed more than seven percent in Japan, while Hong Kong-listed HSBC sank more than three percent. National Australia Bank was off more than two percent and South Korea's KB Financial Group fell three percent.

Bloomberg News reported that about \$465 billion had been wiped off the market value of global financial stocks in three days. "Measures by authorities have so far prevented a US bank run on deposits but have not been enough to avert a bank run by investors," said National Australia Bank's Rodrigo Catril.

"The risk of a financial crisis remains elevated, and investors have rushed to reduce their exposure to the sector," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management added that the selling came despite non-US banks having little exposure to the firms in trouble and with global financial systems being flush with cash.

"US financial stress

could lead banks of all stripes to retrench lending to the real economy and tighten broader financial conditions, amplifying risk to the broader markets," he added. "And a lower rates environment would likely hit worldwide banks' profits." Investors were already on edge over the prospect the Fed would hike interest rates more than initially thought when it meets next week, as the economy remains in rude health and the jobs market tight.

They are now nervously awaiting the release of US consumer inflation figures this week, with a forecast-beating figure meaning a huge headache for the Fed, in light of the SVB crisis.

"A policy mistake is hands down the biggest risk in the market," Mary Manning, of Alpinity Investment Management, told Bloomberg Television.

"Controlling inflation but also addressing the fact there is some instability in the banking system is difficult."





## In brief

## Open Tennis Tournament

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Tennis Association (ITF), in collaboration with Impetus, would be holding the ITC Open Tennis Tournament would kick off at the Islamabad Tennis Complex from March 18. Tournament Chief Organizer, Davis Cup Coach Fazal Subhan informed APP that Khadija Laghari had been appointed as the **C h a i r p e r s o n** Organizing Committee of the tournament while Kamran Khalil would act as Tournament Director. "Eight categories of competitions will be held in the tournament, including men's singles, men's doubles, women's singles, boys under-18, ladies under-18, boys under-14, boys and girls under-12 (mixed) and boys and girls under-10 (mixed) categories." The finals of the tournament would be held on March 19, whereas prizes will be distributed among the winning players after the final competitions.

## Golf Tournament attracts 500 golfers

LAHORE (INP): AAA Associates has been supporting the game of golf in Pakistan for quite a while now. The topline vertical real estate company has been an instrumental role in organizing golf tournaments in twin cities and this time the venue was chosen to be in Lahore. The event took place from 9th to 12th March and was a national-level golfing occasion. More than five hundred golfers from various clubs in several categories participated in the tournament, which included AAA Associates' Lahore golf team as well. The team members included Mr. Wajid Riaz, General Manager of Sales, Mr. Umar Ijaz Branch Head Lahore, and Mr. Rana Rehan Sales Consultant. On this occasion, the participants from AAA Associates interacted with the players and guests to introduce the company's projects. The closing ceremony on the last day was attended by a large number of renowned golfers, army officers, and their families. The ceremony was also followed by an extravagant hi-tea for the guests.

## Not up to UK to decide ban: IOC

LONDON (Agencies): The International Olympic Committee says the UK government should "respect the autonomy of sport" after it asked sponsors to support a ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes at Paris 2024. Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer wrote a letter to UK chief executives of the IOC's 13 worldwide partners saying the regimes "must not be allowed to use sport for their propaganda purposes". "It is not up to governments to decide which athletes can participate in which international competitions," read an IOC statement. "This would be the end of world sport as we know it today." In February, Frazer chaired a summit of 36 countries, including France, that released a joint statement pledging their support for ongoing sanctions at international sporting events following the war in Ukraine. The IOC said: "It must be the sole responsibility of sports organisations to decide which athletes can take part in international competitions based exclusively on their sporting merit." In accordance with this, Olympic sponsors are not involved in this decision-making process. "We hope very much that the British government will respect the autonomy of sport."



INDIAN WELLS: Emma Raducanu of Great Britain hits a forehand against Beatriz Haddad Maia of Brazil in the third round of the BNP Paribas Open.

## Rehman and Gul in coaching staff for Afghanistan T20Is

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Cricket Board has announced Abdul Rehman and Umar Gul as the head and bowling coaches of the Pakistan side for the three-match T20I series against Afghanistan later this month.

Abdul Rehman is a seasoned coach, who has performed being carrying out duties at domestic level. He was the head coach of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa when they won National T20 and Pakistan Cup, and shared Qaid-e-Azam Trophy with Central Punjab. He also won two National T20s as head

coach of Peshawar Panthers and was Peshawar Zalmi's assistant coach when they won the HBL Pakistan Super League in 2017.

Rehman has also been assistant coach under Andy Flower at Multan Sultans for the last four years. He was Pakistan U19 coach during Bangladesh's tour of Multan in November last year.

Umar Gul, one of the most celebrated T20 bowlers in Pakistan, was Afghanistan's bowling coach in the recent ICC Men's T20 Cricket World Cup 2022. He took 85 wickets at 16.97 in 60

T20Is from 2007-16.

Mohammad Yousuf and Abdul Majeed will continue their roles as batting and fielding coaches.

Complete list of player support personnel

Mansoor Rana (team manager), Abdul Rehman (head coach), Umar Gul (bowling coach), Mohammad Yousuf (batting coach), Abdul Majeed (fielding coach), Cliffe Deacon (physiotherapist), Talha Ijaz (analyst), Ahsan Iftikhar Nagi (media and digital manager) and Drikus Saaimon (strength and conditioning coach).

## Pakistan grabs U14 trophy of Int'l Open Karate C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's young talented female team bagged the Under-14 trophy of the 25th Kensho International Open Karate Championship 2023 at the Galle sports Complex, Sri Lanka.

The Pakistani team raised the country's flag in the championship, which included teams from Sri Lanka, Japan, Germany, India and Pakistan, said a press release issued here on Tuesday.

A team from Pakistan secured three gold medals and one silver medal in the championship. The gold medalists include Anahita Fatima, Aiyana Noel, Ayra

Adil while Zehab Ghazanfar clinched a silver medal.

The young Kumite Anahita Fatima, Aiyana Noel and Ayra Adil bagged the gold medals in 40Kg, 35Kg and 20Kg categories, respectively while Anahita Fatima downed the opponent player in 20 seconds.

Speaking on the achievement, Anahita Fatima said, "It's my dream to participate in the Olympics and represent Pakistan." Moreover, male Kumite Zehab Ghazanfar secured the silver medal in the 35kg category. Under the supervision of the Sindh Karate Association,

the Pakistan team took part in the international event.

"It is a great honour to share the spectacular victory with a young Karate team comprising four karatekas of Taurus Mixed Martial Arts in an international championship held in Sri Lanka," Chief Coach and Secretary Sindh Karate Association Wasif Ali said.

Title and Medal:-40kg females kumite Gold medal, Anahita Fatima; -35 Kg females kumite Gold medal, Aiyana Noel; -20 kg females kumite Gold medal, Ayra Adil; -35 kg male kumite silver medal, Zehab Ghazanfar.

## Alcaraz, Fritz win; Murray, Badosa out at Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS (AP): Carlos Alcaraz defeated Tallon Griekspoor 7-6 (4), 6-3 in the BNP Paribas Open on Monday, joining defending champion Taylor Fritz in the fourth round.

Former NBA players Dirk Nowitzki and Steve Nash sat in the front row to see Alcaraz advance in the Southern California desert, where he was a semifinalist a year ago. The 19-year-old from Spain can return to the world's No. 1 ranking by winning the title here.

The fourth-seeded Fritz routed Sebastian Baez 6-1, 6-2. Fritz served four aces and won 88% of his first-serve points against the 30th-seeded Baez from Argentina.

"I'm trying to take it like it's any other tournament, but it is pretty tough to not know that I'm defending a title," Fritz said. "I'm getting constantly reminded of that."

Andy Murray's run ended with a 7-6 (6), 6-2 loss to 21-year-old Jack Draper.

"I've looked up to Andy since I was so young," Draper said. "I watched him win Wimbledon for the first time in 2013 and then I've had the opportunity to get to know him and practice with him often since 2019. He's a really special person, a great champion and a great human being, and it was a privilege to

play against him on this court."

Murray has not won three consecutive matches at a Masters 1000 event since he won the title in Paris in 2016.

Also advancing was Stan Wawrinka, who defeated No. 7 seed Holger Rune, 2-6, 7-6 (5), 7-5. American Tommy Paul beat ninth-seeded Hubert Hurkacz, 4-6, 6-2, 6-4.

Rune saved a match point and rallied from 2-5 down to win the second-set tiebreaker. But Wawrinka recovered in the third to send his 19-year-old opponent packing.

"The last 45 minutes was tough," Wawrinka said. "I had the match in control and was playing well. I was putting a lot of pressure — I should have won the match way before."

Wawrinka reached the fourth round at Indian Wells for the first time since 2017, when he lost in the final. He turns 38 next month.

"All my career I know only one way," Wawrinka said. "To keep fighting, working, pushing myself and stay positive. I am super happy with the win."

No. 8 Felix Auger-Aliassime avoided the upset bug and beat Francisco Cerundolo, 7-5, 6-4.

In women's action, top-ranked Iga Swiatek beat 2019 champion Bianca

Andreescu, 6-3, 7-6 (1).

"I'm glad that I got the chance to play under pressure a little bit more, and see how I am going to cope with that," Swiatek said on court.

No. 4 Ons Jabeur lost to Marketa Vondrousova, 7-6 (5), 6-4, and No. 5 Caroline Garcia outlasted Leylah Fernandez, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-1.

Qualifier Varvara Gracheva knocked out No. 8 Daria Kasatkina, 6-4, 6-4. Emma Raducanu, the 2021 U.S. Open champion, beat No. 13 Beatriz Haddad Maia, 6-1, 2-6, 6-4.

The final set lasted more than an hour, with Raducanu breaking Haddad Maia's serve to go up 4-3. Raducanu held the rest of the way and closed it out on her fourth match point. It was her biggest win over an opponent since her breakthrough run at the U.S. Open.

Next up for Raducanu is a fourth-round match against Swiatek.

"I'm pretty sure I'll be ready tactically; my coach is good at tactics so I'm just going to trust him," Swiatek said. "I'm pretty sure that I got into the rhythm already, so hopefully I'm going to play better with every match."

No. 10 Elena Rybakina beat defending champion Badosa, 6-3, 7-5.

## Captains of Qalandars, Sultans, United, Zalmi optimistic to make it into PSL final

ISLAMABAD (APP): Skippers of Lahore Qalandars, Multan Sultans, Islamabad United and Peshawar Zalmi were optimistic to make it to the final of HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) 8 and lift the trophy, when the ultimate stage of the competition kicks off at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore from Wednesday.

Table-toppers Lahore Qalandars, Shaheen Afridi said, "I am delighted with the consistency my team has shown in this edition. We are very thankful to our fans for their continuous support. We have seen houseful matches in Home of Qalandars where the crowd turns out in large numbers to support us. We cannot wait to repay their faith with another title."

Lahore Qalandars would face Multan Sultans in the PSL Qualifier on Wednesday.

Multan Sultan's Mohammad Rizwan said, "The first half of the tournament went really well for us and then we lost the way in between. But, I am very happy with how we have made a comeback strongly and ensured that we quali-

fy for the Playoffs.

"We enter the Playoffs with some great fighting spirit and that is what is needed towards the back-end of a tournament like the HBL PSL. You need to have that confidence that you can bounce back from any situation and that record run chase and then exceptional performances from our youngsters like Usman Khan, Abbas Afridi and Ihsanullah have instilled believe in us that we can comeback from anywhere. We are eyeing our third consecutive HBL PSL final now, and, with the help of Allah Almighty, we will try to lift the trophy this time."

Islamabad United and Peshawar Zalmi would meet in the first PSL Eliminator on Thursday and the team that loses will get knocked out of the event. The winner would face the loser of the Qualifier on Friday. Meanwhile the Winner Qualifier and Winner Eliminator 2 would be up against in the final on Sunday.

Islamabad United's Shadab Khan said, "It has been an exciting season for us, but now we are focused on

what lays ahead. As a captain, I am pleased at how the players have performed and especially at how youngsters have raised their hands in tough situations. The results are not something you can control, but as a team, it is important to remain consistent in your processes and know what you are paying for."

"I am pretty confident with our chances. We have lifted the HBL PSL trophy twice and there is no doubt that we can do it for the third time," he said.

Peshawar Zalmi's Babar Azam said, "I am very happy to see how the youngsters in Peshawar Zalmi have stepped up and made their potential known to the world. Saim Ayub, Muhammad Harris, Haseebullah and Arshad Iqbal have been outstanding and I am backing them to continue to perform and deliver in the Playoffs."

"While our batting has done wonderfully well, we need to fix some of the loopholes in our bowling department and I am sure that we will also emerge as a strong bowling unit in Lahore," he said.

### Madrid tries to avoid Liverpool comeback

MADRID (AP): Real Madrid got used to pulling off dramatic comebacks in the Champions League last season. Now it needs to avoid one to keep its title defense going.

It will be Liverpool needing to do something magical at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium on Wednesday to reverse a 5-2 loss from the first leg in the round of 16. It definitely won't be easy — no away team has ever erased a three-goal loss from the first leg in the Champions League. Only five times the team that lost at home rallied in the second leg, with Manchester United the only one to overcome a two-goal deficit in a round-of-16 matchup against Paris Saint-Germain in 2019.

Liverpool did manage a huge comeback at home in the 2019 semifinals, rallying against another Spanish club, Barcelona. It had lost 3-0 at the Camp Nou before pulling off a 4-0 win in the second leg at home to keep alive a run that eventually ended with the team winning the trophy. Only three other teams overcame a deficit of three or more goals — Barcelona, Roma and Deportivo La Coruña. "We need to go and do something special," Liverpool defender Trent Alexander-Arnold said. "It's about throwing the kitchen sink at it and going all out."

Madrid, which beat Liverpool in last season's final for a record-extending 14th European title, pulled off a thrilling comebacks on its way to that final, rallying from behind against PSG in the round of 16, Chelsea in the quarterfinals and Manchester City in the semifinals.

Madrid also rallied against Liverpool in the first leg this season after going down 2-0 in the first half in England, eventually building its comfortable three-goal advantage with two goals each by Vinicius Junior and Karim Benzema. Éder Militão also scored for Madrid at Anfield. Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti expected an open second leg and said his team will not play too defensively.

"The message to the team is simple," Ancelotti said Tuesday. "We have to try to play as well as possible, just like in the first leg. We won't try to speculate, we have to be in the game from the first minute. We have to go into the game with maximum intensity and enthusiasm and try to win it." The only time Madrid failed to advance in the Champions League after winning the first leg on the road was in 2019 when it was eliminated by Ajax in the round of 16.

Madrid has won six of its last seven matches against Liverpool in the Champions League, drawing the other one. The team ended a three-match winless run with a 3-1 victory over Espanyol at the Bernabéu in the Spanish league on Saturday. The coach is expected to have Ferland Mendy and Benzema available after recovering from injuries. Liverpool took another hit to its confidence with a 1-0 loss at relegation-threatened Bournemouth over the weekend, hurting its chances of moving closer to the top four in the Premier League.

## All Pakistan Bank of Khyber Women Squash C'ship begins in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): All Pakistan Bank of Khyber Women National Senior Squash Championship organized by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Squash Association got under way here at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex here on Tuesday.

Provincial Secretary Higher Education and President KP Squash Association inaugurated the Championship. Dawood Khan was accompanied by Chief Financial Officer of Bank of Khyber Irfan Saleem Awan, Squash Legend Qamar Zaman, Vice President Ehsanullah, Chief Organizer and Chief Referee Manoor Zaman, Associate Secretary Sajjad Khalil, Muhibullah Khan, Finance

Secretary Wazirzada Gul, Media Manager Bank of Khyber Hasan Tariq, Coach Zaidi Faqir and other personalities were present.

The best 32 players from all over the country are participating in the four-day Championship in which Pak Army, WAPDA, SNGPL, ZTBL, Punjab, Sindh are participating.

Among the top rank players participating in the competition are Noorul Ain, Maryam Malik, Komal Khan, Noor Al Huda, Mehwish Ali, Roshana Mahboob, Kainat Aamir, Umm Kulsoom, Amna Malik, Hira Aqeel, Sana Bahaduri, Zahra, Abdullah, Manahl Aqeel, Hafsa Yousuf, Mayra Hussain,

Naheed Faiz, Wajiha Altaf, Nimra Aqeel, Aish, Shahbaz, Maleeha Shah, Bushra Shahbaz, Sara Noor, Nashia Shahid and Mashal Khan are included.

In the exhibition match held on the opening day, Sana Bahadur of Pakistan Army won against Roshana Mahboob of ZTBL.

Secretary Higher Education Dawood Khan in his brief chat paid tribute to the sponsor Bank of Khyber which always extended a helping hand in holding and promoting squash in the province. He said more than 25 tournaments including six women's events would be organized so that more players would come up.



DHAKA: Bangladesh players celebrate with the winners trophy after the third and last T20 cricket match between Bangladesh and England.

## Bangladesh beat England by 16 runs to seal 3-0 T20 series win

MIRPUR (Agencies): England stumbled to a 16-run defeat in the final T20 as Bangladesh completed a 3-0 series clean sweep.

Chasing 159, England were in control at 100-1 as Jos Buttler and Dawid Malan added 95 for the second wicket in Mirpur. But Bangladesh fought back when the pair fell in consecutive balls in the 14th over.

The pressure built on England's middle order and they finished on 142-6 after losing 5-28 in the space of 35 balls. Bangladesh's 158-2 was set up by opener Litton Das' explosive 73 from 57 balls and Najmul Hossain Shanto's 47 not out from 36.

Ben Duckett dropped Das on 51 and Rehan Ahmed dropped a simple chance from Rony Talukdar on 17. But England salvaged some pride at the death as Sam Curran and Chris Jordan restricted Bangladesh's scoring, conceding only 27 runs from the final five overs.

Despite losing Phil Salt for a duck in the first over, Malan and Buttler led an impressive counter-attack on a slow, wearing pitch.

But Mustafizur Rahman changed the game when Malan was caught behind for 53 and Buttler was sensationally run out for 40 by Mehidy

Hasan. The series concludes England's winter and the white-ball side will not be in action again until August.

**England's batting stumbles again**

It has been a difficult series for England's batters as captain Buttler and coach Matthew Mott have attempted to juggle a bowler-heavy squad because of absences. England are without key batters from their T20 World Cup triumph last year in Ben Stokes, Alex Hales, Harry Brook and Liam Livingstone.

Bangladesh comfortably chased 157 in the first game before England crawled to 117 in the second, and in Mirpur it was a similar situation as the hosts handled the conditions better.

Das capitalised on England's sloppy fielding to hit 10 fours and a six but Bangladesh also ran smartly, constantly pushing for a second run and scampering singles when boundaries were not on offer.

But England faltered even when the run-rate was under control. Even after Malan and Buttler fell in succession, the equation was an achievable 59 from 40 balls. The pitch did start to deteriorate to favour the bowlers, but England kept searching for boundaries

instead of adjusting and accumulating.

In the crucial 17th over the masterful Taskin had Moeen Ali caught on the boundary and Duckett was bowled attempting a heave down the ground. Knowing the players they have to return, England will not be too concerned, but their batters will have learned valuable lessons from the tour with the 50-over World Cup taking place in India in October.

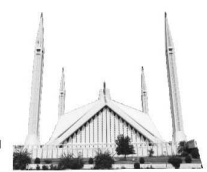
**England's successful winter ends in defeat**

While England's winter has ended in disappointment, it still caps their joint most successful winter of all time with 14 wins across all formats - matching their tally in 1986-87 but in four more games.

The highs came from the T20 World Cup success in November and a thrilling Test series win in Pakistan, with some lows from the anti-climactic ODI series against Australia that followed the World Cup and this Bangladesh defeat.

England will be disappointed as the Tigers are ranked ninth in the world, but it was evident Buttler's side were coming to the end of a long and busy winter, especially with their uncharacteristic fielding performance.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 89,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 89,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 61,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1431.95 feet and was 33.95 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 22,300 cusecs while outflow as 43,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1100.90 feet, which was 50.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 20,100 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 49,100, 37,800, 32,600 and 7,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 9,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Meeting held to review crime situation

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Police Officer CPO Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Mahmood Hamdani held a meeting to review crime situation here on Tuesday, informed a police spokesman. CPO also gave important instructions to the field officers regarding controlling crimes. A strategy should be made more effective and criminal elements should be held by conducting snap checking. The Dolphins and security squads should focus on effective patrolling instead of special duty, he added. CPO said that special attention should be given to crime hotspots. He directed to launch a special crackdown against organized gangs and hardcore criminals. He said that all available resources should be utilized to arrest anti-social elements. CPO said that those who attack the life and property of the citizens will be dealt with iron hands.

### NDMA issues guidelines

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued detailed guidelines for the departments concerned to ensure timely measures for disaster risk management (DRM) during the upcoming summer season. The Authority in its guidelines mentioned that with the onset of the summer season; heatwaves, forest fires and glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) events could be expected across the country in respective hazard-prone areas. It noted that based on the vulnerability of different regions, the impacts could vary, hence requiring requisite preparations by respective disaster management authorities, rescue agencies, line departments and local administrations. The NDMA guidelines underscored the need for proactive measures from all provincial disaster management authorities (PDMAs), state disaster management authority (SDMA-AJK), Gilgit Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA), Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration, health departments, line departments, rescue agencies, responders, urban search and rescue (USAR) teams, Armed Forces and federal departments and ministries to undertake dynamic measures to ensure timely preparations and response against likely hazards. For Heatwave, the guidelines stated that PDMAs in collaboration with district disaster management authorities (DDMAs) and local administration would carry out extensive awareness campaigns for sensitizing the public to likely dangers associated with heatwave-like conditions and associated preventive measures.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman addressing the National Level Simulation Exercise inaugural session.

## Senate body seeks illegal construction details on gov't accommodation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate Standing Committee on Housing and Works Tuesday sought details of illegal construction on government allotted accommodation and directed strict action against the encroachers. The committee met here with Senator Haji Hidayatullah in the chair. Reviewing the matter regarding progress on tendering process to restart construction work related to Kashmir Avenue Apartments Sector G-13, permission to transfer Kashmir Avenue Apartments, the committee was informed that the transfer of Kashmir Avenue (G-13) apartment project had been opened subject to clearance of all outstanding installments payable at the time of transfer of apart-

ments as per payment schedule which is not less than 23 percent of the total cost of the apartment.

The committee stressed the need for timely possession of the apartments.

While discussing the retendering process, the committee was of the view that transparency must be ensured and that all out efforts must be made to ensure that there was no usurpation of rights of the contractor due to the termination of the previous contract.

The committee probed details to the reasons for terminating the contract before starting the arbitration process. Details of reasons for the termination must be submitted to the committee in the next meeting.

Reviewing the matter of

restarting the Residency Housing Project, Peshawar by PHAF, the committee was informed that the main issue that was hindering the project was regarding the possession that had now been settled with the assistance of Commissioner Peshawar. It was recommended that the committee visit the site of the project and meet the Chief Secretary to play a role in expediting the progress of this project.

The committee was attended by Senator Falak Naz, Senator Fida Muhammad, Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi, Senator Molana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri and senior officers of the Ministry of Housing and Works along with its attached departments and agencies.

### Sultan Ali assumes charge as IG Motorway Police

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sultan Ali Khawaja, PSP, assumed charge as Inspector General, National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) here on Tuesday. Sultan Ali Khawaja was working as Additional Inspector General Police, South Region in Motorway Police, said a press release.

On his arrival at NHMP Headquarters, he was presented with a Guard of Honor subsequent to which he held meetings with his staff officers.

The new commander pledged his resolve to strengthen the organization for improved public service. During his illustrious career, he undertook various important assignments. He is considered the most professional police officer.

He lauded the NHMP saying that Motorway Police is a well-reputed force which has to work with more enthusiasm to enhance credibility level at the national and international levels.

He emphasized the commanding officers and field formations to focus on helping culture and courtesy with the commuters.

### Relevant authorities to entertain complaints of citizens on priority

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chhatta on Tuesday directed the relevant authorities to provide maximum relief to the citizens by resolving their complaints on priority.

Presiding over a meeting held here, he reviewed attendance of officials of different government departments. He directed the officials of these departments to ensure attendance in their offices at 9:00 am as surprise visits would be conducted to check presence of the officials. Special branch would also check attendance of the government officials, he added.

Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Mohsin Naqvi and Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman would personally inspect attendance of the officials in these departments, he said.

He instructed the authorities concerned to listen the complaints of the citizens and make all-out efforts to resolve them on priority basis. "Due to absence of the officers in government departments, the public face problems," he said.

## PTI has plans for post-Imran arrest party lead: Shibli

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Shibli Faraz said on Tuesday the PTI knew who would lead the party if PTI chief Imran Khan was arrested. Speaking to the media outside the Islamabad High Court (IHC), he said it was a breach of the law when the capital police reached Lahore [to arrest Mr Khan], adding that the party would continue fighting the court battle. "Police tortured PTI activists and lobbed teargas shells", he added. The barbarism which started on May 25, he said, was not settling.

He said thieves were imposed on us, adding that they were following the agenda of arresting Mr Khan and avoiding elections only. "Popular leaders are killed and Mr Khan is Pakistan's most beloved leader", he added. Thieves got Mr Khan attacked at

Wazirabad, he continued. When a large party was not given its due right in 1971, he said, the country suffered a major blow.

He went on to say that we had to get rid of such rulers, adding that we had to make sure elections were held within 30 days. "We are initiating an inquiry to proceed KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali under Article 6 of the constitution", he added. KP governor's appointment, he said, downgraded the office. Reiterating Mr Khan's call for the public to come out, he said the country's most popular party was being targeted, adding that the country could not function that way. "People have to get out to struggle for themselves", he added. Mr Khan was fighting for you, he said, and if you did not participate in it, the country would have no future.

## Chairman Senate inaugurates photo exhibition

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani inaugurated a photo exhibition commemorating the Golden Jubilee of the Senate which beautifully showcases the rich history of the Upper House of the Parliament.

In addition to the exhibition, Chairman Senate Sanjrani also unveiled the Senate Golden Jubilee Theme Song, which is a testament to the Senate's contribution to the democratic process in Pakistan. To further mark this special occasion, Chairman Senate Sanjrani announced the issuance of a commemorative coin and postal stamp. These will serve as lasting reminders of the Senate's 50-year journey and its important role in the country's political landscape.

Lastly, Chairman Senate Sanjrani planted

a sapling in the yard of the Parliament House Building. This act represents the Senate's commitment to nurturing and growing democracy in Pakistan. Chairman Senate while talking to media personnel remarked that today marks a significant milestone in the history of our nation. The Upper House of the Parliament has successfully completed 50 years of its remarkable journey.

During this span of five decades, the Senate of Pakistan has emerged as a compelling forum, representing not only all the provinces of the country but also the underdeveloped regions. The Upper House has been instrumental in promoting the country's progress and prosperity, as well as serving as a channel for the ordinary citizens' voices, he added.

## PR plans to lay fibre optics cable along railway tracks

ISLAMABAD (APP):

Pakistan Railways has been planning to lay fibre optics cables along the railway tracks across the country in a joint venture with private sector investors to generate revenue for the department.

"Pakistan Railways has around 7,791 kilometres railway network across the country which will not only help the department to improve its financial condition but also attract investors to invest," the official sources in the Ministry told APP.

They said the matter also came under discussion during a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) last month in which the Ministry of Railways pointed out that the department was offering an excellent opportunity for laying fibre optics cables along its track for digital connectivity

across the country.

Pakistan Railways told the meeting that it has a network of 7,791 km, which passed through high-density population areas and connects major cities in the four provinces, they added. They said with the average assets and hefty pension bills, Pakistan Railways contended, but its financial health was deteriorating and unless new revenue sources were identified, the reliance on government subsidy would keep on growing.

The sources said that Pakistan Railways was of the view that right-of-way charges on fibre optics cables would offer the department a decent source of earnings.

They said that the Ministry of Railways had already sent a summary to the prime minister in August last year suggest-

ing the adoption of the business model of laying fibre optics cables in a joint venture with private-sector investors on railway land due to poor financial health and limited earning sources. Then, the sources said that the prime minister, while agreeing to the proposal, directed the Ministry of Railways to prepare a new draft policy in consultation with all stakeholders, which would have a positive impact on developing the digital economy, and place the matter before ECC for review.

The ministry proposed that Pakistan Railways may be allowed to lay fibre optics cables on its land in a joint venture with private parties in a transparent manner. However, the ECC members discussed the matter in detail, they added.

## CDA plans new development schemes for rural, urban areas

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA) has planned new development schemes worth billions of rupees aimed at uplifting the living standards of urban and rural residents in the federal capital.

An official told APP, that the Development Working Party (DWP) meeting approved the PC-I of a scheme worth Rs 10.5 billion for development work in the rural areas, extending the scope of uplift projects to rural areas. The project would focus on repairing the

dilapidated roads, water supply system, street pavement, and sanitation system in the rural areas, and was expected to be completed in two years.

The CDA has also approved the revised PC-I for the Islamabad bus service project costing at least Rs 9,614 million, and a project worth Rs 2,573 million to purchase new machinery for the sanitation directorate. Additionally, a PC-I worth Rs 142 million has been approved for a link road between Garden Avenue and Murree Road through the Margalla underpass.

Islamabad Highway along with approaches was expected to be completed within nine months of current year.

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## ANF seizes over 1652 kg drugs in 39 operations; arrests 45

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan has seized 1652.968 kg drugs and 1846 liters prohibited chemical, worth US\$ 33.302 million internationally, arrested 45 persons including two women and three absconders, impounded 13 vehicles while conducting 39 counter narcotics operations throughout the country during last week.

According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, the seized drugs comprised 23.032 kg Heroin, 1531.140 kg Hashish, 67.9 kg Opium, 28.011 kg Methamphetamine (Ice), eight grams cocaine, 0.312 kg Ecstasy Tabs (530 tablets), 1.865 kg Xanax tabs (8320 tablets), 0.300 kg Valium Tabs (1065 tablets), eight grams caffeine and 1846 liters HCL.

ANF Balochistan recovered 1092.200 kg drugs and 1846 liters prohibited chemical in eight operations while arrested eight persons involved in drugs smuggling and impounded two vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 21 kg heroin, 1048.200 kg hashish, 23 kg Methamphetamine (Ice) and 1846 liters HCL.

ANF Punjab recovered 64.205 kg drugs in nine operations while arrested 11 persons including a woman involved in drugs smuggling and impounded five vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 1.5 kg Heroin, 58.400 kg Hashish, 300

grams opium, 3.6 kg methamphetamine (Ice), 150 grams weed, 190 grams ecstasy tabs (315 tablets) and 65 grams Xanax Tabs (480 Tablets).

ANF KPK recovered 42.140 kg drugs in five operations while arrested three persons involved in drugs smuggling and impounded a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised four kg Opium and 38.140 kg hashish.

ANF Sindh recovered 312.746 kg drugs, in seven operations while arrested 10 persons including three absconders involved in drugs smuggling and impounded a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised 309.5 kg hashish, 1.106 kg Methamphetamine (Ice), 1.8 kg xanax tabs (78400 Tablets), 300 grams valium tabs (1060 tablets) and 40 grams ecstasy tabs (75 tablets).

ANF North recovered 141.677 kg drugs in 10 operations, arrested 13 persons including a woman in drugs smuggling and impounded four vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 63.6 kg Opium, 0.532 kg Heroin, 76.900 kg Hashish, 305 grams methamphetamine (Ice), eight grams cocaine, eight grams caffeine, 242 grams weed, 82 grams ecstasy tabs (140 tablets). All cases have been registered at respective ANF Police Stations under CNS Act and further investigations are under process.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani inaugurating the unveiling ceremony of the Commemorative Stamp issued on the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Senate of Pakistan at Parliament House.



Force consists of over 100,000 troops

KABUL (ToloNews):The Islamic Emirate's Ministry of Defense said that its forces have reached between 100,000 and 150,000 troops. The ministry's spokesman, Enayatullah Khwarazmi, said that facilities and equipment have been provided for these forces, and their salaries will be paid at the designated time. "We have between 100,000 and 150,000 armed and equipped troops to provide security, guard our borders, protect our trenches--and our border forces are active," Khwarazmi noted.

New Consul to UAE

KABUL (Agenices): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) introduced Abdul Rahman Feda as the General Consul of Afghanistan in the UAE. Feda's appointment was announced in a letter issued by the Foreign Ministry. In the letter, MoFA announced that the official term of former General Consul Mansour Ahmad Azizi had ended. A second letter said the former chief of protocol of MoFA, Abdul Rahman Feda, had been appointed as the new General Consul.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

## UN Chief calls for support of Afghan Women



KABUL (ToloNews): UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for the world to support Afghan women, saying that it's a battle on "many fronts" in Afghanistan.

Speaking to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, Guterres said they have been "supporting schools wherever it's possible, schools with girls in the secondary level." "The donor community has said there will only be aid where women are involved. Where women are not involved, the aid will not be present. So, the

pressure goes on in order to guarantee that we have women working in the humanitarian sector. In the public services, only very few women are working and we are fighting hard to increase it," he said.

He also expressed concerns over the closing of secondary schools and universities for girls and women. However, the deputy spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, Bilal Karimi said that the rights of all Afghans are preserved within sharia law.

"No one should have concerns about the rights of

the Afghan people. The Islamic Emirate is committed to the rights of all citizens based on Islamic law and is working in this regard," said Bilal Karimi, deputy spokesman for the Islamic Emirate.

Analysts said that the Islamic Emirate should accept the legitimate wishes of the international community. "The Islamic Emirate has a national and historic responsibility for the future of the country and its people and that they should engage with the international community,

so that they can be recognized via the international community," said Toryalai Zazai, political analyst.

"The flexibility regarding the issues of women's education and higher education can pave the way for the new initiatives," said Sayed Jawad Sijadi, political analyst.

It has been more than 530 days since the schools for female students have remained closed. The Islamic Emirate also in a recent decree banned female students from going to universities.

## Many problems plague Daikundi health sector: Residents

NEILI (Pajhwok): Residents of central Daikundi province complain about insufficient health facilities and services and want the government to address the issue.

Qudrat Musowi, a resident of Daikundi, said inadequate health services in districts caused several patients to lose their lives.

He added all districts of Daikundi were impassable with scattered populations and in some areas there was no health center or even a pharmacy. According to him, lack of specialist doctors and lack of medicines in health centers are other serious challenges the people are facing and most of patients have to travel to Kabul for treatment.

He added: "There are very few health facilities in the most populated areas and the available health facilities in districts do not have the capacity to treat the large

number of patients and on the other hand, there are no professional doctors and equipment."

Mohammad Nadir, another inhabitant, said a lot of issues plagued the health sector of the province as even an ordinary disease could not be cured here.

He said the people also faced financial challenges and they could not take their patients to a sophisticated health center in other provinces.

He also said that due to the remote and mountainous geography of the province, some patients die before reaching health centers. Ibrahim Akbari, another resident, complained about the lack of medicines and beds in hospitals which caused the transmission of diseases. "I myself had taken patients to the provincial hospital several times and I witnessed that the place for the ailing people was

very inappropriate," he added. Gulsoom, a resident of Neili, whose son was admitted in the provincial hospital, since about a week, also complained about the lack of beds. He added: "Doctors were very responsive, whenever they come, they ask questions and give medicines, but there are no enough beds, three children share one bed."

He added his son was not fully recovered when doctor discharged him due to the lack of beds.

The residents say health facilities are their basic need and the government should to pay attention in this connection. Reza Nejati, one of the doctors and a representative of the private health sector in Daikundi, told Pajhwok that currently health services were good compared to the past, but some problems remained. He added in addition to public health

centers, the private sector was also offering health-care services to the people.

According to him, the lack of pharmaceutical companies, a standard drug market, and the lack of wholesale sales of medicines are among the challenges crippling the health sector in the province.

Ali Sharifi, Acting Director of Public Health of Daikundi, said that health services were being provided normally in all regions and there was no serious problem in this area. He added that there were about 140 health centers in the province that operated in mobile and fixed form.

However, he said they had shared their suggestions with the ministry concerned about some deficiencies in order to solve these problems to facilitate people's access to health services.

## Baghlan blacksmiths seek better market for their products

PUL-I-KHUMRI (Pajhwok): Blacksmiths in northern Baghlan province have urged government and public support as their product's market had been hit hard by imported items.

The blacksmiths of Afghanistan, since centuries, are producing different house and farming tools such as knife, pickaxe, sickle, ax, shovel, plough and some other tools that the people use in their daily life. But blacksmiths now complained against the declining market of their prod-

ucts and said people purchased imported items instead of locally produced ones. Ghulam Dastager, the head of Blacksmiths Union in Baghlan province told Pajhwok Afghan News, the imports of such tools have left negative impact on their business.

He said: "The people used to buy and use locally produced tools in the past, but since the imports of such items are increasing from Pakistan, China and Iran and the people switched to purchase them, the people were

buying and using the butchery and farming tools that were produced locally but now turned their back to them."

But, Abdul Basir, another blacksmith also said, that their business was good in the past, while their market was no good during this year. He said: "I had more work to do in the past and my customers needed to wait for days for their turn, but during this year, the items that I produced are left in the shop, no one is asking for them".

Mohammad Naser,

another blacksmith said, that he has been in this business since 35 years, but his business during this year was very weak.

He said: "However the locally produced tools are more durable and good quality, but the people still purchase the imported ones". These blacksmith asked the people and the officials of the government to purchase the locally produced tools.

They also called on the government to increase the duty on the imports of foreign tools. Sher Mohammad Ayoubi, the head of provincial Industry and Commerce Department told Pajhwok Afghan News, it is a part of government's policy to explore market for the domestic products.

He said some high level officials of the government are directed to ban some foreign products in order to encourage the development of domestic products. He added the domestic producers must ensure high quality of their products to encourage the people to purchase these items.

It is worth mentioning that some other producers have also expressed similar complaints regarding the dwindling market of their products.



## Kandaharis demand cut in right-hand cars' registration fee

KANDAHAR (Pajhwok): A number of residents of southern Kandahar province have demanded of the government to extend the period for registration of right-hand-drive vehicles and reduce the registration fee.

They say the three-month duration of the registration process of right-hand-drive vehicles is short and the fee taken in exchange for documents should be reduced given the poor economic situation of the people.

Saleh Mohammad, a res-

ident of Kandahar city, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the General Directorate of Traffic had set a period of three months for the registration of right-hand-drive vehicles.

He said the fee for issuing documents for three years according to the model of each car was 5300 afghanis to 7000 afghanis, which he said most people could not afford.

Some other residents urged the government to provide permanent documents to right-hand-drive vehicles instead of tempo-

rary documents for three years. Khalid Ahmad, a resident of Kandahar City, said people's economic situation was not good and it would be difficult for them to renew documents after every three years.

He said the government should register right-hand-drive vehicles in the form of cooperation and assistance with the people.

Taxi drivers also said they could not afford to pay the amount for temporary documents.

Taxi driver Hikmatullah

told Pajhwok that he could hardly earn 300 afghanis per day, so how he would pay 21,000 afghanis. "Our demand is the amount should be reduced."

Kandahar Traffic Manager Mullah Bashir Akhund said they had no authority to increase or decrease the registration fee or extend the duration of the registration process.

He said the money was submitted in the bank and representatives of the police headquarters and intelligence also monitored this process.

## Residents urge govt to asphalt Cheshti-Sharif-Herat City road

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): The residents of Cheshti-Sharif district of western Herat province say their demand to asphalt the road connecting the district with provincial capital Herat City has long been neglected. Home to eight mines and Salma Dam, Cheshti-Sharif district is situated 170 kilometers east of Herat city.

Residents of the district say the construction of the unpaved and pothole-ridden road is their long-standing demand and ask the Islamic Emirate government to pay heed to the issue. Mohammad Maroof, a driver on the Herat City-Cheshti-Sharif highway, told Pajhwok Afghan News it was a 9-hour long trip as

they leave Cheshti-Sharif district at 8:00 am and reach Herat city at 4:00 pm.

"If the road is asphalted, we will be able to reach our destination sooner with less or no damage to our vehicles", he added.

He said travelers used to get off the vehicles multiple times to rest because they got tired of the bumpy ride.

Khairullah, another resident of Cheshti-Sharif district, corroborated

Mohammad Maroof's statement and added that due to the road's dilapidated conditions, less people tended to travel to Herat city. Khairullah, a shopkeeper in Cheshti-Sharif district, said he travels to Herat city only if he

needs something direly.

Mohammad Naser, another resident of Cheshti-Sharif district, said patients mostly succumb to death because of the road's worst condition.

"Health services in Cheshti-Sharif district are very limited, that is why the residents travel to Herat city for treatment".

Shamsul Haq Hamas, the district police chief, said the great desire of the residents of Cheshti-Sharif district was laying asphalt on the Herat-Cheshti-Sharif highway.

Hamas urged officials of the Islamic Emirate to consider the problems of the residents of Cheshti-Sharif district. But Maulavi Mohammad

Idrees, the Public Works Department head, said currently they had the plan to asphalt Kushk Kuhna and Gulran districts' roads, if they were given extra budget, they would asphalt the Cheshti-Sharif district highway as well. Idrees added according to bilateral understanding between the central government and companies investing in lead and other mines in Cheshti-Sharif district and in mines in Ghor province must also asphalt roads.

It is worth mentioning that Salma Dam, one of the biggest dams in western zone of the country, and some mines of marble are also situated in Cheshti-Sharif district.

## Male tailors claim restrictions on making clothes for women

CHARIKAR (TOLONews): Several male tailors in Charikar, the capital of Parwan province, said that they had received verbal orders from officials of the department of virtue and vice prohibiting them from making clothing for women. Tailors said that with the closing of their shops, they are facing economic challenges.

"10,000 Afs is the rent of the shop, there are student expenses, and we used to meet all our expenses from sewing women's clothes," said Mukhtar Sekandari, a tailor.

According to the representatives of the Parwan tailors' union, most of the tailors in this province lost employment as a result of the restrictions, and some had to leave the country.

"All the tailors who made clothing for women lost their jobs and some even went to Iran," said Imamuddin, representative of the Charikar

Craftsmen and Shopkeepers group.



"Our shops are on the brink of collapse, there is no business," said Mohammad Saber Qudous, the representative of Parwan tailors.

However, local Parwan officials deny this claim and said that some recommendations have been

given to the tailors.

"They are permitted to make clothes and there is no barrier in the field for them, but when they take the size of women who personally come to them, that is forbidden by the department of virtue and vice," said Hikmatullah

Shamim, the spokesman of the governor of Parwan.

This comes as many of the country's youth have migrated illegally over the past two years as a result of unemployment and the country's growing poverty.

## Kabul residents want to get rid of ragged banknotes

KABUL (Pajhwok): Residents of Kabul complain they are facing problems conducting routine transactions due to old banknotes. Residents, including moneychangers, shopkeepers, drivers and others, said almost all banknotes were worn-out.

But the 10, 20, 50, and 100 denomination notes were even in worse condition, they added. Tabish, an inhabitant of Taimani area, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the circulation of tattered banknotes had increased in the market, posing challenges to the people.

He urged the central bank to withdraw old banknotes and replace them with new ones to address the issues being encountered by the people.

Jamshid, a resident of the Kart-i-Naw area of the 8th police district, said: "The afghani bills have become so old that they can be no longer

used. Numbers on many of them are not visible. Therefore, they should be replaced."

Shamsullah, a fuel pump station worker in Taimani locality, complained that drivers gave them damaged notes. He grumbled many banks and exchange offices did not accept old banknotes, a situation creating serious problems for them.

The worker urged the central bank to print and circulate new afghani banknotes. Basir Karimi, a moneychanger in Sara-i-Shahzada market, said the problem was worsening with each passing day and commoners did not accept from them.

Abdul Rahman Zirak, spokesman for the moneychangers' association, confirmed the issue had escalated in all money markets across the country.

He said: "We are receiving complaints from provinces from time to time that the banknotes

have become extremely old and are causing problems for customers.

"We have shared the issue with the central bank and the Ministry of Finance. They promised to address the problem."

Zirak recalled some time ago, Da Afghanistan Bank provided newly-printed banknotes to private banks for distribution in the form of salaries.

Hasibullah Noori, spokesman for the central bank, told Pajhwok considering market needs, they implemented reasonable monetary policies. New banknotes are injected into the market and old ones withdrawn.

"As you are aware, some time back, the central bank launched the process of distributing fresh notes to commercial banks and withdrawing old ones. The process is ongoing based on DAB procedures," he explained.

Newly-printed ban-

knates had the best quality, he claimed, but people did not pay much attention to them as all transactions were done in cash. This leads to the bills getting old prematurely.

He urged all citizens to consider taking necessary steps for the protection of banknotes to keep them from being damaged too soon and discharge their national responsibility.

However, he did not share information about the amount of the newly-printed banknotes.

Shah Mahmood Mehrabi, chairman of the inspection committee of DAB, earlier told reporters the new banknotes printed in France would arrive in Afghanistan in May.

In January this year, Da Afghanistan Bank, said it had distributed 100 million afsh fresh banknotes to commercial banks across the country, demonetising ragged bills.



# Ex-CJP brought dishonour upon himself through ‘his verdicts’: Marriyum

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday said former Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Saqib Nisar had not only disrespected himself but also his institution with his "controversial verdicts and conduct" which somehow indicated his "direct involvement in the politics".

"It is not Maryam Nawaz who has disrespected Saqib Nisar, rather he has brought dishonour upon himself. He has admitted his meetings with Imran Khan, who after coming into power looted the national exchequer ruthlessly and plunged the country into an economic quagmire causing high inflation and poverty," the minister said in a news conference.

She said Maryam Nawaz had bravely exposed the political role played by the former CJP and made the evidence in that regard public. "Maryam Nawaz is a source of respect for her father as being a brave leader she has the courage to expose such people before the people." It was not merely an allegation as the former chief justice had himself admitted to holding meetings with Imran Khan and nobody had denied it so far, she added, daring Saqib Nisar to respond to those allegations in the courts as he better knew what the law stated in that regard.

Saqib Nisar very well knew that what was being said about him was true, she said, referring to his reported interview with a private TV channel in which, according to the minister, the former CJP had stated that he had not declared Imran Khan as a "full honest and righteous person". "There is no need to make a hue and cry now and if you think you are being defamed then respond to these allegations in the court," she said while alleging that Saqib Nisar was directly involved in the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's campaign for the 2018 general election.

She said there was no such example in the country's judicial history that a chief justice was directly involved in politics and exercised his power beyond his mandate. "No law in Pakistan allowed the former chief justice to meet former prime minister Imran Khan who had severely harmed the national interests and diplomatic relations of Pakistan with the friendly countries during his rule," Marriyum said the former chief justice had compromised the future of upcoming generations with his conduct and "controversial decisions".

To gain some vested interests, she alleged, he had given a verdict in the case related to the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI), which ultimately led to the suspension of its

operations causing severe problems for kidney patients. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif found the PKLI closed during his visit, she added. The minister said the former CJP's conduct showed that he was somehow part of the nexuses led by Imran Khan, which ultimately resulted into an economic turmoil, extreme inflation, unemployment, and poverty.

She said Imran Khan even after his ouster from power was causing severe damage to the country by creating chaos and unrest. He had exhausted his all political options and now gave a call for a public gathering in Lahore which was also destined to be a flop show as the people fully knew that he was pursuing an anti-state agenda. Imran Khan did not want stability in the country and exploited every opportunity to hamper the government's efforts aimed at providing relief to the masses, she said while reminding him that he had failed to fulfill even a single promise whether it was related to 10 million jobs or 5 million homes or the elimination of corruption.

She said, "The PTI chief had rather 'made history in robbing the national exchequer. On the other hand, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government and its Quaid Nawaz Sharif had a track record of steering the country out every crisis whether it was economic or related to inflation, terrorism, or load-shedding." The people knew that it was only the PML-N which under its dynamic leadership could provide a state-of-the-art road infrastructure, mass transit systems like metro, lap-tops, and scholarships, she added.

The minister expressed confidence that the people of Punjab would give a strong response to the PTI for halting the development process in the province. At the time, when PM Shehbaz Sharif being the chief minister was striving to uplift the living standards of the people of Punjab with his sheer hard work and dedication, Imran Khan was hatching a conspiracy to remove a thrice-elected prime minister, she added.

The nation, she said, would no more become part of the conspiracies being hatched by Imran Khan against the country. The government had filed the cases against Imran Khan after thorough investigations and it was time for the law to take its course to punish him for his corruption, loot, and plunder, the minister added. She said Imran Khan did not have any grounds to escape trial for his corruption and misuse of authority during his government's tenure and that was why he was avoiding the courts. He would have to answer for his wrongdoings, she added.

The minister said the incumbent

government was the first in history which had made the record of Toshakhana public but unfortunately, the PTI's social media trolls were misleading the masses. Imran Khan had stolen gifts from Toshakhana. There was a difference between retaining and stealing a gift, she added. Imran Khan should better appear before the court and submit his reply if he had not committed a crime, Marriyum remarked.

"I received three watches during my official visits to foreign countries and all of them were deposited in Toshakhana," she said while responding to a query. She said the credit went to the present government which had introduced a new policy barring to retain those presents whose price exceeded \$300. The minister recalled that it was Imran Khan who had refused to make the record of Toshakhana gifts public saying that it would damage relations with friendly countries, but ironically he did not care how much the cypher story had damaged the foreign policy.

She also reiterated contradictory narratives crafted by Imran Khan in the backdrop of his removal from the Prime Minister's Office. He first blamed a foreign country for his ouster and then started accusing the institutions and political leaders, and now the interim Punjab chief minister, she claimed. In fact, she said, it was Imran Khan himself who had hatched the conspiracy against the country by suspending the IMF programme in March 2022 which caused inflation. He even today was pursuing his agenda of creating instability in the country. Many precious lives had been lost as a result of his long marches and rallies.

The minister said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had announced the Ramadan package while the Punjab Government had already been providing free of charge flour through the Utility Stores to provide relief to the poor people. About 80 million poor people in Punjab would benefit from the Ramadan Package and for transparency, its implementation would be closely monitored by a committee, she added. The prime minister, she said, had instructed other provinces also to arrange the supply of free-of-cost flour to the poor in the month of Ramadan. "Such a good package is being given to the people by the government despite the restrictions imposed by the IMF programme, which was started by Imran Khan." As regards the death of Ali Bilal alias Zille Shah, the minister said his dead body was brought to the hospital in the double cabin vehicle of PTI leader Raja Shakeel, whose driver escaped after leaving the body and got refuge at Zaamn Park.



ISLAMABAD: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali, called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Pak-Iran ink MoU for supply of electricity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Iran have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the supply of 100 megawatts (MW) of electricity to Gwadar. On the instructions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Minister for Energy Engr Khuram Dastgir Khan visited Iran from March 10 to 13, said a press release issued here Monday.

Khuram Dastgir held meetings with Iranian Minister of Energy Ali Akber Mehrabian. Both ministers emphasized further strengthening of bilateral relations between the two countries, besides extending cooperation in the energy sector. They showed interest in initiating new joint ventures in the energy sector.

The minister's visit aimed at finalizing an agreement on power supply to Gwadar, which was initiated in his earlier visit in June 2022. In a record time of nine months, the electricity transmission line has been laid from Iran to Gwadar. For the finalization of the agreement, three sessions were held by technical teams in which extensive discussions were held.

The project would be inaugurated at the earliest and it would ensure uninterrupted supply to Gwadar which would lay a foundation for a prosperous Gwadar. During his visit, Khuram Dastgir also attended a ceremony organized by Embassy of Pakistan, Tehran to commemorate Pakistan National Day.

He addressed the Iranian civil and military dignitaries and diplomats on the occasion. In his remarks, the minister said that Pakistan and Iran were brethren muslim countries and shared common faith, cultural affinity and history. He expressed the hope that in future these bilateral relations would witness upward trajectory.

Khuram Dastgir extended condolences over the loss of human lives in earthquake at Turkiye, Syria and Khoye, Iran. The Minister extended felicitations to the leadership of Iran and Saudi Arabia on revival of their diplomatic ties. Iranian Minister for Energy Mr. Ali Akber Mehrabian was Chief guest on the occasion. He said that there was a lot of potential for improvement of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran.

## WB to enhance coop with Pakistan

WASHINGTON (INP): The World Bank remains committed to Pakistan's long-term development with focus on transitioning to renewable energy, especially hydro and solar power, said a senior official of the international development and climate institution.

At a meeting with Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Masood Khan, the Bank's Vice President for the South Asia Region, Martin Raiser said that this cooperation would be optimized in the years to come, according to a press release of the Pakistani Embassy. The Pakistani envoy and Vice President Raiser discussed steps to advance cooperation between Pakistan and the World Bank in the development and climate response sectors. Last October, Martin Raiser co-chaired with the United Kingdom a high level round-table on how to respond to the impacts of the catastrophic floods in Pakistan on the sidelines of 2022 Annual Meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

## New Toshakhana policy Gifts exceeding \$300 in value to become govt assets

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The federal cabinet has introduced a fresh policy on presents given to government functionaries by foreign dignitaries, among which include a \$300 ceiling on gifts that could be retained, it emerged on Tuesday.

The new 'Toshakhana Procedure for the Acceptance and Disposal of Gifts, 2023', dated March 8, includes a fresh set of guidelines for ministries and divisions to adhere to. The guidelines were released by the government alongside the Toshakhana records of 2002 onwards.

Established in 1974, the Toshakhana is a department under the administrative control of the Cabinet Division and stores precious gifts given to rulers, parliamentarians, bureaucrats, and officials by heads of other governments and states and foreign dignitaries. According to Toshakhana rules, gifts/presents and other such materials received by persons to whom these rules apply shall be reported to the Cabinet Division.

The department has been in the news in recent months in light of proceedings against former prime minister Imran Khan for "not sharing details" of Toshakhana gifts. The most significant change in the rules, according to the memo, involves gifts that exceed \$300, which straight away become the state's property to be disposed of according to Toshakhana rules.

"Gift(s) valuing upto USD 300 shall be allowed to be retained by the recipient after due payments as per its assessed market value," the memo said. "The gift(s) exceeding this monetary (sic) limit shall straightaway become state/Toshakhana property to be deposited and disposed of according to Toshakhana Procedure." The new Toshakhana policy has also prohibited government functionaries from receiving

government buildings. The new policy clearly states that all gifts, irrespective of their price, received by government functionaries must be "reported" and "deposited" in Toshakhana within "30 days of receipt of the gifts" or "30 days from the date of return to Pakistan in case of foreign visit".

It adds that "punitive action" will be taken against the individual recipient if they do not report the receipt of gifts and deposit the Toshakhana within the time limit. The "chief of protocol", who is an officer of the foreign ministry, or his representative attached to visiting dignitaries or delegations will be responsible to supply the list of the gifts received and the names of their recipients.

In cases where the protocol chief and his representative are not associated, the ministry sponsoring the event will be responsible for providing the details. "In the case of outgoing delegations or visits abroad of our dignitaries, it shall be the responsibility of the ambassador of Pakistan and/or head of the Pakistan mission in the country concerned to report the receipt of the gifts with the name of the recipients." However, the new policy has shown leniency toward gifts of perishable items that can be retained "without reporting or depositing" them.

It has also prohibited any government functionary "except those in BPS 1 to BPS 4" from receiving cash awards as gifts. "Such gifts may be politely refused. In case, it becomes impossible to refuse without causing offence to the visiting dignitary, the amount shall be immediately deposited in the government treasury and a copy of the treasury challan shall be provided to the Toshakhana Incharge, Cabinet Division." The new Toshakhana policy has also prohibited government functionaries from receiving

gifts for their spouses or for members of their families. However, if the gift cannot be declined due to any reason, it must be deposited with the Toshakhana immediately.

"Such gifts received by the president/head of the government for their person or their family members shall be deposited in Toshakhana for determination of assessed market value, retention cost, and further disposal as per Toshakhana Procedure. These instructions do not apply to gifts and donations made to institutions." It adds that experts in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and private appraisers will assess the value of the gifts whereas an expert of Pakistan Ordnance Factories Wah will assess the value of weapons received as gifts.

"If the difference in the value of gifts assessed by the two categories of appraisers is less than 25 per cent, the higher value will be accepted. However, if the difference in value is 25pc or more, a committee to be constituted by the cabinet secretary shall decide the final value." The evaluation process for assessing the value of the gifts shall be completed within 30 days after declaration by the recipient.

Animals received as gifts will be transferred to the nearest Remount Veterinary and Farms Corps for early sale or being handed over to the Zoological Garden. "Gold and Silver bullions shall be sent to State Bank of Pakistan — Mint." According to the new policy, the auditor general of Pakistan shall conduct an annual audit of Toshakhana. "The cabinet secretary, with approval of the prime minister, shall dispose of gifts either through a display at prominent government buildings, a donation to charities or public auction, in the manner explained in this policy".

## LHC seeks caretaker govt plan to deal with rallies

LAHORE (Agencies): While hearing a plea challenging ban on people gathering under criminal law Section 144 in Lahore Tuesday the Lahore High Court directed the home department to submit a comprehensive plan of the caretaker government for dealing with political processions and rallies by March 15.

A single-member bench of the LHC comprising Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh was hearing a petition challenging the provincial government's decision to impose Section 144 in Lahore. Advocate Azhar Siddique filed the petition on behalf of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Hammad Azhar claiming the deputy commissioner Lahore "illegally and unlawfully" imposed Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code in the provincial capital, banning and restricting the petitioner's political party to hold their electoral campaign.

During the proceeding of the case on Tuesday the bench asked the government's counsel to elaborate on which occasions Section 144 was imposed. Responding to the court query, Azhar Siddique submitted that the petitioner Hammad Azhar was unable to appear before the court in the current matter as he was filing nomination papers at the ECP to meet the deadline.

"The senior leadership should be present here as we want to decide this matter," Justice Sheikh observed. Advancing arguments in the matter, Siddique contended saying imposition of a ban on public gatherings was illegal and claimed that other political parties are holding conventions but only the PTI is not being allowed to hold rallies, that too despite the issuance of the election schedule by the ECP. He informed the court that after the announcement of the general election date of April 30 in Punjab, the PTI has announced its election campaign from March 12, 2023.

## PTI challenges by-polls on 3 vacant NA seats at PHC

**Humayun Khan**

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has challenged by-polls on three National Assembly (NA) constituencies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa scheduled on 30th April before Peshawar High Court (PHC).

The petition was filed by PTI former Members NA including Ali Muhammad Khan, Fazal Muhammad Khan and Shaukat Ali while Barrister Gohar Ali Khan will represent petitioners before High Court. The petition stated that PTI MNAs resigned from membership following voting of no confidence against the then Prime Minister Imran which is accepted on 28th July 2022 while Election Commission of Pakistan has held by-polls on the vacant constituencies.

PTI chairman contested by-election from seven constituencies while retained one seat and made vacant

other six seats while ECP scheduled by-polls on the three positions on 30th April, the added. By-polls should not be held less than 120 days before General Election which will be reach on 14th April, the petition added.

The petition stated that by-elections will not only be a waste of money but also be a deviation from the Constitution. It further stated that many other constitutional problems were likely to arise from following the schedule as well.

The party also maintained that the resignations were never individually verified, thereby expressing reservations over the acceptance of the resignations that had left the National Assembly seats vacant in the first place.

It is worthy to mention that earlier the ECP had called off by-elections in 37 National Assembly constituencies in light of the decisions of the concerned

high courts. The by-elections had been triggered after National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf had accepted the resignations of PTI lawmakers earlier this year.

A total of 123 PTI MNAs resigned en masse on April 11 last year two days after party Chairman Imran Khan was removed from the post of the prime minister through a no-confidence vote. On January 17, the speaker accepted the resignations of 34 PTI lawmakers, and one member of the Awami League (AML), an ally of the PTI. Three days later, 35 more resignations were accepted, including one of AML chief Sheikh Rashid. On January 25, the ECP denotified 43 PTI lawmakers and two days later announced the by-elections to 33 National Assembly seats on March 16. It also announced 31 more by-polls for March 19 in February.

## Imran destabilizing country: Muqam

**F.P. Report**

SWABI: Adviser to the Prime Minister for Political and Public Affairs and National Heritage, Engr Amir Muqam here Tuesday said that PTI Chief Imran Khan was destabilizing the country after realizing that his politics became irrelevant.

Addressing a big public gathering after the inauguration of 132KV Kamal Sher Khan grid station completed with an estimated cost of Rs 800 million here, Engr Amir Muqam said Imran Khan has destroyed the country's economy that created price-hike and inflation in the country including KP where PTI ruled over four and 10 years.

He said Imran Khan has dragged state institutions into politics after his ouster due to a successful no-confidence motion by the national assembly and was still leveling baseless allegations against political opponents and senior officials of government organizations.

Amir Muqam said Imran Khan was known for his lies-based politics, which is evident from the fact that he stepped back from his uncalculated foreign conspiracy narrative. Muqam said Imran even did not like neutrals and his time to play and win political matches under his own umpires was over now. The prime minister's adviser said that PTI dissolved KP and Punjab assemblies in a bid to politically destabilize Pakistan. He said on one side PTI prematurely dissolved KP and Punjab assemblies as well as the governments and was now demanding early elections, which showed the immature politics of Imran Khan.

He claimed that Imran Khan was exerting pressure on state institutions including the judiciary after he was charged in different cases including Tosha Khana, adding the PTI leader has tarnished the country's image after stealing an expensive watch of Khana Kaba's

model from Tosha Khan. Muqam said work on Kanal Sher grid station was stopped by former PTI rulers after its inauguration in 2017 by the Nawaz Sharif government in Swabi, adding the present government has immediately resumed work on it and completed it in record nine months benefiting thousands of consumers of Swabi.

He said work on the other development projects in the Swabi district was also expedited and would be soon completed. The prime minister's adviser asked the PTI workers whether they would continue support to a person (Imran), who deceived them in the name of so-called change for the last 10 years or extend support to Nawaz Sharif, who completed records development projects including the construction of a network of motorways, highways and made Pakistan an atomic power besides enhancing the country's image globally.