

Four women gunned down  
F.P. Report

MANSEHRA: A man shot dead his wife, mother-in-law and two sister-in-laws over family dispute in Mansehra on Friday. Police said the incident took place in Oghi Tehsil of Mansehra, where the accused Sajid entered the house and opened fire, as a result of which the accused's wife, mother-in-law and two sister-in-laws lost their lives.



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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting with regards to Ramadan Package.

Toshakhana case: IHC stops police from arresting Imran

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Islamabad High Court stopped the police on Friday from arresting Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan in the Toshakhana case. IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard Khan's plea challenging the order of Islamabad's district and session court that had issued the arrest warrant for the PTI chief.

The high court said that the former prime minister should be given a chance to appear before the court. The IHC's Registrar's Office had earlier raised objections to Khan's petition challenging his arrest warrants in the Toshakhana case. The PTI chief's biometric verification is not available, the office noted. "How can the high court hear the same matter on which it has already made its decision?" the office also questioned.

Later, the court decided to take up Khan's plea with the RO's objections. At hearing, the IHC chief justice inquired about the objections raised on the petition. Khan's counsel, Khawaja Haris, informed him that the biometric verification issue had been addressed. About the objections regarding the IHC's decision on the previous petition, he said that the court had referred the matter to the trial court. "We had asked the court to look into the underlying issue," the chief justice said.

He noted that everyone is equal before the law. "You want to appear before the court and give assurance in this regard?" he asked. At this, Khan's counsel requested the bench to suspend the arrest warrant so that the PTI chief could appear before the court. Justice Farooq warned the lawyer that there would be consequences if he doesn't fulfil the promise and contempt proceedings will be initiated. After this, the court granted relief to Imran Khan and directed the police to not arrest him. The IHC also ordered the district administration and Islamabad police to provide security.

In the petition, the former prime minister had challenged the Islamabad court's decision of rejecting his plea seeking suspension of arrest warrants issued against him in the Toshakhana case. Khan, who is holed up in his Zaman Park residence in Lahore in defiance of the court order that had directed him to appear before it, had filed the plea through his lawyer Haris. In his petition, the PTI chairman requested: "The undertaking should be accepted and the police should be stopped from arresting [him]." The PTI chief also assured the court of his appearance before the Islamabad court tomorrow (Saturday), requesting the court to hear his plea urgently.

"[...] non-bailable warrant of arrest has been issued by this court just for the appearance of the applicant. The applicant is ready and willing to appear before this court on the fixed date i.e. 18.03.2023 and he has given his undertaking in this regard," the petition read. "It is trite law that the purpose of issuance of a non-bailable warrant of arrest is to ensure attendance of the accused and the undertaking has fulfilled the purpose of the warrant. Arrest and detention of the applicant will serve no useful purpose and he will be humiliated just for nothing."

LHC grants PTI chief protective bail in 9 cases

LAHORE (Agencies): In a major relief for Imran Khan, the Lahore High Court (LHC) Friday approved protective bails of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman in eight terrorism cases and one civil case — a total of nine — after he appeared before the court in person. The PTI chief had approached the LHC earlier in the day to seek protective bail in nine cases. Five of those cases are registered in Islamabad and four in Lahore.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh and Justice Farooq Haider conducted the hearing on bail pleas filed against the cases that are lodged under terrorism sections. For the five cases in Islamabad, the court granted bail to Khan till March 24 and for the three cases in Lahore, he received bail for 10 days (March 27). Justice Sheikh also heard the bail pleas that the former prime minister filed against the civil cases registered against him, in which he approved the PTI chief's protective bail till March 27.

The high court has also granted police access to Zaman Park, Khan's residence in Lahore, for investigating the incidents that transpired on March 14 and March 15 — when clashes left several injured. The court also wrapped up PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry's plea against the operation at Zaman Park and ordered the party to ensure it cooperates with the authorities. Hundreds of PTI supporters accompanied Imran Khan when he visited the high court, while authorities also allowed his bullet-proof vehicle to enter the court premises.

At Khan's Zaman Park residence — which became a battleground on Tuesday — workers shielded the party chairman's home to thwart his possible arrest. Later, the situation was calm as the Islamabad High Court restricted police from arresting him in the Toshakhana case. The legal proceedings against Khan began soon after he was ousted from Prime Minister's Office in a parliamentary vote early last year. Since then, he has been demanding a snap election and holding nationwide protests, and was shot and wounded in one of those rallies in Wazirabad on November 3. Incumbent Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has rejected Khan's demands, saying the election would be held as scheduled later this year.

Khan's counsel told the court that his client does not have the details of all the cases. In response, Justice Sheikh said that the LHC cannot give the PTI chief blanket bail and it will only consider those cases against which the pleas have been filed. Khan intervened and said he was confused as numerous cases have been filed against him. "When I get bail in one case, another is there waiting for me." He added that an "unprecedented" attack was launched on

his house. Justice Saleem told Khan that he should have cooperated with the system and asked the PTI chief to review his actions.

Khan said that he wanted the case filed in the lower court against him to be shifted to another court as it was a "death trap". He said that he asked authorities for providing him with adequate security. At this, Justice Saleem said: "Khan sahab, the case has been mishandled at your end." The PTI chief then lamented that "94 cases" have been filed against him and if six more were to be lodged, then they would hit 100. "This will be a non-cricket century."

The court then granted bail to Khan in cases filed in Islamabad till March 24 and in the cases filed in Lahore, he received bail till March 27. During the hearing, Khan's counsel Azhar Siddique asked the LHC to grant Khan protective bail so he can appear before relevant courts, while he noted the plea in the Toshakhana case is ineffective. The lawyer noted that Khan needs a 10-day protective bail plea in the Zille Shah murder case which has been registered at Lahore's Sarwar Road Police Station.

At this, the court granted protective bail till March 27. The lawyer then urged the court that no action should be taken against the PTI chief until he receives the details of the cases against him. The federal government's lawyer told the court that he does not have details of the cases lodged against Khan in other provinces. "For this, the court will have to issue notices. Then Punjab government's lawyer sought time for providing the complete records of the cases lodged against Khan. After the arguments, the high court sought the records of all the cases registered and restricted authorities from taking disciplinary action against Khan till Tuesday next week.

The Punjab Police had also filed a plea in the high court for allowing the law enforcers to investigate the events that transpired on March 14 and 15 — when the authorities and PTI went face-to-face. At the hearing, the PTI chief's lawyer told the court that the police can come and investigate, but SSP Zaman Park should not visit the place with a huge force. Justice Sheikh asked the lawyer whether he could control the investigation. After this, Khan's counsel said that the investigation officer may come to Zaman Park and investigate. The high court then allowed the investigation officer to visit Zaman Park and probe in line with the law. During the case's hearing, Justice Sheikh said the court issued the summons in line with the law and a perception is being created that the state's writ is being ignored. "Such problems should not arise again," the judge said.

Maryam urges govt to treat PTI as 'terrorist organisation'

LAHORE (Agencies): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz said Friday that the government should deal with the Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as a terrorist organisation — and the time had passed to sit and negotiate with the deposed prime minister.

In a hard-hitting press conference in Lahore, the PML-N leader lashed out at the former premier for creating a "scene" at his Zaman Park residence, saying Khan announced a "revolt against the state institutions". Referring to the clashes outside Khan's residence, the PML-N's chief organiser said that scenes at Zaman Park and the Kacha area are similar — the Kacha area is infamous for being a haven for notorious criminals, including high-profile kidnappers.

Maryam also accused Khan of attacking the state in collaboration with the banned organisations. She further said that he was "launched" into the government at the behest of



"external forces". Turning her guns towards the judiciary and the establishment, the scion of the Sharif family's political dynasty said that Justice (ret'd) Asif Saeed Khosa gave shameful titles to PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif.

Khosa, the former Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP), had reportedly used terms of "Sicilian Mafia" and "The Godfather" while hearing the Panama Papers case involving the three-time prime minister and others. Strongly reacting to former US envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan Zalmay Khalilzad's remarks about Khan's possible arrest, Maryam asked:

"Who gave Zalmay Khalilzad the right to interfere in the internal affairs of Pakistan?" In a series of tweets on Tuesday, Khalilzad said that arresting Imran Khan would only deepen the crisis in Pakistan. He offered Islamabad advice on how to deal with the political, economic and security crises being faced by the country. The PML-N leader also asked, "Why was Zalmay Khalilzad kept silence when journalists were subjected to torture during Imran's tenure?" Responding to a question, she said that Khan was telling a lie about bail on the international media.

10 of a family burnt to death in Kohistan

F.P. Report

LOWER KOHISTAN: At least 10 people, including children and women, were killed and three injured in a fire incident early Friday morning in the Seri area of Pattan, the district headquarters of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Lower Kohistan.

Lower Kohistan Rescue 1122 spokesperson, Farman Ali told that the fire erupted in a wooden house due to an electric short circuit in the early hours of Friday when the residents were asleep. As a result, the house's roof collapsed, leading to the deaths of 10 family members and leaving three others injured. Ali further said that until the residents woke up, the entire house had been engulfed in fire.

The rescue official said that as it was dark when rescue efforts were under way, and they faced difficulties in retrieving the bodies and the injured. "However, their bodies have been recovered and the three injured have been shifted to Pattan's Rural Health Centre," Ali added.

He further said that eight buffalos also perished in the incident as the fire was on a "huge scale" and locals had taken part in the rescue efforts as well. A few days ago, an enormous fire at a commercial high-rise on Karachi's Sharea Faisal road had been attributed by Chief Fire Officer Ishfaq Ahmed to an electric short circuit that had lit up a panaflex banner hanging on the building on fire.

A week ago, another fire caused by an electrical short circuit in a house had engulfed as many as 36 thatched houses in Mithi's Aqil locality. Although no loss of life was reported, all valuables and other belongings of the affectees had been completely destroyed by the devastating fire.

The Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday expressed grief and sorrow over the fire incident in Lower Kohistan District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. At least 10 persons of the same family, including women, children and men died and 13 others were injured when fire broke out in a house in Siri Paye area of Lower Kohistan. The prime minister prayed to Allah Almighty for grant of eternal peace and elevation of ranks in paradise to those killed in the incident. He also directed to provide all possible medical assistance to the injured.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Azam Khan on Friday expressed profound grief over the tragic incident of fire eruption in a house that claimed the lives of at least ten people from the same family in Lower Kohistan district.

Imran defying court order: Info Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb has said that state institutions were being challenged and attacked in Zaman Park, Lahore.

In an interview with BBC News, she said police have shown immense restraint to comply with the court orders to arrest Imran Khan in corruption cases. He (Imran) on the other hand was not only defying court orders but also inciting his party workers to create anarchy, she added. Police had no weapons and were hit with petrol bombs, sticks and stones, Marriyum Aurangzeb said adding due to these criminal acts of PTI goons, 65 police personnel including DIG Operations, were injured and hospitalized.

"Imran Khan is using party workers, women and children as human shields to avoid arrest and stoke unrest in the streets of Lahore", she maintained. The recent audio leak was proof that Imran Khan ordered his workers and senior party officials to procure petrol to use it as a weapon against the police contingent.

Federal cabinet okays Lawyers Protection Bill

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Friday approved the winding down of the SME Bank on the recommendation of the State Bank of Pakistan while instructing to ensure the protection of consumers' deposits.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, chairing the meeting of the federal cabinet, instructed that the protection of the customers' deposits should be ensured during the winding down process. It was decided that all of the bank customers would be paid Rs5.557 billion, in the first phase. The cabinet also approved the Lawyers Protection Bill 2023 for its onward tabling before the parliament.

The prime minister said that the lawyers had played a key role in the constitutional evolution of Pakistan. He said approval for the support price of Rs8500 per 40 kilograms of

cotton has also been granted to make the crop profitable for the growers. On the finance ministry's recommendation, the federal cabinet granted ex-post facto approval to 15 bilateral and two multilateral MoUs of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan with different countries and international institutions.

The cabinet approved the constitution of an inquiry committee under the Additional Deputy Commissioner for the extradition of a citizen Muhammad Waseem, son of Muhammad Aslam to Saudi Arabia under the Extradition Act 1972. Muhammad Waseem Aslam is wanted by the Saudi government in a murder case. An agreement for the extradition of criminals between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia already existed.

The body approved the reconstitution of Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara

Parbadhak Committee, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony. The 13-member committee would consist of Sikh community representatives from all the provinces. The committee would be mandated to take care of the Gurdwaras, facilitate Sikh pilgrims, and run other administrative matters.

The federal cabinet endorsed the decisions of the Cabinet Committee on Legislative Cases made in its meeting held on March 13, 2023, including the approval of the Lawyers Protection Bill 2023 which was drafted on the lawyer community's request for their protection. The meeting also endorsed the decisions of the Economic Coordination Committee made in the meetings on March 14 and 15, 2023 including the setting of Rs8500 per kg as the support price of cotton.

People in Punjab, KP to be given free flour: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday said needy persons in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be given the gift of free flour in the month of Ramadan ul Mubarak.

Speaking at a meeting held here to review arrangements for the provision of flour to needy persons, he said for the first time in the history of the country, a package had been prepared for the provision of free flour to poor people in the month of Ramadan. He said no negligence would be tolerated regarding the quality of flour to be provided to the citizens.

The prime minister said the government was making all efforts to provide relief to the poor and middle class. It was told that in Punjab, 15.8 million households would be provided free flour during Ramadan while free flour would also be provided in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The needy persons can know about their eligibility for a gift of flour by sending their identity card number on SMS 8171 assigned by

Benazir Income Support Programme. It was further told that flour would be available on less rates in 50 Sasta Bazaars in Balochistan. Advisor to Prime Minister Ahad Cheema, Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Syed Mohsin Naqvi, chief secretaries of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan and Managing Director of Utility Stores Corporation attended the meeting.

In order to avoid any inconvenience, the people have been asked to check their eligibility for the free flour by sending an SMS containing their CNIC number to 8171 helpline of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) as the data has been linked with the BISP. As per the criteria, the families registered with the BISP and having a poverty score of 60 or lesser would be eligible to avail the facility.

**Shehbaz acknowledges services of school teacher who coined name of Islamabad:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday acknowledged the services, on national level, of Qazi

Abdur Rehman Amritsari, who had proposed the name of the Federal Capital as Islamabad.

In recognition of his services and on recommendations of Capital Development Authority (CDA), he awarded the allotment letter of a residential plot in Park Enclave to the heirs of late Abdur Rehman. The prime minister has fulfilled the Government of Pakistan's promise of acknowledging the services of late Qazi Abdur Rehman Amritsari, said a press release.

He said the services of Qazi Abdur Rehman Amritsari for Pakistan could not be ignored. He said the nation paid tribute to the school teacher Qazi Abdur Rehman who gave an identity to Islamabad. PM Shehbaz Sharif also directed the CDA authorities to complete all the formalities and provide possession of the plot to the heirs of Qazi Abdur Rehman. He eulogized media, specially anchor person Hamid Mir, for highlighting the issue. The prime minister also lauded the efforts of CDA chairman Noor ul Amin in this regard.

Putin's arrest warrants issued for 'war crimes'

AMSTERDAM (Agencies): The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant on Friday against Russian President Vladimir Putin, accusing him of being responsible for war crimes committed in Ukraine, but Moscow said the move was meaningless.

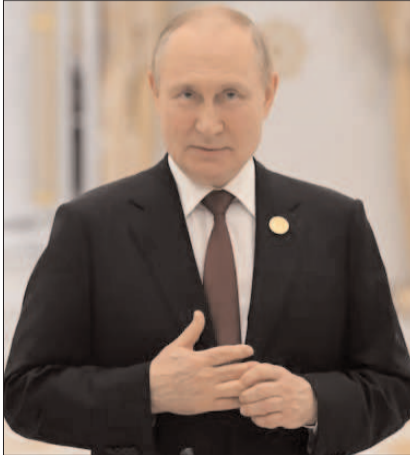
Russia has repeatedly denied accusations that its forces have committed atrocities during its one-year-old invasion of its neighbour. The ICC issued the warrant for Putin's arrest on suspicion of unlawful deportation of children and unlawful transfer of people from the territory of Ukraine to the Russian Federation.

The court also issued a warrant for Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's Commissioner for Children's Rights, on the same charges. In the first reaction to the news from Moscow, Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on her Telegram channel: "The decisions of the International Criminal Court have no meaning for our country, including from a legal point of view."

"Russia is not a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and bears no obligations under it." There was no immediate reaction from the Kremlin. Senior Ukrainian officials applauded the ICC decision, with the country's Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin hailing it as "historic for Ukraine and the entire international law system".

Andriy Yermak, chief of the presidential staff, said that issuing the warrant was "only the beginning". ICC prosecutor Karim Khan opened an investigation into possible war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Ukraine a year ago. He highlighted during four trips to Ukraine that he was looking at alleged crimes against children and the targeting of civilian infrastructure.

The ICC move came a day after a UN-



mandated investigative body accused Russia of committing wide-ranging war crimes in Ukraine, including wilful killings and torture, in some cases making children watch loved ones being raped and detaining others alongside dead bodies. The news also came ahead of a planned state visit to Moscow next week by Chinese President Xi Jinping which is likely to cement much closer ties between Russia and China just as relations between Moscow and the West hit new lows.

Russia has been placed under unprecedented Western sanctions since he sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. Beijing and Moscow struck a "no limits" partnership shortly before the invasion and US and European leaders have said they are concerned Beijing may send arms to Russia. China has denied any such plan, criticising Western weapon supplies to Ukraine, which will soon extend to fighter jets after Poland and Slovakia this week approved deliveries. The Kremlin said the jets would simply be destroyed.



## 12 killed, 1,315 injured in 1,220 accidents in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At least 12 people were killed while 1,315 injured in 1,220 accidents in Punjab.

A spokesman for the Rescue 1122 said on Friday that 616 drivers, 79 under-age drivers, 154 pedestrians, and 557 passengers were among the victims of the traffic crashes.

The statistics showed that 262 accidents were reported in Lahore which affected 262 people placing the provincial capital top of the list followed by 88 in Multan with 91 victims and at third Gujranwala 83 with 88 victims. As many as 1,045 motorcycles, 69 rickshaws, 145 cars, 25 vans, 16 buses, 24 trucks and 108 other vehicles besides slow-moving carts were involved in the accidents.

## NUST delegation calls on Governor

KARACHI (APP): A five-member delegation of the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) called on Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori here at Governor House on Friday.

The significance of higher education in the development of the country, the role of the universities, promotion of research in various fields and other issues of mutual interests came under discussion.

The delegation included Anis H Younus, Maria Qadri, Ubaira Atif, Mehtab Ahmed and Junaid Faizi.

The Governor Sindh said that NUST was the dignified educational institution of the country and he appreciated the role of the university in the field of research. He stressed the need for cooperation between NUST and the universities of the province. He also praised the collaboration of NUST with international universities.

## IGP orders 2 weekly sessions of change of investigation board

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar has issued orders for holding two weekly sessions of the change of investigation board for convenience of citizens and action on their applications without any delay. The sessions of the change of investigation board were being held regularly.

According to details, the session of the change of investigation board was being held as per routine on Wednesday and Thursday, and the board consisting of three SPs, headed by DIG Ali Javed Anwar Malik, was taking timely decisions on the change of investigation applications.

In these sessions, more than 100 pending applications have been disposed of during the last 20 days and now no application for change of investigation was pending. The IGP directed Additional IGP Investigation Punjab Sultan Ahmad Chaudhry to monitor the work of the change of investigation board himself and said that decisions should not be delayed on applications, submitted by the citizens.

The seating capacity of the citizens in the waiting room of the investigation office Punjab has also been increased and all possible relief would be provided to citizens by completing the investigation stages with timely decisions on the applications.

# IOI President calls on CM Sindh

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Honorable President IOI/Ombudsman Western Australia Mr. Chris Field, and the Principal Assistant to President IOI, Ms. Rebecca Poole, left Pakistan after completion of their successful visit.

During 1st ever visit of IOI President, they attended the launching ceremony of Research Study on "Assessment of Malnutrition (Stunting) in District Tharparkar", at Chief Minister's House where Chief Minister Sindh Sayed Murad Ali Shah welcomed

them.

They also called on the Governor Sindh Mr. Kamran Khan Tessori accompanied by the Ombudsman Sindh, Mr. Ajaz Ali Khan. They also visited the Provincial Ombudsman Secretariat where they planted a sapling. They were briefed about the working of the Sindh Ombudsman Office by the Ombudsman Sindh.

They also paid visits to Mazar-e-Quaid, National Museum of Pakistan, Mohatta Palace and the Holy Trinity Cathedral Church during their stay in Karachi.



## 20th convocation ceremony - Karachi Institute of Economics & Technology

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Karachi Institute of Economics & Technology (KIET) held its 20th Convocation Ceremony on Wednesday, 15 March, 2023 at KIET Main Campus, Pakistan Air Force Airmen Academy, Korangi Creek, Karachi.

A total of Nine Hundred & Thirty-four graduates were conferred degrees in the disciplines of Management Sciences, Computer Sciences, Arts, Humanities & Sciences and Engineering. The College of Management Sciences awarded 429 degrees. The

College of Computing & Information Sciences awarded 363 degrees. 80 degrees were awarded to the graduates of College of Engineering and the College of Arts, Humanities & Sciences awarded 42 degrees to its graduates. Furthermore, 20 degrees were awarded to the MS/M.Phil and PhD scholars.

Honorable Air Marshal (Retd.) Mr. Mirza Zafar Hussain, Chancellor KIET, was the Chief Guest at the occasion who awarded Gold and Silver Medals to the distinguished students. The Chief Guest empha-

sized the importance of higher education and the significance of research and development for the progress of the country. Air Vice Marshal Hussain Ahmed Siddiqui, President Air War College Institute was the guest of honor at the ceremony.

In his welcome address, President of KIET, Air Vice Marshal (Retd.) Usaid ur Rehman Usmani praised the efforts of the students and faculty while emphasizing the role of education and modern research in the development of Pakistan. He thanked the Chief Guest for his gracious presence.



## Administrator East inspects road carpeting

KARACHI (APP): Administrator DMC East Syed Shakeel Ahmed along with officials concerned here on Friday inspected the road carpet works being carried out in UC-8 near Abdul Haq Park PECHS block-II. He said that development works were being carried out in various UCs of the district East. He thanked the people for appreciating the development works

and said that it was our responsibility for utilizing the available resources to facilitate the citizens.

Meanwhile, on the directive of Administrator DMC East, a meeting of officers was chaired by Municipal Commissioner Fahim Khan in view of the expected rains.

The meeting formulated a strategy to deal with the expected rainfall.



PESHAWAR: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali addressing inauguration ceremony of IADEx as chief guest.

## 'Jatha politics' a dangerous trend, says Kh Saad

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Railways and Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique has said 'Jatha politics' is a dangerous trend, and it should not be allowed in the country at all.

Addressing a press conference here on Friday, he said political leaders never use jathas [groups] to resist a court order, and they surrender to the law gracefully.

Criticising the Imran Khan government's alleged excesses against his political opponents, he said: "All certified political leadership of the country was imprisoned and defamed by levelling false allegations against them." He questioned that why an agreement was not being finalised with the IMF, asserting that the IMF knew that Pakistan was financially a weak country and it was demanding implementation of new conditions every other day for signing the agreement.

"Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has shared one of the conditions with the media a day earlier," he added.

He said that this was the game being played with the solidarity of the country. "He (Imran) is not a politician but a threat to the country," he alleged. The minister said there were two separate laws for

the common man and for Imran Khan and no such concessions were ever given to other parties' leaderships. "We are still appearing before courts and never avoided the proceedings," he added. The PML-N senior leader said that everybody knew that Mian Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz used to appear before courts regularly.

He said Imran Khan would have to appear before courts even if it was acceptable to him or not. Kh Saad alleged that Imran had never struggled for the rule of law, never faced any dictatorship and never raised voice for the rule of Constitution, adding that he just played cricket in his life, told lies and used abusive language against his opponents. He said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was established with the help of facilitators and foreign funding, and now the state was facing its consequences.

Being a representative of the federal government, he said that the law would take its course against all those involved in violence against the administration and the law-enforcers. "We know every person who did illegal and unlawful acts against political leadership, but we do not believe in revenge," he said and added that several such

people sought apology in private meetings.

He said the leaders of the ruling alliance, Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), knew it well that after taking charge of the country their politics would be at stake. But, they believed that the country country was more important than their politics, and the government was struggling to save the country, which had been destroyed by Imran Khan and his facilitators. About ever increasing inflation, the minister said it was obvious that inflation would increase when the IMF and friendly countries were not giving financial support to the government. He said that Imran Khan was playing with the country and was still being facilitated by his foreign allies like Zalmay Khalilzad and others besides the foreign funding.

The minister said that Imran Khan was now criticising his own previous facilitators.

To a question, Kh Saad said that the PMLN's election manifesto would be new judicial system, merit based promotion of the lower judiciary, upgradation of procedure of judges' appointment to higher courts and new financial framework, according to the national requirements.

## 'Police arrested 25,483 'criminals' this year so far'

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore Additional IG Bilal Siddique Kamyana said on Friday the Lahore police, during the ongoing campaign, arrested 25,483 alleged criminals during the first two-and-a-half months of the current year.

Sharing details of action against illegal weapons and arms smugglers, he said the police arrested 1,734 persons and registered cases against them in different police stations of the city. Nine Kalashnikovs, 127 rifles, 89 guns, 1,525 pistols and revolvers and more than 10,000 bullets and cartridges were recovered from them. During action against drug-peddlers, police arrested 2,360 accused, registered cases against them, and recovered 15kg heroin, 1,074kg charas, 5.316kg ICE and 26,663-litre liquor. The police arrested 1,275 people involved in gambling, registered 277 cases against them and recovered Rs 4.527 million stake money from them.

Moreover, 12,886 proclaimed and targeted offenders and court absconders were arrested by the police including 1,094 POs of A category and 8,401 of B category during this period.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

It is Published Through This Notice That I Mst Hameeda Jan Widow of Musaddique Shah R/o Behzadi Chakar Kot District Kohat is the owner of Plot no.63 Sector B-1 Size one Kanal Phase.II KDA Kohat Has Appointed has son Mr. Zahoor Khan S/o Musaddique Shah R/o House no. 443, Mohallah Gulla Khel Behzadi Chakar Kot District Kohat Through (Special) Deed no 817 Bahi no 04 Volume no 260 Dated 27/12/2022 which is Registered in The office Kohat of Tehsildar/ Sub Registrar The Attorney Holder now wants to Transfer the Above Said Plot If Any Bank/Institution/Firm/Per son Has Any objection About The Transfer He Should Contact The Housing officer UADA Within 15 Days in Writing with Proofs otherwise Plot will be Transfer and no objection will Be Accepted (Project Director Urban Area KDA Kohat)

## ٹینڈرنوٹس

(Fortification of Police Stations) زیر تینڈر

پولیس سٹیشن تعمیر، پولیس سٹیشن صابرا باد، پولیس سٹیشن بائو داؤد شاہ اور پولیس سٹیشن گڑگری کے لئے سی۔ای۔ ڈیوبو کے ساتھ رجسٹرڈ ڈھکیڈھاروں سے جنہوں نے برائے مالی سال 2022-23 کے لئے اپنے اسٹور کی تجدید کروائی ہو سے سربراہ ٹینڈر مطلوب ہیں جو کہ زیر تینڈر کو موزوں 30-03-2023 کو بوقت 11:00 بجے دفتر تینڈر میں ملایا جائے گا۔ جو کہ سی روز بوقت 02:00 بجے ٹینڈر دہندگان کی موجودگی میں کھولے جائیں گے۔ کام کی نوعیت کسی بھی وقت دفتری اوقات کار میں دفتری۔ پی۔ ای۔ ای صاحب میں ہے۔ آفیسر سے ملا حاکم کی جانسی ہے۔ تجزیہ لاگت ذیل ہیں۔ زیر تینڈر میں تینڈر مضمون گ کرنے کا حق محفوظ رکھتا ہے۔

نمبر شمار	نام پولیس سٹیشن	تینڈر / باڈی رینڈر	نمبر شمار	نام پولیس سٹیشن	تینڈر / باڈی رینڈر
1.	پولیس سٹیشن شاہ سلیم	1200000/- روپے	4.	پولیس سٹیشن بائو داؤد شاہ	1200000/- روپے
2.	پولیس سٹیشن خیر	1200000/- روپے	5.	پولیس سٹیشن گڑگری	1200000/- روپے
3.	پولیس سٹیشن صابرا باد	1200000/- روپے			

نوٹ: 1- 02% کال ڈیپازٹ نامہ موزرٹ پولیس آفیسر کے ساتھ منسلک ہونا چاہیے۔ 2- ٹینڈر کے ساتھ دفتری شناختی کارڈ کی کاپی منسلک ہونی چاہیے۔ 3- کنٹرول شدہ دستاویزات منسلک ہونی چاہیے۔ 4- کامیاب ٹینڈر دہندگان کو چار دن کے اندر باکریٹ پر دستخط کرنا ہوگا۔ دیگر شرائط اور شرائط منسلک ہونے والی ہیں۔ 5- ڈیپازٹ کو اختیار ہوگا کہ وہ ایک یا تمام ٹینڈر 47-KPPRA Rule کے تحت منسوخ کریں۔ 6- منظور شدہ ٹینڈر ریٹ 30 جون 2023 تک قابل ہوگا۔

**ڈسٹرکٹ پولیس آفیسر (کرک)**

### INVITATION TO E-BID THROUGH SAP Ariba Discovery

Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), the largest Exploration & Production listed Company of Pakistan, invites Sealed E-Bids through **SAP-Ariba Discovery** for the service/material given below under competitive bidding procedure as per Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules:

SR #	TENDER ENQUIRY NO.	DESCRIPTION	BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME	BID OPENING DATE & TIME
1	OGDCL-SCM-SERVICES-CB-PROD-205428023-2023	HIRING OF PORTA CABINS FOR WALLI OIL & GAS FIELD, F.R LAKKI MARWAT, KPK PROVINCE	04.04.2023 AT 1030 HRS.	04.04.2023 AT 1100 HRS.
2	OGDCL-SCM-SERVICES-CB-PNP-205428572-2023	HIRING OF SERVICES FOR EXECUTION OF ATA-2023 JOBS AT DAKHNI PLANT, TEHSIL JAND, DISTRICT ATTOK, PUNJAB PROVINCE	04.04.2023 AT 1100 HRS.	04.04.2023 AT 1130 HRS.

- Vendors not having Ariba Network ID are requested to register themselves on SAP Ariba Portal by clicking on the link [supplier.ariba.com](http://supplier.ariba.com) to access and participate in OGDCL tenders.
- Complete Tender document(s) along with Scope of Work / TOR / Clarifications can be viewed and downloaded from SAP-Ariba RFP by clicking on the link [discovery.ariba.com/profile/AN01562899621](http://discovery.ariba.com/profile/AN01562899621).
- Original Bid Bonds as per RFP/Tender Document shall be submitted at the reception of OGDCL House, Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area, Islamabad, Pakistan on or before bid submission date and time mentioned above.
- OGDCL reserves the right to accept or reject any bid and to annul the bidding process and reject all the bids as per Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Rule-33".

### EXTENSION

Reference to our Press Tender Notice published in national newspapers on 04.03.2023, it is notified that the bids submission/opening dates are extended as follows:

SR #	TENDER ENQUIRY NO.	DESCRIPTION	FROM	TO
1	OGDCL-SCM-SERVICES-CB-PEFD-204498407-2023	HIRING OF IN-LINE INSPECTION INTELLIGENT PIGGING SERVICES FOR CRITICAL PIPELINE SEGMENTS AT UCH, QP ASOGHARI FLOW LINE	DATE: 22.03.2023 SUBMISSION: 1030 HRS OPENING: 1100 HRS	DATE: 06.04.2023 SUBMISSION: 1030 HRS OPENING: 1100 HRS

- Bid submission/opening time and all other terms & conditions shall remain unchanged.
- Bidders are requested to contact **In-Charge Supply Chain Management (SCM) Services** at Phone # +92-51-92002-3750 for further queries / information.
- This advertisement is also available on PPRA website at [www.ppra.org.pk](http://www.ppra.org.pk) and OGDCL website at [www.ogdcl.com](http://www.ogdcl.com).

**GENERAL MANAGER (SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT)**  
**OIL & GAS DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LIMITED**  
 OGDCL HOUSE, JINNAH AVENUE, ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN.  
 Phone No. 92-51-920023540; Fax No. 92-51-9244139  
 No. 356/51  
 LARGEST TAX PAYER COMPANY OF THE NATION "SAY NO TO CORRUPTION" WE EXPLORE PROSPERITY



LAHORE: Nomad women busy in washing crockery on train tracks outside their makeshift huts near Railway Station Area



PESHAWAR: Adviser to Chief Minister for Health Dr. Abid Jameel talking to media persons on the occasion of World TB Day.

## Welfare incentives for KP police to boost morale, capacity of cops

PESHAWAR (APP): Being the front-line force in fight against terrorism, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police have rendered great sacrifices for protection of lives and properties of people besides thwarting the nefarious designs of the inimical forces.

"For years, KP police, being the front line force, remained the prime target of suicide attacks, ambushes, kidnapping and targets' killings. The recent deadly terrorist attack on Malik Saad Shaheed police line at Peshawar on January 30 last was one of such horrific terror assaults made in a bid to shatter the morale of KP police force," said Syed Akhtar Ali Shah, former IGP KP while talking to APP on Friday.

However, he said the KP police stand more determined, focused and in high morals to wipe out terrorism and extremism from the province. From 2,000 to 2021, an estimated 1,505 KP police officials including senior officers were martyred excluding the personnel of Khasadar and Levy Force. Ironically, the number of police officials reportedly martyred from 1971 to 2,000 was only 289, which was very low as compared to the last two decades in the province.

Akhtar Ali Shah said senior police officers including Additional Inspector General of Police (AIG) and Frontier Constabulary Commandant Sifat Ghayur, AIG Ashraf Noor, DIG Malik Muhammad Saad, DIG Abid Ali, SPs Tahir Dawar, Khurshid Khan, Abdul Kalam Khan and many more officers have led from the front in fight against terrorism and embraced Shahadat in line of duty.

Underscoring the need for launching special welfare programs for the KP police force, he also suggested strengthening the counter terrorism department (CTD) to enhance their professional capacity necessary for complete eradication of terrorism. CTD spokesman told APP on Friday that 11 wanted terrorists belonging to banned Tahrir e Taliban Pakistan (TPP) arrested from Peshawar, Mardan, Charsadda and Khyber districts. He said three terrorists wanted by the government in serious cases were also apprehended and shifted for interrogation.

To provide relief to the police force, Inspector General Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur on Friday announced a mega relief and welfare package for the police cops and their families. Under the landmark package, the IGP in a video message said monthly income of the widows of all those policemen, who served below ten years service, have been increased from Rs7,000 to Rs25,000 while constable's burial charges were enhanced from Rs30,000 to Rs50,000.

Similarly, bridal gifts of the first daughter's marriage of all officials were increased from Rs30,000 to Rs one lakh while Rs300,000 would be immediately released for an open heart surgery for all police officials. He said Rs150,000 would be provided for open heart surgery of the widows, children and parents of officials besides Rs one lakh for treatment of early stage cancer and Rs5lakh for later stage cancer's treatment of the officials and Rs 250,000 for their children, wife and parents.

Likewise, he said Rs one million would be provided for liver transplant and bone marrow treatment of all officials and Rs seven lakh for their parents, wife and children's treatment, Rs30,000 per month for thalassemia patients and Rs one lakh each for injured of bomb blasts, traffic and other mishaps. Regarding measures related to education, the IGP said the police department would bear the cost of police children education in Khyber Medical College Peshawar, Ayub Medical College Abbottabad, UET Peshawar, GIK Swabi, IMS Peshawar, LUMS, Aga Khan University, NUST Islamabad and other institutions of the higher education.

The children of police officials, who would qualify the exams of CSS, PMS and judicial service would be given Rs300,000 cash award and IGP merit certificate, adding the success of every child of police officials would be considered the success of the police department. The police chief said that the police force was like a family and the welfare of children would be the top most priority. Akhtar Hayat said KP police have rendered great sacrifices in war against terrorism and maintaining law and order in the province, therefore, their welfare would be made a role model. These measures would significantly help increase the level of motivation and spirit of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police force and provide golden opportunities to their children and families to get quality education at top professional education institutions and healthcare services all over Pakistan.

## IGP demote 800 police officers who got out-of-turn promotions

PESHAWAR (PPI): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa IGP Akhtar Hayat Gandapur has issued a notification for the demotion of 800 police officers, who were promoted out-of-turn, in compliance with Supreme Court's 2018 order.

The notification included the demotion of dozens of SHO's and DSP's. This was in response to a writ petition filed by the affected police officers. According to the sources, in the year 2018, the Supreme Court ordered to demote all police officers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who received out-of-turn promotions while the provincial government, IGPs or courts had ignored the deserving ones.

Therefore, the current IGP Akhtar Hayat Gandapur has issued orders for the demotion of 800 police personnel promoted out of turn, of which 65 are from Dera Ismail Khan, in order to ensure the implementation of the Supreme Court's decision after more or less five years. Sources claimed that if the Supreme Court's ruling is implemented, all the officials who were disregarded will receive their due right. It merits here to mention that in the last five years, three IGPs have been failed to implement the same Supreme Court's ruling. Each time, the IGPs had to back down due to the interference of the provincial government and influential politicians.

## Smuggling bid foiled

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Capital City Police have foiled a narcotics smuggling attempt to Punjab and arrested an accused after recovery of 6 kilograms of quality heroin powder from his possession on Friday.

According to Station House Officer (SHO) Chamkani, Ifitkar Khan, the accused Abdul Aroof is the resident of Peshawar and is a member of an organized narcotics smugglers gang. The accused was smuggling narcotics in a commuters' bus and on a tip, police arrested him while checking near the motorway.

The arrested accused has confessed to narcotics smuggling during initial investigations. A formal FIA has been registered against the accused and further investigations are in progress. In another incident, Mathra Police have also arrested three alleged narcotics peddlers. The accused identified as Rahim Bakhsh, Shehryar and Ahmat Khan are the residents of Peshawar and involved in heinous crime, ice-drug and narcotics peddling.

## Ceremony held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Gandhara Hindko Board Peshawar and Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) would jointly organize a ceremony to honor renowned artist, Arbab Hashim on March 18 (Saturday).

The ceremony has been planned to highlight contributions of famous artists, sculpture musician and filmmaker. Ceremony would be held in Mohsin Hall of SCCI wherein critics and art lovers would shed light on the life and achievement of Arbab Hashim.

## KMU-IBMS hold a Biochemistry symposium

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A Biochemistry Symposium was organized under the auspices of the department of biochemistry, Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar Institute of Basic Medical Sciences. A large number of students and speakers from different regions of the province participated in the symposium. The ceremony was hosted by Prof. Dr. Rubina Nazli, dean of basic medical sciences, while Prof. Dr. Jamilur Rahman and Prof. Dr. Jawad Ahmed were the chief guests of the event.

Students presented their research papers and poster presentations during the symposium and demonstrated their knowledge and expertise in the field of biochemistry. The presentations were received with great enthusiasm by the audience. Apart from the oral presentations, a poster competition was also organized during the symposium in which students were given an opportunity



to showcase their research on posters. Posters were displayed throughout the symposium, the quality of which was highly appreciated by the participants.

Prof. Dr. Rubina Nazli, the host of the event, while appreciating the quality of the symposium's turnout and presentations, said that the purpose of organizing this symposium was to provide students with opportunities for innovative research. She appreciated the hard work and dedication of the students and encouraged them and said that they are expected to continue their work in the field of biochemistry with the same zeal.

The chief guests (Prof. Dr. Jamil ur Rahman and Prof. Dr. Jawad Ahmed)

and other distinguished guest speakers including Prof. Dr. Amin ul Haq, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Sadiq, and Associate Prof. Dr. Farid ullah Shah congratulated the students and the faculty and staff of the department of biochemistry for conducting this successful symposium.

They said that this symposium will help in enhancing the skills of students as well as highlight the importance of continuous research in the field of biochemistry. They expressed happiness over the research being done in the field of biochemistry and assured all possible cooperation to the students while encouraging them to continue their studies and research in this field.

## Faiq rejects hike in prices of electricity, PoL products

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP) chairman Muhammad Faiq has rejected an increase in prices of electricity and petroleum commodities, saying that the poor segment will hardly suffer by the government's move and also will come a new wave of inflation in the country.

Shah talking to a group of reporters here on Friday said the government has jolted the masses by making another hike in power tariff by Rs3.23 per unit and again jacking up petrol by Rs5 and diesel Rs13 per litre, saying the government has snatched the right to live from poor masses.

He, furthermore, criticized the government for snatching morsels from the mouths of poor people, asking it to shun the policy of erasing poor masses. Purchasing power of people is rapidly dying as they have been forced on beggars and suicides, he added.

Faiq severely criticised the incumbent rulers, saying that members of treasury and opposition benches busied in their vested interests and left the poor masses in lurch. The party chief

said social and economic injustice is deepening in the society. He said the growing sense of deprivations among people would force them to raise up against the present political system.

Shah said the government austerity measures only restricted claims and documents as no practical steps were taken to cut down lavish spending and non-development funds. "Brigade of the federal ministers and advisors: "Is it not injustice with the country and burden on the national economy which is dependent on foreign loans and Aid?"

Talking about the intensifying political chaos, the ATP chairman said that the situation is getting worse with each passing day, adding that no will gain nothing while the fragile democracy will 'wrap up' in the prevailing political uncertainty and uproar. Shah once again urged the institutions and stakeholders to play their due role to end the current political unrest.

He also asked all political forces to jointly formulate a strategy and reforms for paving way for the holding of fresh elections, which, according to him, is

the only solution to the current crisis. Faiq reminded that his party has already given a holistic roadmap for solution of the present crisis, if it would be implemented with true spirit the change will definitely come in the country.

## One arrested for aerial firing

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Capital City Police have arrested an accused of aerial firing on Friday. The accused have resorted to aerial firing to celebrate the win of a cricket match on Friday.

University Town Police have taken notice of the aerial firing to celebrate victory of the cricket match and arrested an accused Mohammad Shoaib son of Israr Hussain, resident of Pawaka, a suburban locality of the city. During the initial investigation, the accused confessed to aerial firing. A pistol has also been recovered from his possession. Police Station, University Town has registered a formal FIR against the accused and further investigations were in progress.



PESHAWAR: Resident of Tehkal holding banner and placards during a protest against land grabbers.

## PTI poor health policies fail to lessen problems of patients of KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Husan Zadgai, a 65-year-old woman was leading a happy life until she was diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB) disease that made her life painful and miserable for long. Hailing from Pabbi, Nowshera district, the senior citizen recalled that she had been coughing from her childhood but the disease got aggravated with every passing year as it was treated as a seasonal cough with flu.

The patient said her TB was diagnosed at the final stage after she was hospitalized due to continued coughing, loss of weight & appetite and shortness of breath. "I was busy at breakfast with my family when suddenly I became unconscious after falling on the ground from the chair," she said with sobbing eyes after recovery. "I have passed through different tests at Hayatabad Medical Complex (HMC), Peshawar where I was diagnosed with last stage of TB that had increased the size of heart due to accumulation of substantial fluids," she said, adding her pericardial effusion surgery was conducted for extracting fluids from lungs.

Later, she was referred to the Lady

Reading Hospital Peshawar for further treatment of cardiothoracic surgery due to lack of such facilities at Hayatabad Medical Complex, Peshawar, which exposed PTI tall claims. Husan Zadagai has spent all the amount saved for dowry of her daughter on her long treatment and would have died if she had not spent money for her treatment.

Like Husan Zadagai hundreds of people become victims of communicable TB disease every year in KP that put the public sector hospitals overburdened due to lack of TB hospitals in the province where PTI ruled for nearly 10 years. The KP Health Department report has revealed that in 2019, tuberculosis cases were detected in 158 patients out of one lakh population in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Similarly, the multi drug resistance (MDR) cases (incidence rate) were recorded as 9.18 out of 100,000 people. The total notified cases in KP were registered as 41,129 while 4,413 cases were detected in the newly merged districts (Ex Fata). In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the case detection rate was 48 percent while

32 percent in newly merged areas in 2019 during PTI tenure. "The findings of the Health Department report published by the PTI government itself were alarming. It showed PTI's poor policies and ineffective health reforms, which failed to eradicate fatal TB disease besides lessen patients' problems," said Ikhtair Wali, PMLN KP spokesperson while talking to APP on Thursday.

Instead of focusing on construction of new TB, cancer and general hospitals in KP, he said that PTI had wasted nearly 10 years of people where poor patients have to wait for long to get treatment under Sehat Card. The PTI rulers had neither made fully functional the regional health directorates for speedy resolution of issues of employees of public sector hospitals nor improved healthcare services in districts.

He deplored the former PTI government for not fully implementing the medical teaching institutions (MTI) reforms act 2015 in all public sector hospitals due to which the healthcare service delivery was badly affected. The shortage of staff in the sehat card program, delay in release

of funds by the previous government and lack of kidney and liver transplantation services besides non-inclusion of TB treatment were causing enormous problems for poor patients of KP who visited Islamabad and Lahore for treatment.

"Like Cancer, TB was a fatal disease, which could prove fatal if untreated timely," said senior medical specialist at government hospital Pabbi Nowshera, Sirzameen Khan. He said that about one-third of the world population was infected with TB, having a 5-10% risk of developing TB throughout their lifetime. "TB was not only a biomedical but a socioeconomic phenomenon coupled with social stigma and necessitated the urge for a multi-sectoral framework to address all the possible determinants that can influence TB prevention and treatment." In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the burden of non-communicable diseases which was 32.6pc (16,050 disability adjusted life years (DALYs) lost per one lac population) of the total burden in 2000, has increased its share to 39.5pc (15,457 DALYs lost per 100,000 population) in 2019.

However, the burden of the communicable, maternal, child and nutritional group, which was 63 percent (31,130 DALYs lost per one lakh population) in 2000 has gone down to 55.1per cent (21,537 DALYs lost per 100,000 population) in 2019. According to officials' sources, approximately Rs10 billion sehat card Program (SCP) payments to the hospitals were outstanding on part of the State Life Insurance Company (SLIC) and the government had to release Rs 4 billion to the insurance company every month to clear the backlog and keep the program running.

Riaz Tanoli, chief executive officer, SCP said that the government pays Rs2.5 billion per month to SLIC to bear the expenses under the program while the insurance company retains Rs 1.5 billion from the amount in lieu of the liabilities and pays rest to the hospitals. He said that Rs 30 billion per year was required for smooth functioning of the SCP. The patients suffering from communicable and non communicable diseases were being provided free of charge treatment under the program

in the province where Rs30 billion were spent on treatment of around 9.7 million families in its second phase, he said.

In the first phase, he said SCP was launched in Kohat, Mardan, Malakand and Chitral districts wherein 1.8 million poor households were entitled to get up to Rs 540,000 free treatment. In the first phase, he said that 2.3 million people availed the facility and Rs 6 billion were spent on their treatment. In February 2019, he said the program was extended to across the country including all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in its second phase with a target to provide free treatment including surgeries and medicines up to Rs one million to each family of over 80 million people at 1,000 designated hospitals. In-spite of the change of government in KP, he said the program continued unaffected, adding the caretaker government has recently released Rs 4 billion to the program. Dr Raiz Tanoli said Rs 48,772 million was spent on treatment of 1,977,455 patients from January 2016 to December, 2022.



## In brief

### QWP leader blasts Imran F.P. Report

CHARSADDA : Provincial Chairman Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao has asked the PTI chairman Imran to show the performance of his three and half year rule instead of spreading anarchy. He expressed these views while addressing a public meeting at Union Council Sho Dagg, district Charsadda on Friday. On this occasion, workers of various political parties announced joining QWP along with their families and associates. Sikandar Hayat Sherpao said that on one hand Imran Khan is presenting himself as a champion of the rule of constitution and supremacy of law, but on the other hand is resisting his arrest to dodge the law. The QWP provincial chief further accused Imran Khan of creating anarchy in the country and inciting youth to misuse them for the achievement of his objective. He said that the logic of the PTI chief that he is feeling threat to his life in appearing before the court and seeing no threat in this regard while participating in rallies and public meetings makes no sense. He further said that the PTI leadership is bent upon misleading the youth and using them in their own interest. He recalled the false commitment of the provision of employment to 10 million youth.

### E stamp papers in Buner launched F.P. Report

BUNER: The ADC general Alhtar Nawaz Khan on Friday formally launched E stamp papers services in the district by initiating it from the main branch of the NBP in Daggar. On the occasion BoR KP and NBP Daggar authorities were present. The ADC claimed transparency would ensure as the unfair means by issuing stamp papers in back dates would be blocked that would help minimizing properties related feuds as well. He elaborated by introducing E stamp services the true values would mention and frauds would discouraged. The ADC further told E stamp papers would be easily verified on line adding the NBP branches in Swari and Kalpani would also help public in this regard. The ADC shared web site [www.estamp.kp.gov.pk](http://www.estamp.kp.gov.pk) for getting online E stamp papers.

### Youth Camp event kicks off F.P. Report

BARA GALI: The sixth Natives Youth Camp event has started under the aegis of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) and The Natives in the Bara Gali campus of Peshawar University. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Managing Directors The Natives, Farhad Khan, Asif Khan and large number of students. About 50 students from KP, Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab and Azad Kashmir are participating in the camp. Various sessions including discussions, dialogues on cleanliness, climate change and eco-tourism. These session are awareness meant for among the participants. The five-day camp is jointly arranged by KPCTA, the Department of Youth Affairs KP and the Strengthening Participatory Organisation (SPO). Speaking on the occasion, participants shared that the event would help highlight the importance of eco-tourism, aware people of the hazards of climate change and promote scenic tourist attractions of the province.



HYDERABAD: A view of accumulated rainwater on main road ni Qasimabad, needs attention of authorities concerned.

## 18th HIV children died since 2019 in Larkana

LARKANA (PPI): The Sindh Government's Health Department has finally revealed the number of HIV positive registered cases, number of on-treatment cases and deaths in Larkana and Ratodero after suppressing the vital information from media persons for personal gains.

In a rebuttal letter issued by Dr. Muhammad Naem, Additional Director, Communicable Disease Control (CDC), HIV / AIDS, Sindh, which has become viral on social media, he disclosed that the total number of Registered HIV child patients in Larkana is 702 out of which 591 are on treatment and 113 have died. He said that the total number of registered HIV positive children in Ratodero is 2189 out of which 2028 are on treatment and 105 have died since April 2019 till today. In this way, he added, out of total 2189 registered HIV positive

cases as many as 2028 are on treatment and 218 have died.

Dr. Imran Akbar Arbani, who detected the first outbreak in Ratodero, said Friday that 30% to 35% cases which are sent for blood screening are detected positive in a month, which is alarming. He said due to an increase in the number of positive cases, screening was reduced to show the performance as only one person is posted to work for screening in Ratodero who can carry out a few cases daily. He said that the affected patients are also looking for the supply of proper medicines for coinfections.

When this scribe talked to Imtiaz Jalbani whose two HIV positive daughters have died out of five positive children, he said that HIV treatment medicines are given to them but drugs prescribed for co-infections are denied hence procured by them from the

open market being very poor labourer. He said that CD-4 and Viral Load Test facilities are also not being done which determine the treatment effects. He said commitments were made by the PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari that parents of affected children will be provided jobs, free transport services and endowment funds etc which are still awaited despite passage of four long years.

Dr. Hala Ram who has retired after heading the HIV/AIDS Treatment Center of Chandka Hospital said that screening must be mandatory before marriage, quacks should be brought to justice, hairdressers should strictly follow the SOPs, blood transfusion should be strict, illegal blood banks should be sealed forthwith and mass awareness must also be made among villagers because prevention is better than management.

## Four days Jishni Chitral opend after long time F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Jishni Chitral 2023 celebration has been started in Lower Chitral district. In this regard, the opening ceremonies were held at the stadium of Government Centennial Model High School. Chitral festival is being celebrated after a long time. This time there will be competitions in volley ball, football, cricket, tug-of-war, polo, naat hawani, recitation and poetry.

All the teams participating in the celebration also performed a play march in the stadium in which babies students of the School of Knowledge and Science Singoor presented a beautiful welcoming march with flowers in their hands. While playing the national anthem, all participants stood up in its respect. Major of Chitral Scouts inaugurated the Chitral celebration by cutting the ribbon. Apart from them, district administration officers, Wildlife Department, Police, Chitral Scouts, Health Department, Civil Defence, Chitral Levies, Tehsil Municipal Administration and representatives of other departments also participated in it.

District Sports Officer Ameer Zaman said that teams from Chitral Police, Levies, Health, Education departments, Chitral Scouts, Civil Defence, Population Welfare and other departments are also participating in the Chitral celebration, which is being celebrated with the support of the district administration. He said that there are nine teams in volley ball, nine teams in football, nine teams in cricket, two teams of tug-of-war and two teams of polo are also participating in which police and levies teams will contested Polo match.

He said that apart from this, there will be competitions in Milli song, poetry, recitation and Naat Hawani. He said that the main purpose of celebrating Chitral is to engage the young generation in positive activities so that on one hand they remain mentally and physically healthy and on the other hand they can also be protected from drugs and other negative activities. The festival in Chitral will continue for four days. A large number of spectators were present in the stadium who enthralled from these colorful events.

## Committee vow to eliminate terrorism, eradicate narcotics

### F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: The divisional intelligence implementation committee has reiterated to utilise all available resources to maintain peace, eliminate terrorism, eradicate narcotics and keep a check on movements of Afghan refugees in the region. The committee met at the commissioner's office in Bannu on Friday with divisional commissioner Parwez Sabatkhel in the chair.

Bannu DC Manzoor Afridi and DPO Ziauddin Ahmed, Lakki Marwat DC Abdul Hadi, North Waziristan ADC Bashir Khan and officials of law enforcement and intelligence agencies were in attendance. Matters pertaining to law and order situation, narcotics control efforts, terrorism and movements of foreigners were discussed in the meeting.

It also reviewed the obstacles and hindrances in maintaining peace and bringing prosperity to the region. The divisional commissioner

asked the authorities concerned to launch a crack down on unregistered vehicles and motorcycles in their respective areas. In the first phase, the local police and excise officials will launch a campaign to get the vehicles registered with the excise and taxation department", he maintained.

Mr Parwez also gave approval to setting up steering committees at district level to review the security situation and chalk out a strategy to improve it with consultation of elders and local residents. "The steering committees will also keep a check on movements of Afghan nations in their respective areas", he said. He directed the intelligence and law enforcement personnel to eliminate Hawala, Hundi and other illegal money change and transfer businesses.

He asked the officials of Afghan commissionerate to provide complete data and record of Afghan nations settled in Bannu division to his administration. The divisional commissioner

said that funds would be arranged for the police department's projects as it would help to improve law and order situation in the entire region.

Also in the day, divisional commissioner Mr Parwez Sabatkhel chaired a meeting at his office to discuss with relevant authorities matters pertaining to provision of municipal services to citizens and elimination of encroachments. Tehsil municipal officers, divisional monitoring officers and other concerned authorities attended the meeting.

The divisional commissioners asked the municipal authorities to take practical steps to strengthen the financial position of municipal bodies and eliminate encroachments. He also directed the authorities to improve cleanliness conditions and ensure provision of clean drinking water to citizens. He said the administration will extend full support to municipal bodies to safeguard state owned lands and properties.

## Growing population biggest obstacle to development

### F.P. Report

QUETTA: Pakistan cannot afford a rapidly growing population. Revolutionary measures are needed to prevent population growth. These views were expressed by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri while speaking at an event organized under the title of increasing population and its impact on the future and society. In the event, personalities belonging to different schools of thought also expressed their views. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zahri expressed concern in her address and said that the population in Pakistan is increasing rapidly and Pakistan can afford this rapid increase.

In terms of the current population, there is a severe shortage of resources in Pakistan and all the citizens of Pakistan are not able to use these resources properly. The rapidly increasing population is also a big challenge for the government, which has to take special measures to deal with it. She said that the resources in the country are

less and the government needs to use all the options to educate the people about the continuous increase in population and there are negative effects on social life, which affects the whole family.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said in her statement that the world's population has exceeded 8 billion in her message. Countries around the world are prioritizing the respective populations according to their available resources. According to the data, Pakistan is the 33rd largest country in the world in terms of area, while Pakistan is the fifth largest country in the world in terms of population, which causes major problems because the problems are more than the resources, which is the reason for the continuously growing population. She said that increasing population is a big threat to health, employment, education, climate change and depleting water reserves and national security.

She further said that people

should be informed about the importance of reducing the population growth rate and there is a need to create awareness and for this all schools of thought have to play their role in which our religious leaders and media can play a very important role. A stable economy and a sustainable social life can be ensured. She expressed concern and said that if we do not control the population, the chances of Pakistan's population doubling in the next 30 years are very high, which is a very high number.

It can lead to great financial risk. According to statistics, the ratio of maternal mortality in Pakistan is 186 out of every 100,000. Raising awareness in every class for family planning in Pakistan is the need of the hour. There are other challenges such as rampant population growth, lack of trained health workers and communication gap, including low-level misunderstandings, which each member of the society has to play their part to overcome.

## Police must use scientific techniques to curb crimes

### F.P. Report

ATTOK: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khuram has directed the police to find the clue of the criminals by using the crime scene unit and modern scientific techniques. According to the press release, while chairing a meeting the RPO Rawalpindi Syed Khuram Ali advised the police officials to behave more courteous and well-mannered ensuring true sense of security among the people when dealing in the police stations.

He directed the district police to accelerate their crackdown against the gangsters, proclaimed offenders, rape cases, target killers, decoits, robbers, car lifters, drug pushers, land grabbers including other street crimes.

He also appreciated the

progress of the police officers to bring the car lifters in the justice with the advice to improve their performance with utmost dedication. He also stressed upon the police officials to uphold their good reputation and confidence among the common people who could knock the door of police station without any fear and hesitation.

The Regional Police Officer Rawalpindi Syed Khuram Ali urged upon the police force that they should always remain alert while performing their official duties to avert any untoward incident.

RPO Syed Khuram Ali also planted a sapling in the green belt of DPO Office and also inspected the mode of online complaints and disposal of investigation through front desk at model police station Attock City. He also inaugurated

the protection centre in Attock.

## 55 suspects held in Kohat Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Police here Friday arrested fifty five suspects and recovered arms from their possession during a search operation conducted in areas of Pindi Road.

According to police, District Police Officer, Shehzada Umar Abbas supervised the search operation. During operation police searched 160 houses and arrested 55 suspects besides recovering 1 Kalashnikov, 1 Klakov rifle, 2 repeaters, 4 pistols, 14 chargers and hundreds of cartridges from their possession.

## Politicians praise police's restraint despite PTI's workers attacks

CHARSADDA (APP): The Lahore police has shown maximum restraint and professionalism that averted untoward incidents during Zaman Park's skirmishes despite repeated attacks and hooliganism by the PTI workers.

"PTI leadership has tried hard to defame Punjab government and Lahore police by provoking the law enforcers but completely failed in its negative designs," said Ikhtair Wali Khan, PMLN KP spokesman while talking to APP on Friday.

Praising the high professionalism, commitment to duties and restraint of the Lahore police, he said that the valiant cops have effectively dealt the difficult situation erupted after

the PTI workers have pelted police with stones and slingshot, setting police vehicles on fire and ransacking public properties during two days clashes outside Imran residence at Lahore.

As a result of the provoked aggression of the PTI, he said that scores of policemen and law enforcers including officers were critically injured. "The PTI workers had challenged state institutions including police by attacking the law enforcers in Zaman Park on a number of occasions, resultantly many cops being hospitalized."

"Despite repeated hooliganism and thrashing of police, not a single shot has been fired by

the law enforcers and previous lives were saved despite PTI workers' violence that earned bad name for the country," he said. Wali claimed that the recent audio leak has proved that PTI supporters were ordered by the party leadership to procure petrol to use it as a weapon against the police and law enforcers.

"In democratic societies, political leaders were not afraid of jails and faced court trials with courage," he said, adding Imran Khan was continuously defying court orders. "Is Imran Khan considered himself above the law and constitution. If a three times elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif can appear in courts for over 200

times along with his daughter Maryam Nawaz and faced imprisonment then why not Imran Khan can appear in courts," he said.

ANP leader Wajid Ali Khan also praised Lahore police for showing great professionalism and maximum restraint despite PTI workers' provoking attitude. Imran Khan instead of surrendering to police has motivated his enraged supporters to create obstruction in police official duties to serve court notices on the PTI chief.

Police had no weapons and ammunition during Zaman Park clashes and were hit with petrol bombs, sticks and stones besides slingshots which was highly deplorable on the part of

PTI workers, he said. As a result, about 65 policemen and DIG Operations Lahore were injured and admitted to hospital. Wajid Khan said Imran had used PTI workers, children and women as human shields to avoid his possible arrest after he was charged in various cases and tried to spread anarchy in the historic city of Lahore.

As a result of the irrational approach of the PTI leadership, he said that surrounding areas of Zaman Park were converted into battle zone that resulted in disruption of traffic causing great difficulties for hundreds of thousands of people and visitors in Lahore. Strongly condemning Zalmay Khalilzad's unsolicited advice on the cur-

rent political situation of Pakistan, PMLN Nowshera President Sahibzada Hamaza said that Zalmay Khalilzad had no right to speak in the internal political affairs of Pakistan.

"Pakistan is an independent sovereign country and no one has the right to pass such unsolicited advice or comment on our internal political affairs," he said. He said democracy can't grow in Pakistan due to repeated unconstitutional intervention, rigging allegations in elections and chaotic economic situations. Hamzan Khan said it was high time for all politicians to think above party politics and sit together for the country's larger interest to take the ship of democracy to safe shores.



## Iraqi ambush of Americans made a mockery of ‘Mission Accomplished’

DUBAI (Reuters): A year after President George W. Bush launched the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, four US civilian security contractors in SUVs took an ill-fated turn into the Iraqi city of Falluja. Their assignment was to protect a convoy of catering trucks. It would be their last, and what happened to them would prove a defining moment in a conflict that -- far from being "Mission Accomplished" as Bush had declared less than a year earlier -- had only just begun.

Masked insurgents ambushed the contractors using rocket-propelled-grenades and AK-47 rifles on a main street in Falluja, part of the Sunni Triangle, a central region of mainly Sunni Muslims that had been the powerbase of Saddam Hussein who had been toppled by the invasion launched on March 20, 2003. Arriving in the city an hour or so after the ambush on March 31, 2004, I was confronted by a crowd kicking the head of an incinerated body. Others dragged a charred corpse by its feet. I was taking notes, trying to make sense of the furore, when a boy, who was probably aged about nine, approached. Standing over two blackened bodies, he offered to help me out.

"We hung the others from a bridge. Would you like to see them? I can take you there," he said. The attack in Falluja, 32 miles (50 km) west of Baghdad, and those violent scenes heralded not just more attacks on US troops but a broad insurgency that swelled the ranks first of Al Qaeda and then Islamic State, mirroring Iraq in conflict and chaos from which it has yet to fully emerge two decades later. Falluja still bears the scars of battles that have raged through its streets. Beyond the smart main road entering the city, walls bear the pockmarks of bullets and some buildings that were pounded into the ground in military operations still lie in ruins. The city is chronically short of funds to rebuild war damaged infrastructure which would cost more than \$2 billion, Talib al-Hasnawi, Falluja town council chief, told Reuters.

"It's true that the rebuilding process is below our expectations due to the limited resources and budget, but we are not stopping rebuilding what was have damaged," he said. Still, security in the city today is much improved. Families travel from Baghdad just to have dinner at Falluja Badiya, a famous kabab restaurant. Trade, agriculture and fish farming are on the increase, al-Hasnawi said. Twenty



years ago, violence across Iraq was stoked further by sectarian tensions, pitting minority Sunnis, who had enjoyed a privileged status under Saddam Hussein, a Sunni himself, against Shi'ites, the majority who had been oppressed under his rule. Tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians and insurgents were killed in the years that followed the US invasion, launched on the basis of a US charge that Iraq had stockpiled weapons of mass destruction, a claim that proved a chimera.

When US combat troops pulled out of Iraq in 2011, 4,418 US soldiers had died, alongside hundreds of foreign troops, contractors and civilians. In the two decades of turmoil since the invasion, Falluja repeatedly emerged as a hotspot. "Falluja is the cemetery of Americans," the crowd had chanted on that day in 2004 when gunmen killed the four contractors who worked for the Blackwater USA security firm: Jerry Zovko, Wesley Batalona, Michael Teague and Scott Helvenston. I saw an Iraqi douse one of the corpses with petrol, sending flames soaring into the air. Witnesses said at least two bodies were tied to cars and dragged through the streets. Later in the day, I saw body parts hung from a telephone line.

Iraqi frustration at what they saw as the mismanagement of the US administration had been quick to emerge after the US and coalition forces swept into Baghdad and across Iraq. Paul Bremer, who governed Iraq's Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) for 13 months after Saddam Hussein was toppled, said the Falluja attack was "certainly a horrendous act" but he told Reuters in a March 14 interview that US forces were not deployed in sufficient number in Iraq to prevent the worsening of security. "We never had enough people on the

ground in Iraq," he said. Ultimately Bremer disbanded Iraq's army, leaving 400,000 soldiers without jobs, which Western and Iraqi critics of the US action said provided a ready pool of recruits for Islamist groups and other insurgents that emerged.

In the interview with Reuters, Bremer defended his decision, saying the army, which consisted of Saddam's soldiers, had attacked the Kurds and the Shi'ites, and so preserving the force would have risked a civil war. As violence spiralled, Al Qaeda militants seized control of Falluja, prompting two US offensives. After US forces pulled out of Iraq, Islamic State seized control of the city in 2014, leading to a seige by Iraq's army and Shi'ite militias. In 2004, I followed the boy who had offered me help through Falluja, a city of low rise middle class homes owned by families who had struggled under years of international sanctions ever since Saddam Hussein's 1990-1991 invasion of Kuwait that was ended by another US-led coalition. We reached the bridge from which two of the contractor's corpses were dangling. Below them were families, some with young children, honking car horns or clapping in celebration.

"I am happy to see this," said one 12-year-old onlooker, a boy called Mohammad. "The Americans are occupying us so this is what will happen." US officials at the time blamed the killings on supporters of Saddam Hussein, saying they wanted to restore the old order, but said the United States would not be diverted from building democracy. "We will be back in Falluja. It will be at the time and place of our choosing. We will hunt down the criminals," Army Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt said in response to the killings.

## Brazil sees more fierce gang violence

BRASILIA (AFP): Marauding attacks by gang members in northeast Brazil continued for a third night despite a beefed up presence of security forces, authorities said. Media reports carried images of public buses and buildings in flames in nine cities -- including state capital Natal -- in the northeastern Rio Grande do Norte state.

The unrest, was orchestrated by imprisoned gang leaders as a protest against jail conditions and new regulations cracking down on criminal activity within the state penal system. In Natal, a garbage collection center, a supermarket and a gas station were all set ablaze, the G1 news site said. "Never in my life have I seen something like this going on. We left for work... and we came across this. It is very sad," Reinaldo Silva, a mason in Natal, told AFP. Authorities dispatched an additional 220 federal police to the state but reinforcements may climb as high as 800 in coming days, Justice and Security Minister Flavio Dino told CNN.

At least 28 urban areas in the state have been hit by the disturbances this week, authorities said. Local media have carried footage of vehicles in flames, and of police cruisers, businesses and government buildings riddled with bullets. Leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva hasn't spoken public about the disorder. At least two people were killed in clashes with police earlier in the week, and 67 people have been arrested, public security sources in the state told AFP.

## US releases video of drone collision

WASHINGTON (AFP): The United States released a video it said shows an "unsafe" and "unprofessional" intercept by Russian military jets when one struck an American drone, damaging its propeller. Russia has denied responsibility for the incident, which the United States says left its drone uncontrollable and required it to be brought down in the Black Sea.

The declassified 42-second video -- which the US military says has been edited for length -- shows an Su-27 jet bearing down on the propeller-driven MQ-9, releasing streams of fuel as it passes in an apparent effort to harass the drone. An Su-27 makes another pass, again dumping fuel as it does so. The video is then interrupted -- a cut the US military said lasts for 60 seconds as a result of a Russian jet striking the drone. When the feed returns, part of the drone's propeller is missing.

Russia's defense ministry said it had scrambled jets after detecting a US drone over the Black Sea, but denied causing the crash, saying the aircraft had lost control. The Pentagon said the drone was on a routine mission when it was intercepted -- a term that refers to one aircraft making visual or electronic contact with another -- in a "reckless" and "unprofessional manner." The incident has ratcheted up tensions between Moscow and Western allies, already soaring over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but top security officials from the United States and Russia have been in touch. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu, the Pentagon said, while Moscow's defense ministry said General Staff Valery Gerasimov spoke to General Mark Milley, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"We take any potential for escalation very seriously and that's why I believe it's important to keep the lines of communication open," Austin said after his call with Shoigu. "I think it's really key that we're able to pick up the phone and engage each other. And I think that will help to prevent miscalculation going forward," Milley said Wednesday that it was unclear whether the collision was done on purpose, though the "aggressive behavior" was intentional. Russia plans to try to retrieve the downed craft but was unsure if the effort would be a success.

## Foreign policy of Lula takes shape, irking the West

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP): Brazil's new President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has so far shown little concern about defying consensus in the West on foreign policy - even when it comes to dealing with authoritarian governments. In recent weeks, Lula's Brazil sent a delegation to Venezuela, refused to sign a UN resolution condemning Nicaragua's human rights abuses, allowed Iranian warships to dock in Rio de Janeiro and flatly refused to send weapons to Ukraine, at war with Russia.

These decisions have raised eyebrows in the US and Europe, but experts said Lula is reactivating Brazil's decades-old principle of non-alignment to carve out a policy that best safeguards its interests in an increasingly multi-polar world. Brazil's foreign policy is based on its 1988 constitution, which establishes non-intervention, self-determination, international cooperation and the peaceful settlement of conflicts as guiding principles. That involves "talking to all states at all times without making moral judgements, while respecting certain red lines," said Feliciano Guimarães, a political scientist at the think tank Brazilian Center for International Relations. Lula's red lines are not yet clear, he added.

Last week a delegation from Brazil headed by Celso Amorim, a special advisor to the presidency and former foreign minis-

ter, went to Venezuela in the first high-level official visit in years. Diplomatic relations with the neighboring nation were severed under Lula's predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro. Venezuela's leftist president Nicolás Maduro is accused of trampling freedom of speech and persecuting political opponents. Amorim's team met with both Maduro and the opposition. Maduro posted pictures of the meeting with Amorim on Twitter and praised the "pleasant encounter." Brazil intends to promote democracy in Venezuela and push for greater transparency in elections, which is why the delegation met with both sides, according to an official at the foreign ministry who was not authorized to speak publicly. Brazil's representatives at the United Nations in early March declined to sign a Human Rights Council declaration condemning Daniel Ortega's regime in Nicaragua. Ortega's government has cracked down hard on dissent, and last month deported and moved to strip Nicaraguan nationality from more than 200 dissidents -- drawing international rebuke over what was deemed a throwback and a form of banishment.

In an interview with Brazilian newspaper O Estado de S.Paulo, published March 10, Brazil's Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira said the declaration was not signed due to "differences in language and

approach." Vieira pointed to Brazil's historical position of seeking dialogue first. But the controversy prompted the Brazilian government to later highlight that it was "extremely concerned" about reported human rights violations in Nicaragua and offer to welcome political refugees who have had their nationality stripped. Lula made diplomacy a priority during his previous presidency from 2003 to 2010, and Brazil was widely respected on the international stage. The BRICS group composed of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa was established in 2006.

Lula and Amorim held talks with US presidents and senior Iranian officials in an attempt to build peace, negotiating alongside Turkey to slow Iran's uranium enrichment. The efforts ultimately failed, and Iran continued enriching uranium. Lula is seeking to reinsert Brazil on the global stage after Bolsonaro, who showed little interest in international affairs beyond asserting his affinity for other right-wing nationalist such as Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu and Hungary's Viktor Orbán. He reserved special adulation for former US President Donald Trump. Bolsonaro's trips abroad were few and far between. Lula quickly showed a different tack, heading to Argentina in the first month of his presidency to meet with his counterpart, Alberto Fernández.

## 5 killed in mysterious north Iraq helicopter crash

DOHUK (AP): A mysterious helicopter crash in northern Iraq has killed at least five people, allegedly including militants belonging to an outlawed Kurdish insurgency group, according to statements from the Iraqi Kurdish-run counterterrorism agency and the region's president. The AS350 Eurocopter crashed in the district of Chamanke in Dohuk province in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region night, the counterterrorism agency said in a statement posted on social media.

At least five passengers were killed, said Lawk Ghafuri, spokesperson for the Kurdish region's President Nechirvan Barzani. "The investigations are ongoing by security officials to determine the ownership of the helicopter," Ghafuri said in a post on Twitter. At least seven

were on board, according to an investigator at the crash scene speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the investigation with the media.

The helicopter was carrying militants belonging to the outlawed Kurdistan Worker's Party, or PKK, the counter-terrorism statement said. No party has yet claimed ownership of the chopper. Iraq's government, the U.S-led coalition and Turkey had been contacted by the Iraqi Kurdish regional government about the crash, but each denied the helicopter was theirs, the statement added. Zagros Hiwa, a PKK spokesperson, said the group does not possess helicopters and they were also investigating the incident. He also cast doubt on the presence of PKK militants onboard the flight, saying they may have a coalition helicopter

carrying fighters with the People's Protection Units, or YPG, a Syrian Kurdish group allied with the U.S-led forces. A spokesman for the US-led coalition declined to comment, saying the crash fell outside the scope of the coalition's operations.

Turkish defense ministry officials said that initial reports that the helicopter had been Turkish were "completely untrue" and that there was no helicopter flight belonging to the Turkish military in the region. The PKK has been waging an insurgency against Turkey since the 1980s and is considered a terrorist group by Ankara, the United States and the European Union. Its militants have established safe havens in northern Iraq and frequently come under attack by Turkey in the region.

## Jury heard another Trump call recording

ATLANTA (AP): A special grand jury that investigated whether Donald Trump and his allies illegally meddled in the 2020 election in Georgia heard a recording of the former president pushing a top state lawmaker to call a special session to overturn his loss in the state, according to a newspaper report.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported Wednesday that it spoke to five members of the special grand jury who said they heard a recording of a phone call between Trump and Georgia House Speaker David Ralston that had not previously been reported and has not been made public. Ralston, who died in November, did not call a special session in the weeks after the November 2020 election.

The five grand jurors - three men and two women - spoke to the newspaper but declined to be named because they were concerned about their safety and privacy. Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis opened the Georgia investigation in early 2021, shortly after another recording of a phone call between Trump and a top state official was made public. During that Jan. 2, 2021, phone call, Trump suggested that Georgia

Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger could "find" the votes needed to reverse his narrow loss in the state. "All I want to do is this: I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have," Trump said during the call. "Because we won the state."

In a separate recording made public in early 2021, Trump can be heard talking to the lead investigator in Raffensperger's office in December 2020, pressing her to look into Fulton County, saying she would "find things that are gonna be unbelievable." Trump also told her, "When the right answer comes out, you'll be praised." The special grand jury, which was

seated in May, heard from about 75 witnesses and considered other evidence before wrapping up its work in December. It did not have the authority to issue indictments but instead produced a report with recommendations for Willis.

The foreperson of the special grand jury said in news interviews last month that the panel recommended that numerous people be indicted, but she declined to say who. It is ultimately up to Willis to decide whether to go to a regular grand jury to seek one or more indictments in the case. She said during a hearing in January that decisions in the case are "imminent."

## Heavy rains hit California

SAN CLEMENTE, California (Reuters): As heavy rains soaked into already sodden ground in California, mudslides in the beachfront community of San Clemente forced evacuations of blufftop homes this week and in one case left a swimming pool dangling partway off the cliff edge. Drone visuals showed a large chunk of the backyard taken out by the mudslide. Patio furniture and plant pots are strewn along the long drop down to the bluff's bottom.

The West Coast is getting pounded by an usually wet season following two decades of drought, creating havoc on roads and endangering houses along the coastline in southern California's Orange County. This week, the 11th atmospheric river of the season dumped more torrential rain, causing power outages and risking flooding from the already saturated soils and swollen streams. Although the rain had finally tapered off in the area, forecasters have warned that another storm could be incoming next week.

## Colombia govt sends labor reform to Congress

BOGOTA (Reuters): Colombia's government presented a labor reform bill to Congress that would reduce working hours and boost overtime pay, but critics say the measures could hurt job creation. The bill is part of a raft of reforms being pushed by President Gustavo Petro, the country's first leftist leader, as he looks to fight poverty.

Congress passed a major tax reform last year and is debating changes to the healthcare system. The government is expected to present a pension reform proposal next week. Petro's coalition has a majority in Congress, though the health reform has caused friction with some legislative allies and led to the exit of one member of his cabinet. "It is precisely the reduction of salaries, job instability, which have not allowed the growth of productivity in Colombia," Petro told a crowd in central Bogota, before the bill was formally proposed to Congress. The initiative, which must be approved by both lawmakers and the Constitutional Court, seeks to enshrine eight-hour work days, reduce the normal work week to 42 hours and guarantee at least one day off every seven days. The standard workweek in Colombia is now 48 hours.

The reform risks hurting job creation, Jaime Alberto Cabal, president of merchants association Fenalco, told journalists earlier. "(The bill) forgets about the unemployed, the opportunity to access work and the possibilities for informal workers to get formal work due to the high costs," he said. The bill includes a measure to enshrine daytime working hours at between 6 a.m and 6 p.m., increasing the chance of overtime pay. Daytime hours currently run until 10 p.m. Overtime cannot exceed two hours per day or 12 hours per week under the planned proposal, while work on Sunday or holidays will mean double pay. The bill also seeks to ensure health and pension contributions for those who work through delivery apps and other digital platforms.

## Assad says he won't meet Erdogan

AMMAN (Reuters): Syrian President Bashar al Assad said he would only meet Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan when Turkey was ready to completely withdraw its military from northern Syria and restore the situation that existed before the Syrian war. Turkey has been the biggest military and political ally of the Syrian opposition, which controls the last rebel bastion in northwest Syria. Ankara has set up dozens of bases and deployed thousands of troops in northern Syria, preventing the Russian backed Syrian army from re-taking the region.

Visiting Moscow for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Assad told Russian TV station Sputnik that there was no point in a meeting with Erdogan until Turkey's "illegal occupation" ended. "This is linked to arriving at a stage Turkey would clearly be ready and without any ambiguity to exit completely from Syrian territory and

end its support of terrorism and restore the situation that prevailed before the start of the war on Syria," Assad told Sputnik in an interview relayed by Lebanon's pro-Iran Hezbollah's group's al Manar TV station. "This is the only situation when it would then be possible to have a meeting between me and Erdogan. Aside from that what's the value of such a meeting and why would we do it if it would not achieve final results for the war in Syria," he added in the clearest remarks on the recent rapprochement.

The defence ministers of the two countries met late last year for the highest-level talks between the two neighbours, whose governments have been at odds since 2011, when the Arab Spring uprisings reached Syria and plunged the country into war. Hundreds of thousands of people have died in the conflict, which drew in numerous foreign powers, and splintered the country. During low points

in relations between Ankara and Damascus, Erdogan called Assad a terrorist and said there could be no peace in Syria with him in office, while Assad called Erdogan a thief for "stealing" Syrian land. Turkish and Russian officials say preparations are being made for a meeting between deputy foreign ministers of Turkey, Syria and Iran ahead of planned talks between foreign ministers.

Assad acknowledged the role played by Russia in encouraging a rapprochement between Erdogan and himself. "We trust the Russian side who has played a mediator role to facilitate the communications, but within the basis of Russian policy of respecting sovereignty of states.. and the exit of illegal foreign forces from Syrian territory," Assad said. Assad has said the presence of Russian troops in Syria was legitimate as his government has requested Moscow's support.

## Greek unions launch 24-hour walkout over train tragedy

ATHENS (AFP): Greek unions begin a 24-hour walkout with demonstrations planned in major cities to voice outrage over last month's train disaster, which claimed 57 lives. The strike called by the country's leading private and public sector unions will disrupt transport and the civil service.

With air traffic controllers joining the strike, no passenger flights to or from Greece will take off, airports said. Ferry services will also be suspended. The fatal crash occurred shortly before midnight on February 28 when a passenger train crashed head-on into a freight train in central Greece after both were mistakenly left running on the same track. Most of the passengers were students returning from a holiday weekend.

Several people remain in hospital, including one passenger who is fighting for his life. The tragedy has exposed decades of

safety failings in Greek railways and has put major pressure on the conservative government ahead of national elections. The stationmaster and three other railway officials have been charged, but public anger has focused on long-running mismanagement of the network and the country has been rocked by a series of sometimes violent mass protests. Last week, some 65,000 people took part in demonstrations around the country, including around 40,000 in Athens. Greece's transport minister resigned after the crash and Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has sought to soothe the public anger by repeatedly apologising and vowing a transparent probe. Acting transport minister Giorgos Gerapetritis this week said rail traffic will gradually resume from March 22.

Gerapetritis said a report by a committee of experts investigating the

tragedy will be delivered in a month's time. Investigators have separately opened a probe into possible railway funds mismanagement over the last 15 years. Gerapetritis and former transport ministers will appear before a parliament committee to answer MPs' questions on the tragedy. With public anger mounting weeks before elections, Mitsotakis has seen a 7.5-point lead in polls cut to half in the latest surveys. The PM has come under fire for initially pointing to "human error" for the accident and blaming the stationmaster on duty at the time, who allegedly routed the trains onto the same stretch of track by accident. But railway unions had long been warning about problems on the underfunded and understaffed train network. Mitsotakis had been expected to set an April election date. Ballots are now expected in May.

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## India’s reckless militarism and peace in South Asia

INDIA'S top governmental body, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has recently approved purchases of a bulk of the latest weaponry including long-range missiles, modern helicopters, heavy artillery guns, and the latest electronic warfare systems worth \$8.5 billion, to overcome the so-called shortage of military weapons that never filled in past decades. The shopping list includes 200 additional BrahMos missiles, 50 utility helicopters, and electronic warfare systems for the Navy, a long-range stand-off weapon for IAF, SU-30 MKI fleet, along with 307 units of 155mm/52 caliber towed artillery guns, high mobility vehicles and other sophisticated equipment for Indian Army. According to the Ministry of Defence of India, all orders would be placed with Indian companies to give a push to boost domestic defense manufacturing under Narendra Modi's Make in India narrative.

Over the years, India has pursued a Bizarre Arms Procurement Policy through which Indian state agents made business with global defense construction giants and multiple defense forces in Europe and North America. Once the longstanding and largest defense importer of the former Soviet Union is now a blue-eyed and close ally of the United States and its close partners and allies. According to Sweden-based Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India had been the largest arms importer between 1992-2022 and accounted for 11% of global arms imports despite the fact the Modi regime was pursuing Make in India manifesto over the past several years. Realistically, Indian war-mongers had turned Gandhi's legacy of pacifism into the doctrine of jingoism over the past decades through reckless arms production, collection, and preaching of fascism and hate at home and abroad.

Apparently, India's hegemonism has exceeded its limits beyond South Asia as Modi led BJP Regime in New Delhi seeks to expand its political and military influence in the broader Indo-Pacific region, from the Bay of Bengal to the entire Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea along with engaging Afghanistan and Central Asia across Pakistan. New Delhi is tactfully using the Security Dilemma theory and self-presumed two-way nuclear threat from China and Pakistan while exaggerating the mere border standoff with China and the all-seasons simmering tension in Indian-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Interestingly, Indian leaders had gathered the latest weaponry from across the world on false pretexts throughout history. The fact is that every state in the region including Pakistan, Bangla Dash, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Maldives remained a victim of Indian belligerence and faced military coercion from New Delhi in the past.

Realistically, the South Asia region presents a unique and dangerous geostrategic matrix, because three nuclear weapons state China, Pakistan, and India lay side by side and maintain a hostile purview vis-a-vis India and China as well as India and Pakistan. Surprisingly, a 1.5 billion strong nation and second-largest military power in the world equally feel a threat by its superior neighbor in the North and many times lesser Pakistan in the west, at the same time it is head to head with its all neighbors in one or other way. India's campaign for military transformation and large-scale weapon production and collection, intended to apparently deter Chinese threats caused serious existential threats for Pakistan and other weaker nations in the neighborhood. The worst-case scenario is that South Asia is entering a new accelerated arms race due to irresponsible and politically motivated massive investment in the defense sector, procurement, and manufacturing of lethal arms and ammunition by India that will surely falsify the concept of deterrence and disturbs the military balance in a regional perspective. Moreover, the decades-long Kashmir dispute and unlawful actions of the Modi regime further push two competing nuclear neighbors toward an armed and potential nuclear conflict at any time in the future. Therefore, the global community must understand peculiar geopolitical and strategic configurations in South Asia and must play a constructive role in resisting India's unending militarism and persistent hegemonism so the geostrategic balance and peaceful co-existence be ensured in the highly volatile region in the world.

# In Ukraine’s deserted restaurants, I find a light amid the darkness

Michael Bociurkiw

FOR over 125 years, one of Ukraine's oldest wineries - Prince Trubetskoi - has occupied glorious grounds on the southern slopes of the Dniro River. Its ancient chateau has survived the First and Second World Wars. Its internationally recognized wines have for decades attracted oenophiles and tourists alike. Then on February 24 last year, Russia's full-scale invasion happened. As Russian forces moved into Ukraine to occupy the Kherson region, the winery ended up in the bullseye of the aggressors.

Over the next nine months, according to the owners, soldiers destroyed much of the property, even carting away a good portion of its priceless collection of 50,000 bottles, some dating back to the founding of the winery in the late 19th century. (At its peak, Prince Trubetskoi produced around 600,000 bottles annually and was one of the few Ukrainian wineries to reach faraway export markets). "We did not prepare for war," winery manager Andriy Strilets said of the damage. "In the 21st century this is immoral. No one expected or believed it."

He's not alone. A few hundred miles to the north, a similar fate met Vitalli Karvyha, whose award-winning chider house, Berryland, near the city of Irpin, was almost completely destroyed in the early days of the war. The business has been in operation for just six years. Whether it be completely losing their businesses due to Russian bombing, cutting operating hours due to lack of customers, or not being able to

grow produce because of the presence of landmines, Ukraine's entrepreneurs are feeling the economic toll of the conflict.

Walking through the capital Kyiv, the economic damage is on full display. Virtually empty shopping malls, deserted bars and restaurants, and sidewalks so bare that dogs command pride of place. During my visit there last month, I often found myself the lone customer dining in the restaurants of what used to

be one of the most vibrant capitals in Europe. Up until the war, Kyiv used to be considered a plum posting for foreign diplomats or a destination where candidates for election observation missions would compete fiercely for long-term assignments.

But after more than one year and the reopening of most diplomatic missions and large foreign enterprises (McDonald's started reopening restaurants in Ukraine in September), Kyiv still appears to me as a city in an induced coma. The shrouding of many of the capital's historic monuments, frequent air raid sirens, checkpoints, barriers and curfews only add to the perception that this is a city under siege. I found the central Kyiv luxury department store Tsum was almost deserted.

Elsewhere across

Ukraine, countless billboards either show expired concert ads from months gone by, or the words: "This ad space could be yours." According to the American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine, 31% of its members have seen their plants and facilities damaged and 19% have had employees killed in the last year. Winemakers, restaurateurs and even beauty salon owners have told me they are

businesses to close down. Yevgen Gusovsky, partner of a company with three popular restaurants in Kyiv, told me the unpredictability of traffic had been the main issue, especially when attacks are expected. Certain ingredients such as seafood can be hard to come by, and some kitchen staff have left to perform military service.

In the southern port city of Odesa, Nika Lozovska,

tory," she said as we rode in a taxi through the suburb of Obolon.

Ironically, in some aspects, the war has boosted sales of Ukrainian products. Winemaker Eduard Gorodetsky says that the declining Ukrainian currency has made it more expensive to purchase imported wine - and at the same time, buying Ukrainian is seen as more affordable and patriotic. "In a way that's helped us," he told me in his "My Wine Bar" tasting room in a

wide array of products - from fashion products to coffee mugs and art works. "Bravery is our brand," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a video address last April to launch the campaign. "This is what it means to be us. To be Ukrainians. To be brave." Ukraine's battle isn't just being fought on the front line - but on every single high street, from Kherson to Kharkiv, from Odesa to Kyiv. Whether it be small entrepreneurs sending part of their profits to the armed forces or consumers purposely buying Ukrainian to prop up struggling local business, their show of resistance has been nothing short of astonishing.

Of course, the best way the West can help the Ukrainian economy get back on its feet is to help Kyiv end the war as soon as possible - specifically, by providing them with the ability to close their skies to Russian missiles that target critical infrastructure and catapult small business into the dark ages. The payoff will be, like the Ukrainians themselves, a more resilient economy that will require less effort from the West to rehabilitate and integrate into the European Union. As Odesa beauty salon owner Dasha Fedoronchuk told me while I helped her lug a 100-pound generator: "In winter it was quite cold, the power was turned off often and for a long time, and taking out the generator was difficult and uncomfortable since it is only women working here. "But we are strong Ukrainian women - we can do anything!"

CNN

## At Europe’s hostile borders, the smallest acts of kindness matter

Karolína Augustová

SINCE 2015, when deepening crises across Asia and Africa coupled with the war in Syria resulted in a significant increase in the number of people seeking asylum in Europe, stopping so-called "irregular migration" has been a priority for the European Union. As more and more people fleeing bloody conflicts, totalitarian regimes, climate change-related catastrophes and extreme poverty started showing up at Europe's gates, EU member states began to fortify their borders. Electric fences, watchtowers, dog patrol units, helicopters and surveillance drones mushroomed across European frontiers, and the budget of the EU border agency, Frontex, ballooned to more than \$800m (754 million euros), making it the best-funded among all EU agencies.

The EU also moved to export its border control strategies and technologies to countries in its neighbourhood, from the western Balkans and Turkey to North Africa and the Sahel. The resulting regional border architecture, designed specifically to keep refugees out of the EU, left

almost no safe and legal paths to asylum in member countries, compelling many to embark on dangerous journeys to try and enter Europe without authorisation in the hopes of applying for asylum once they reach their desired final destination. As a researcher and activist, I spent years tracing refugee journeys and documenting the treatment of asylum seekers at the hands of European border security officials. The worst incidents I documented took place in the borders between Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. Many who tried to migrate through these states told me that they have been abused by border security officers and showed me marks of torture, ranging from electric burns to still-bleeding cuts and bruises, on their bodies.

"When the Croatian police caught us as we were trying to enter the country from Bosnia-Herzegovina, they put us all into a very dirty van," Mazin\*, a young journalist from Pakistan, told me. "It was hot and there was not enough oxygen, so many people were vomiting." He recounted how the police officers beat him and other asylum seekers before illegally pushing

them back into Bosnia without processing them. "They drove us to the Bosnian border, made a line in front of the van, and told us to get out one by one," Mazin said. "As we passed through, police officers in the line all beat us hard with their batons."

Many other asylum seekers told me that their experiences with security personnel at those borders had been similar to that of Mazin - experiences marked by cruelty, sexual violence and torture. Thousands of similar testimonies have also been recorded and published by rights groups and international organisations.

But while documenting the violence directed at people migrating across European borders, I also encountered rare stories of humanity and kindness: stories about individual border officers refusing to be violent and resisting illegal "pushbacks"; stories about officers defying their supervisors' commands in order to help asylum seekers; stories about officers taking personal risks to blow the whistle on their organisation's illegal practices. Empathy, kindness

and adherence to international law, which means respecting the human rights of all those attempting to cross borders, should be standard in all border security work anywhere in the world. But in the current climate, where migration is being perceived as a threat by many, acting against international refugee law and inflicting violence on those classed as "irregular migrants" became part of the job description for most European border officers. And thus, even the simplest acts of kindness, empathy and humanity towards asylum seekers are rare, and require much courage on the part of officers at Europe's borders.

"When we were spotted by border officers in Macedonia," Mustafa from Afghanistan recounted, "one of them saw the conditions we were in, saw how our shoes were broken from weeks of walking, and said to me 'I will pretend that I did not see you. Walk this direction for five kilometres, and there, you can pass the border without anyone seeing you.'" Mustafa told me this unnamed officer's kindness helped him complete his long and dangerous

migration journey. "This person did not return us like the others. Thanks to him, we managed to cross to Serbia and moved closer to our destination." While the officer who helped Mustafa did so simply by looking the other way, others who wanted to support refugees and end illegal border protection practices followed different paths of resistance. For example, in 2019, a police officer in Croatia anonymously reported his border unit to the country's ombudswoman for abusing refugees. In his complaint, he said that out of fear of losing his job, he personally participated in more than 1,000 illegal pushbacks. He said the pushbacks he participated in were often very violent, and involved beatings and theft. He asked the ombudswoman to take action to stop these illegal practices.

Some refugees talked about individual officers who stopped their colleagues from beating detainees or stealing their money. Others spoke fondly of officers who, even when they were not able to offer any practical help, acknowledged their humanity and showed empathy. Members of one Afghan family, for example,

remembered a Croatian officer who cried with them as he led them back towards the Bosnian border. They recalled the officer saying "Please, don't cry. Sorry, I don't want to do this, but I must follow the orders." Similarly, Hamid from Algeria said a group of officers who spotted him near the Italian border in Croatia showed him kindness and even encouraged him to continue with his efforts to find a haven in Europe. "I was very scared that they were going to beat us as others do," he told me. "But they took us to a restaurant and bought us warm food. One of them said: 'Sorry, we cannot let you go because we have orders to return you [to the country you entered Croatia from]. But please, come back and try again.'"

These few uplifting stories of solidarity are important and should be shared - not to humanise the European border regime that is underpinned by extreme brutality, but to show that small acts of compassion, kindness and resistance from inside of the border units are possible and must be encouraged. Individual border officers can make a difference.

## Britain’s growing sick note crisis could sink economic recover

Fraser Nelson

AT first, it looked like a strange post-Covid blip: the number signed off sick from work was surging, with no proper reason. It might have been delayed effects from furlough, but ministers decided to wait to let things settle. They never did. Now some 5,000 a day are claiming sickness benefits, twice the pre-Covid rate.

This week, the Office for Budget Responsibility decided that the Government has lost control. It expects this slide to continue until 12 per cent of the country are on some form of sickness benefit. This is a swift and staggering change (it was not even 8 per cent before the lockdowns) but horribly consistent with other figures. Mental health issues are becoming the new pandemic with some 6.5 million of us now using antidepressants, up a million over five years. The number of adults reporting a disability has risen by a third in the last decade. The number of children and young people accessing NHS mental health services has surged by 25 per cent in the last two

years. Something is going deeply, profoundly and expensively wrong.

Every major country had problems rebuilding its workforce after the pandemic, but everyone eventually managed it. Except Britain. Our sick note phenomenon is such, now, that the expected cost of paying those on health-related benefits has risen by £8 billion in just four months. The biggest single complaint behind new claims is mental health, and the proportion of successful claims has hit an all-time high. More are now on incapacity benefit (and its successors) than at any time under Labour. So the Tories have recreated the problem they once dedicated themselves to solving. Set aside the human welfare implications: all this has huge economic repercussions. With so many coming up for retirement - and so many more studying - who's going to earn the money to foot the swelling welfare bill?

Jeremy Hunt this week said he'd tighten welfare conditions, but that's expected to release just 10,000 more into the

economy. More childcare subsidies should let 75,000 more parents take part-time work. The big change will come from calling in the overseas cavalry: mass immigration is soon expected to provide 160,000 more workers a year. Already, the arrivals are far higher than before Brexit. This is quite a moment for those of us who had thought that Brexit would cut immigration and force ministers to sort out welfare. To train an unskilled school-leaver or take someone back to work from long-term unemployment is a pain. Much easier to phone up an agency in Gdansk and fly some people over. But after Brexit, employers would have to learn that it was time to pay more or train more: they'd complain, they'd demand more immigrants. But if government held firm, a new economic model would be created.

So much for that idea. Vacancies soared but salaries certainly didn't: in fact, in real terms, they're falling at one of the sharpest rates ever seen. Nor has Brexit been a

wake-up call to the reality of welfare dysfunction. No one seems to care that we're now keeping five million people on dole of various kinds. No one in the House of Commons has ever pointed out that one in five potential workers in Liverpool, Glasgow and Manchester is on out-of-work benefits in the middle of the biggest worker shortage in history. Mental health is hard to talk about; it may well be a problem that no party wants to solve. To be sure, many claims will be spurious but NHS data shows the underlying trend is all too real. Politically, it's easy to shovel claimants onto benefits by deeming them to have "limited capability for work-related activity" (the most severe group, into which most new claimants are sent). It's harder to assess someone for what help they need, what work they can do. And harder to sort them out with the right therapist, given the length of the NHS waiting list.

Some officials working in the welfare system privately admit to being flummoxed, facing a new

mental health problem for which they have no handbook. And realising too late that this was not a post-Covid freak but the new normal. There are complaints about the ease of being able to claim (in some cases, via a pharmacist) and shortcuts that, if used, can put you straight into the highest benefit award with no checks. Rishi Sunak is taking some steps to remedy this, with £400 million spent and Universal Support rolled out to go alongside Universal Credit. But it will take much, much more to move the dial.

There was a small celebration in Westminster this week to mark the anniversary of Iain Duncan Smith's welfare reform bill. Bringing in Universal Credit was, at the time, a stunning achievement that - pre-pandemic - had lifted the proportion in work to the highest since records began. Now, that ratio is heading towards the low-est in a generation. A similar blast of energy is needed, but it has to start with candour. To admit just how bad things are, how little they are likely to change - and how the

old methods will not work with this new problem.

There is so much that can be done. Mental health problems are far from unsolvable: techniques like cognitive behavioural therapy are widely practised and have a strong record of success. If the Department for Work & Pensions despairs at the size of NHS waiting lists, it could invest in its own therapists to do what the NHS will not. The basic economics - the cost of helping someone vs the cost of not doing so - make an overwhelming case for action.

Sunak is stepping gingerly in this area. In many ways, that's understandable: mental health is a delicate subject and one that no prime minister wants to get wrong. But nor can he afford to let his economic recovery sink into a sea of sick notes, with an NHS unable to give proper help, and a welfare service that is once again incubating the problem of worklessness that it was set up to remedy. Only recently, the Tories knew how to fix this. It's still not too late for them to do so again.

# A year of war has left Russia's elites anchorless and atomized

Alexandra Prokopenko

A year into Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Russian elites have been unable to muster any enthusiasm for the "special military operation." Nor, however, have they found it in them to publicly speak out against it. Hardly anyone genuinely shares President Vladimir Putin's goals in starting this war. Many of those in the so-called "party of war" are politicians who saw the war as a career elevator. Those in the "party of peace," on the other hand, are focused on minimizing the consequences of war for Russian society, while senior managers continue to adapt their enterprises to the new reality and try not to follow the news too closely.

Only a few have been principled enough to resign their posts. Moral compromises and downright fear of the security services mean that most have stayed put, though they are in no hurry to rally around Putin or take part in the outpouring of "patriotism," either. Generally, anyone who has anything to lose simply prefers to lie low and keep quiet. Only a very narrow circle of Putin's associates knew of his intentions to invade Ukraine. Most were shocked when it happened. But it no longer even occurs to Putin that anyone might not share his goals and convictions, and so since the start of the war, the Kremlin has tried to show that there is broad support for it.

The day of the invasion, the president met with influential businessmen (who all went on to be sanctioned), both to demonstrate that business circles approved of his decision and to reassure them. Those present were reportedly told that their businesses would be supported through sanctions in exchange for patriotism on their part. Indeed, the government soon announced measures to support the economy. Those promises weren't quite enough, however. The tycoon Oleg Deripaska, a veteran of sanctions lists, described the war as "madness," the oil giant Lukoil

called for an end to the war; and many Russians fled abroad. Wealthy companies reportedly chartered flights to get their staff out of the country, while those that could not afford to do so simply allowed their staff to relocate abroad.

Even those officials and employees at state corporations who wanted to resign found it was easier said than done. Appointments to and dismissals from senior and high-profile roles have long had to be agreed with the Kremlin: with chief of staff Anton Vaino at the very least, if not Putin himself. Once the war began, the president had no time for such trifles. The only senior official to resign last spring was Anatoly Chubais, who had been a special representative for ties with international organizations, and there is some debate over whether his resignation was accepted before or after he left the country. In every state structure and company there is a department of FSB employees responsible for overseeing access to sensitive and classified information. Their influence has grown significantly since 2014. After the full-scale invasion, when people started resigning, a recommendation was handed down to keep an eye on anyone who wasn't happy and to try to calm them down and prevent them from leaving where possible, according to one HR official at a ministry.

Sources describe various ways of persuading employees to stay on, from taking months to countersign their letters of resignation to threats from management and the resident FSB officers of investigations and foreign travel bans. Anyone who had already fled abroad was fired. The confusion among the elites is exacerbated by the fact that most of them have lost any personal access to Putin they may have once had. As during the pandemic, people are still required to go into quarantine for one week before meeting with Putin in person. That is something

that far from every official or state businessman can afford to do for the sake of one meeting that might not even yield the desired outcome. The alternative - a video call - makes it harder to solve issues informally.

The vacuum left for the elites by the real Putin has been filled by the "collective Putin": a small group of his representatives who claim to have an understanding of the president's wishes and intentions. Those people have given no indication when the war might end, but have one simple message: "You're either with us or against us." This is why anyone with anything to lose prefers to keep their head down. The regime is under no illusions that all those who remain silent are pro-Putin, so a campaign is underway to contain the elites within Russia's borders. As far back as 2014, officials with access to sensitive information were obliged to seek permission to travel abroad. In 2022, that permission stopped being given: first to senior leadership, and then to rank-and-file employees with access to secret (as opposed to top secret) information.

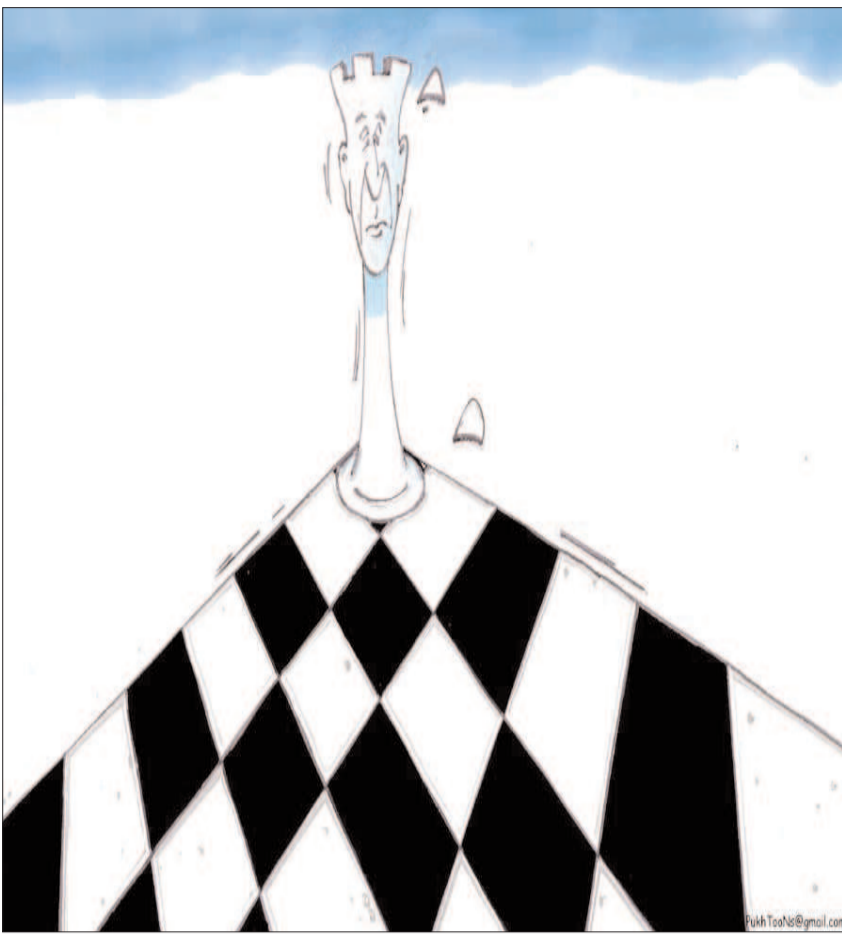
Some civil servants and employees of state corporations were ordered to hand in their passports, and officials and state company employees at both federal and regional levels were barred from leaving Russia over the festive season. Before the war, such restrictions only applied to military personnel, those working for the security services, and civil servants with full access to classified information. Recently, there have been growing signals that it will no longer be possible to stay quiet and weather the storm in 2023. Putin believes he is at war not with Ukraine but with the West, and therefore wants to see full support for his military operation across the board. The number of events featuring stars and officials in support of the war is growing, and by the anniversary of the invasion, the chorus of official voices

glorifying the war and cursing the West had become a crescendo.

The government and the presidential administration are fighting to win over young minds. A textbook teaching the "correct" interpretation of the events of 2022 has been swiftly put together; there are new regulations governing the teaching of history in universities; and spending on "patriotic education" has grown sixfold. Putin's assurances that people who don't agree with the war will not be persecuted are not enough to calm the elite's fears of a likely wave of repression. Both business circles and officials expect that 2023 will see the start of the exposure of "disloyal" people and demonstrative punishments.

The war and attitudes to it are already being used as an excuse to transfer assets. A businessman close to Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has been given a factory in the destroyed Ukrainian city of Mariupol, along with parts of the OBI hypermarket and Starbucks chains (both companies left the Russian market after the start of the war). Since the annexation of Crimea, the Russian authorities there have "nationalized" 700 properties that belonged to Ukrainian oligarchs. The absence of any mechanism for getting sanctions lifted, or even any dialogue on this issue, means the Russian elite has no choice but to hunker down in Russia. "Where can I go with sanctions in place? Neither regulators nor lawyers know how to get them lifted. At least at home in Russia things are clearer," says one federal official. The Russian elites are completely atomized. They are not yet ready to come together to generate a vision for the future. Nor do they want to lose their assets, freedom, or their lives. Given the long line of mysterious deaths of senior managers at Russian state companies and their close relatives - both in Russia and abroad - that last threat no longer looks so outlandish.

The Moscow Times



## The EU's moral claim to exist has collapsed

Robert Tombs

**POLITICIANS are prone to think that a "reset" of relations can be achieved by a warm handshake and a hug for the cameras. But sometimes, the mask slips, and then they would do well to recall the dictum of that old bruiser Palmerston: no permanent allies, no permanent enemies, only permanent interests. Our French friends have never forgotten this, and indeed they often quote Palmerston, thinking it reflects British attitudes. If only!**

The latest slipping of the mask is the report that France is holding up the procurement of ammunition for Ukraine because it wants only EU firms to be considered. Does this ring a bell? For me, it is exactly what happened over the Covid vaccine. Then, the French were determined to have a "European" (read French) vaccine, and an EU system was set up to produce one. But the famous Institut Pasteur and Sanofi failed to create one in time. Oxford University and AstraZeneca, backed by British taxpayers' money, succeeded.

President Macron claimed that the AstraZeneca vaccine was dangerous and ineffective, and the EU (rather illogically) tried to intimidate AstraZeneca into diverting supplies of its jab to Europe. More important than hastening mass vaccinations were the prestige of France and the interests of EU drug companies.

Not dissimilar was Macron's reaction to the Aukus pact, in which Australia chose to buy Anglo-American nuclear submarines rather than French diesel-powered boats. Again, less important

than the security of the Pacific were the prestige and interests of France. Macron recalled ambassadors from Canberra and Washington in an astonishing fit of pique; but deliberately did not recall his London ambassador in a feline slight to Britain, proclaimed not important enough to be threatened. Now we have possible limitations on ammunition supply for Ukraine. All these things have a common thread. The EU has no effective will apart from that of its leading members. They - France and Germany - have been pushed into grudging support for Ukraine by British and American action in supplying arms and encouraging Ukrainian resistance. This breaks with the earlier Franco-German policy, enshrined in the Minsk Accords they brokered in 2014 to appease Putin. Neither Germany nor France have been more than half-hearted in their backing for Ukraine. As for the EU as an organisation, it has no presence at all.

At a deeper level, Paris is pursuing a long-held and consistent policy, whose single-mindedness we can only envy. Most of it goes back to the brooding influence of Charles de Gaulle. The purpose of "Europe" for France is to protect French interests and magnify its global influence. Part of this was Macron's diplomatic game with Putin. A broader aspect is France's determination to create a "European" diplomatic and military capacity, which it assumes, probably correctly, would be French-led - and ideally would have Britain as an

obedient auxiliary. Here, the problem has been the lack of enthusiasm of other EU countries. But the Ukraine conflict offers an advantage: other EU members are now willing to do more and spend more for security.

France's formidable defence industry is a major part of its global power and influence. Just as it wanted to build submarines for Australia (even if they were not up to the job), it wants to make ammunition for Ukraine (even if this slows down the supply). It is determined to keep manufacturing capacity within the EU, as the foundation of the European great power status that it has consistently pursued for a good 60 years. Visionary speeches might not work on its partners, but the interests of European manufacturers can be mobilised. Can we criticise France for focusing on its national interest? We can urge it to accept other priorities, in this case the survival of Ukraine and the defeat, in one way or another, of Putin. But we have to realise that the extent of British public support for Ukraine is unusual, shared only by eastern European and Baltic countries in the front line. Macron has said that he does not want Russia humiliated, and would doubtless like the Ukrainians to compromise.

Where does this leave the EU? As an empty shell. Its great moral claim, as the guarantor of European peace, has collapsed. And post-Brexit Britain? Strangely, as a leading European power - as long as we are willing to make the political and financial effort.

The Telegraph

## Why Republicans target critical race theory in the US

John Mark Hansen

**CRITICAL race theory (CRT) is an academic concept with a core idea that race is a social construct, and that racism is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in legal systems and policies. For the past few years, Republicans in the United States have been waging an escalating battle against an academic approach to studying race in America known as critical race theory (CRT).**

They are fighting not because they are right, or even because they believe they are right, but because they have found that when it comes to winning US elections, culture warfare pays off. Racial animosity, sad to say, remains a key weapon in the arsenal of culture warriors. Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin, indeed, based much of his 2021 election campaign on fomenting an anti-CRT panic and rode it to victory. Similarly, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, a likely presidential candidate, recently picked a fight with the College Board over the alleged inclusion of CRT in its new Advanced Placement (college-level) curriculum in African American studies. Over the past two years, 18 GOP-controlled states have passed laws that prohibit or restrict its teaching.

But the leaders of the largely manufactured campaign against CRT have a strange way of showing their disapproval. At every turn, they have faithfully played out the scenario that CRT scholars have

found repeatedly in American history, providing further evidence supporting the very theory that they insist must be rejected.

One of the originators of CRT was Derrick A. Bell, a former Department of Justice official, NAACP attorney, and the first tenured Black professor at Harvard Law School. In his 1970 constitutional law casebook, Race, Racism, and American Law, Bell drew on the US' historical record to make several points about the US legal order. First, Bell argued that American law has been preoccupied with race since before the country's founding. While American politicians' fixation on race is hardly new, however, what makes the present-day anti-CRT campaign unique is the attempt to criminalise the alleged trauma that white children suffer when confronted with the injustices inflicted on Black Americans and other minorities.

Bell's second key point is that the concept of whiteness has been constructed throughout American history by social convention, the enactment of laws, and legal interpretation. DeSantis himself is a case in point. His forebears were immigrants from southern Italy who, at the time of their arrival in the early 1900s, would have been considered by many native-born white Americans to be a separate "race."

Congress passed the National Origins Act of 1924 precisely to protect the "American race" from

being "deluged with more of their kind," as a member of the House of Representatives put it at the time. But by the time of the law's repeal in 1965, Italian-Americans like the DeSantis family were already accepted as white. Finally, Bell argued that the US Constitution and the country's body of law reflect the material interests of whites, who were in the majority since independence. Progress toward racial equality - the extension of the rights, privileges, and benefits of full American citizenship to African Americans and other racialised "minorities" - has occurred only when whites found it in their own interest to do so, a condition that Bell called "interest convergence."

As examples, Bell cited the Emancipation Proclamation, which President Abraham Lincoln issued for military rather than moral reasons, and President Dwight Eisenhower's support for school desegregation, which addressed an American liability in the propaganda war with the Soviet Union. As Bell was also quick to point out, much of this "progress" was provisional and often revoked during the periods of racial "backlash" that punctuate US history. The sequence of events that has led to the current moment in US race relations bears out Bell's argument. In 2008, the election of Barack Obama raised hopes, especially among white Americans, that the country had

finally transcended its racist past. Bell, who died midway through Obama's first term, would have been far more sceptical - and rightly so. As it turned out, the presence of a Black family in the White House, together with conservative resentment of "takers" and fear of an emerging non-white majority, triggered another racial backlash, setting the stage for the rise of Donald Trump, Youngkin, and DeSantis.

If Republicans really opposed CRT, they would not be acting it out. They would be trying to refute it with reasoned arguments and credible evidence. Their efforts to translate racial anxiety into electoral success merely prove their intellectual bad faith. Fortunately, the US has powerful institutions that rely on arguments and evidence and are able to fight back. But they must not abandon the barricades. The College Board, which retreated in the face of DeSantis's attack and gutted its AP African American studies curriculum, must reinstate the original version and defend it as representative of the best scholarship on the subject.

Moreover, accreditation agencies must refuse to recognise any college or university that prohibits its faculty from teaching any subject or attempts to dictate to them how certain subjects ought to be taught. Intellectual integrity cannot coexist with political indoctrination. America's educational institutions must pick a side.

Gulf News

## Egypt's satellites to boost Africa's climate change fight

Dr. Theodore Karasil

**Egypt's space program on Monday took a new leap forward with the launch of another satellite, Horus-2, that will help Cairo monitor climate change in the increasingly thirsty country. Only 4 percent of Egypt's land is suitable for agriculture and that figure is shrinking quickly due to a wave of urban and suburban development that is accompanying the country's population growth, according to NASA's Earth Observatory. Nasem Badreldin, a digital agronomist at the University of Manitoba, said: "Satellite data shows that Egypt is losing about 2 percent of its arable land per decade due to urbanization, and the process is accelerating. If this continues, Egypt will face serious food security problems." Cairo is relying more and more on using data from space to find remedies.**

Egypt's space aspirations and formal space program have been focused on climate change monitoring for several decades. Since the 1970s, it has used satellites to measure changes in land surfaces/topography. Its satellites were tied into the National Authority for Remote Sensing and Space Sciences, located in Aswan. In 1998, Egypt became the first Arab country to launch a telecommunications satellite. Egypt's second remote sensing satellite, EgyptSat 2, was launched in April 2014, but was lost in space the fol-

lowing year. Four years later, Egypt replaced it with EgyptSat-A, which was launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome, a spaceport in Kazakhstan that is leased to Russia.

In January 2018, the Egyptian Space Agency became the formal space authority in Egypt. It now administers 11 satellites following the launch of Horus-2. Egypt has used several different countries to launch its satellites, the latest being China. Egypt's Horus series is important for its climate change policy. According to Dr. Sherif Sedky, CEO of the Egyptian Space Agency, the Horus-2 satellite will help meet the requirements of Egypt's 2030 vision for sustainable development. Horus-1 was launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China into a sun-synchronous low Earth orbit in late February.

Horus-2 will identify crop and agricultural land use and the data it provides will help Egypt add to its increasing food self-sufficiency. The Horus satellites contain high-resolution, multi-spectral imaging cameras that capture high-resolution pictures, allowing scientists to understand the surroundings. In November 2022, Egypt's hosting of the COP27 climate change conference brought forward its space efforts regarding climate change for North Africa. Cairo's concern with the effects of climate change

go beyond its own agricultural capabilities to the wider African continent. It seeks to use a percentage of its space program for food security by adopting technology pacts with foreign partners. The current partner on this issue is China. Egypt and China are together building the Horus series in the core Middle Eastern state, with Beijing paying for the bulk of the program.

Egypt's launching of satellites to monitor climate change in Africa is important for confronting climate-related challenges and the resulting phenomena. They monitor any changes as they occur and enable plans to be developed to deal with them. This avoids or limits any damage or negative effects. At COP27, the fact that Egypt's space program was emphasized as part of the country's technological edge was welcomed by participants. The country's measuring of land use is both urban and rural, but mostly the latter because of the topography and water resources, or lack thereof, especially in the southern part of country, where there are intensive agricultural projects and aqua filters being built or expanded to make up for the loss of water resources due to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project. Egypt's optical satellite imagery is capable of capturing both urban and rural land cover classes, such as vegetation (or even

different types of plants), bare soil, water and impervious surfaces (such as roads, parking lots and tin or tile roofs). Egypt's land use is thus analyzed through these images.

This satellite analysis is used to update Egypt's national land use and land cover map on a yearly basis, including the monitoring of the marine environment and recording oil pollution for an early warning system, as well as land transformation from agriculture to urban settlements. Plotting the data from Egypt's climate change-measuring satellites is important to set a standard for the country and its neighbors, which seek to use space science to meet their climate change requirements. The Egyptian Space Agency next plans to launch two satellites that will specialize in monitoring climate change and plasma fluctuations in the upper atmosphere above North Africa. Egypt also wants to help form the African Space Agency, which has been under discussion for a number of years, and it now looks like Cairo may take action along with its Chinese space partner. African countries are the most affected and exposed to desertification, water shortages, beach erosion and drought as a result of climate change. Egypt's space program is beneficial not only for Egypt itself, but for all African countries, and it will have a vital and effective role in facing climate challenges in the years to come.

**OPPOSITION parties in Cameroon have accused the ruling party of vote-buying in Sunday's Senate elections. Early results show the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) winning all seats in the poll which 10 opposition parties contested. Singing and celebrating in the streets of the capital Yaounde, supporters of the CPDM already proclaimed themselves the winners of the March 12 Senate elections.**

The CPDM is the party of Cameroon's long-serving leader, 90-year-old Paul Biya. Local media, including state broadcaster CRTV, report that similar celebrations took place in at least nine other locations. Early results from ELECAM, the elections management body, indicate that the CPDM won all 70 seats in Sunday's vote.

ELECAM said the elections, involving 15,000 designated members of the Senate electoral college, were free of glitches across the central African country. Voters in the restive western regions defied separatist threats and carried out their duties, the body said. Opposition parties say the

Moki Edwin Kindzeka

elections were marred by irregularities. Denis Emilien Atangana was a candidate of the Front des Democraties du Cameroun, or FDC. He said it was scandalous for the ruling CPDM to hire buses to transport all municipal and regional councilors who constitute the electoral college to polling stations. He also said the CPDM used threats, bullying and vote-buying to deprive voters of their freedom to make democratic choices. He also claimed, while in the buses, officials of the CPDM distributed money and threatened to punish voters who refused the bribe.

Atangana said opposition parties will file petitions with the Constitutional Council to cancel the results of the vote. He said the government and ruling CPDM suffocate democracy by wanting to occupy all elected and appointed government positions. Atangana alleged the polls were marred by low turnout and violence. The opposition says many voters in the volatile Northwest and Southwest regions did not vote due to threats from separatists who vowed to disrupt the

process.

Separatists on social media, including WhatsApp and Facebook, say they stopped many electors from voting. About 15,000 councilors in 60 divisions across Cameroon make up the electoral college. ELECAM says more than 97% of electors performed their voting rights.

The government says it protected all voters and candidates throughout the process. The territorial administration minister, Paul Atanga Nji, said the government did not report irregularities that could jeopardize the outcome of the polls. "More than 3,000 national and international observers were accredited by the ministry of territorial administration," he said. "They travelled across the country, and we hope that they will produce objective reports on the conduct of this election, which in our opinion was free, transparent and credible. As of now, no major incident has been reported in any of the 58 divisions of the country." The Senate, or upper house of parliament, has 100 seats. Seventy are elected by the councilors. The other 30 will be appointed by President Biya, who has the power to select opposition members as senators.

### Important Notice

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# Over \$11 bln textile products exported in 8 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Textile exports reached \$11,218.655 million during the first eight months of the current fiscal year (2022-23), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. The textile exports showed a decline of 11.09 percent from \$12,617.372 million during the same period of last year (July-February 2021-22).

The export of raw cotton witnessed positive growth during July-February (2022-23) of 86.80 percent from \$6,577 million (last fiscal year) to \$12,286 million, and that of tents, canvas and tarpaulin went up by 19.89 percent from \$72.007 million to \$86.332 million.

Similarly, the export of

cotton yarn showed negative growth by 38.12 percent from \$816.102 million to \$505.015 million.

Likewise, the export of cotton cloth decreased by 12.95 percent from \$1,585.387 million to \$1,380.075 million; cotton (carded or combed) by 39.80 per cent from \$1.610 million to \$0.969 million, yarn (other than cotton yarn) by 29.35 per cent from \$41.845 million to \$29.562 million, knit-wear by 6.83 per cent from \$3,304.616 million to \$3,078.885 million, bed wear by 16.13 percent from \$2,187.922 million to \$1,834.904 million and towels by 7 percent, from \$716.688- million to

\$666.497 million.

The export of readymade garments also declined by 5.48 percent from \$2,518.743 million to \$2,380.837 million; art, silk and synthetic textile by 10.78 percent from \$306.079 million to \$273.080 million; made-up articles (excluding towels, bedwear) by 12.89 per cent from \$556.476 million to \$484.763 million, and all other textile materials by 3.55 percent from \$503.319 million to \$485.450 million. On a year-on-year (YoY) basis, the textile goods' exports declined by 29.92 percent in February 2023 to \$1,180.450 million against \$1,684.313 million in February 2022.

## Shipping Activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships Namely, Olympia, Navios Constellation, Khaipur, Chemroad Zenith and White Purl, Carrying Containers, Mogas, Chemicals and LPG, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, FOTCO Oil Terminal, EngroVopak Terminal and SSGC LPG Terminal respectively.

Meanwhile three more ships, APL Florida, Al Thakkira and Coral Actinia carrying Containers, LNG and Chemicals also arrived at the outer anchorage of the port on Friday morning.

A total of 06 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, Olympia, Navios Constellation and YM Saturn left the Port on Friday morning.

Cargo throughput during last 24 hours stood at 72,753 tones, comprising 52,676 tones imports cargo and 20,077 tones export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,332, Containers (1,151 TEUs Imports and 1,181 TEUs export) was handled at the port. There are 03 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, two ships, Container vessel APL Florida and Gas carrier AL Thakkira are expected to take berths at QICT and EETL respectively on Friday, while three more container ships, Green Pole, SafmarineNyassa and CMA CGM Rabelais are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Saturday.

## SCCI pays tribute to martyrs

SIALKOT (APP): Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Abdul Ghafoor Malik and Vice President Amer Majeed Sheikh attended a ceremony to pay tribute to Shuhada of the Pak Army here on Friday.

According to the SCCI, the event was held to recognize the great sacrifices of the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives for safety and security of the country. On this occasion, the speakers highlighted the importance of the sacrifices of martyrs (Shuhada) and their families.

## GHB, SCCI to arrange ceremony on achievements of Arbab Hashim

PESHAWAR (APP): Gandhara Hindko Board Peshawar and Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) would jointly organize a ceremony to honour renowned artist, Arbab Hashim on March 18. The ceremony has been planned to highlight the contributions of famous artist, sculptural musician and filmmaker.

December 2021, with Brent dropping to \$71.67 a barrel and WTI to \$65.65 a barrel, however, prices recovered some of their weekly losses as traders cashed in on low prices.

Easing supply worries and downside pressure on prices, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak met with Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman. Both leaders discussed several issues, including achieving goals to maintain market stability and restore the balance of supply and demand on the global oil market.



HYDERABAD: Street hawker selling roosters as he displayed in a cage on his motorbike to attract the customers in Friday bazaar at fort ground.

# Law Minister urges all political leaders to sit together for improving economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): The economy of Pakistan is facing serious challenges and it is high time that the leaders of all political parties should sit together and discuss ways and means to steer the economy out of crisis situations.

This was stated by Azam Nazeer Tarar, Minister for Law and Justice while addressing a dinner reception hosted by Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) in honor of Office Bearers of Pakistan Bar Council, Islamabad Bar Council, Islamabad High Court Bar Association and Islamabad District Bar Association. Azam Nazeer Tarar said that the political polarization is not good for the country and stressed that all concerned should reconsider their approach to give a better economic future to the posterity.

He said that for how long we will run our economy on foreign loans and urged that we should work hard to make Pakistan a

self-reliant country.

He said that the legal community in cooperation with the media and the business community have always played a positive role in difficult times and hoped that they would again join hands to put Pakistan on the path of better growth. Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the burden of cases on courts was increasing and stressed that a mechanism of mediation councils should be promoted to settle out of court trade disputes.

He said that the bar council and association should set up their desks in ICCI to facilitate the business community in the prompt solution of trade disputes. He urged the government to focus on conducive policies to promote business activities, investment and exports.

He said that ICCI was

ready to work with bar councils and associations to serve the cause of business and lawyers' communities and resolve their key issues. Haroon Rasheed, Vice Chairman, Pakistan Bar Council said that the business community was the backbone of the economy and close cooperation between business and lawyers' communities would produce beneficial results for the economy.

Raja Aleem Khan Abbasi, Vice Chairman, Islamabad Bar Council said that the current rent control act should be made more balanced for landlords and tenants to provide quick justice in rent disputes.

He stressed for a charter of economy by all stakeholders to arrest the further downfall of the economy.

Naveed Malik, President, Islamabad High Court Bar Association said that a committee comprising representatives of ICCI and Bar Associations should be constituted to

work for solving the issues of business and lawyers' communities. Qaiser Imam Gondal, President, Islamabad District Bar Association said that time and investment was important for the business community and the legal system should ensure prompt solution of commercial disputes. He urged the government to make specific legislation for an efficient and effective alternate dispute resolution system of commercial disputes that would promote local and foreign investment in Pakistan.

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI said that business and lawyers' communities were key stakeholders in the development of the country and urged to develop close cooperation to achieve their common goals that would help improve the economy. Engineer Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar stressed for new laws to promote ease of doing business in order to boost business and economic activities.

# Global stocks rally on ‘dovish’ ECB hike, First Republic relief package

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Wall Street rallied Thursday after a consortium of US private banks announced a \$30 billion rescue package for First Republic, while European stocks jumped on a European Central Bank's interest rate decision that was called a 'dovish hike.'

Shares of beleaguered First Republic did a dramatic U-turn from down more than 30 percent to up around 10 percent after JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America and other private giants unveiled a dramatic package of deposits by 11 large banks to shore up the California bank.

"The actions of America's largest banks reflect their confidence in the country's banking system," the group said of a plan that was coordinated by American regulators.

Major US indices, which had opened the day in the red, also pushed into positive territory, with the S&P 500 finishing up 1.8 percent.

"There is a lot of hope out there that the worst is over," said Maris Ogg of Tower Bridge Advisors. "When you start to take the bankruptcy of First Republic off the table, and you start to take the bankruptcy of Credit Suisse off the table, it does calm people down."

The reversal in New York followed a rebound in European stocks as markets digested the ECB's move.

Investors had hoped the European Central Bank would reduce the

amount of its rate hike, or even pause it over fears about the health of Credit Suisse and the wider banking system following the implosions of two US lenders.

But the central bank raised its main rates by half a percentage point, as it had previously pledged to do.

It did, however, drop a reference -- used in previous statements -- to the need to raise rates "significantly" going forward and ECB chief Christine Lagarde refused to commit to further rate hikes although she said more were needed.

Stock markets seasawed following the ECB's announcement.

European shares, which had risen earlier on relief that troubled banking giant Credit Suisse had secured a financial lifeline, initially fell but then quickly rebounded.

"Investors have viewed this as a 'dovish hike' from the ECB, as the bank indicates that it is shifting to an entirely data-dependent approach," said Matthew Ryan, head of market strategy at global financial services firm Ebury.

Dovish in monetary policy means favoring lower interest rates to maximise growth and employment, rather than pursuing a "hawkish" policy focused on raising interest rates to reduce inflation.

The half-percentage-point "hike sends a clear signal of confidence in the strength of the European banking

sector," Ryan added.

Frankfurt closed up 1.6 percent and Paris advanced two percent. London rose 0.9 percent.

A day after hitting a record low, Credit Suisse rallied as it announced it would borrow up to \$54 billion from Switzerland's central bank.

Its shares soared more than 30 percent at the open Thursday. They finished the day up just over 19 percent.

Other European banking giants including BNP Paribas and Commerzbank were also in the green, though Societe Generale and Deutsche Bank fell.

The ECB rate hike is the first by a major central bank since markets were rocked by banking crisis fears, testing the eurozone institution's resolve to implement another hefty increase. There is also much debate over whether the US central bank will continue with its rate tightening campaign.

The collapse of California lender Silicon Valley Bank has been widely linked to the sharp rise in borrowing costs over the past year.

Some commentators expect US Federal Reserve officials to lift rates once more next week but possibly hold afterwards, while there is a growing belief it could even announce cuts before the end of the year. But the First Republic package underscored the fast-changing nature of the situation.



BAHAWALPUR: Workers cutting a traditional curtains bamboo chick blinds on roadside in front of their shop in the city.

# SBP issues Rs. 50 commemorative coin on golden jubilee of Senate

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan, on Friday, issued a commemorative coin of Rs. 50 to mark the golden jubilee of Senate, the Upper House of the Parliament of Pakistan.

The year 2023 marks the golden jubilee of the Senate and the federal government, for celebrating the significant occasion, has authorised the central bank to issue Rs. 50 commemorative coin, said a statement issued here.

The Senate of Pakistan is the upper legislative chamber of the bicameral parliament having equal representatives from all provinces of Pakistan and it is constitutionally a permanent House, symbolizing a

process of continuity in the national affairs.

The coin is being issued through the exchange counters of all the field offices of SBP Banking Services Corporation from March 17, 2023. The coin is in round shape milled with a dimension of 30.0 mm, weight 13.5 grams and has Cupro-Nickel metal contents with 75% Copper and 25% Nickel. On the obverse face of the coin, the waxing crescent moon and five-pointed star facing North West in position is in the centre while along the periphery, on top of crescent star, the words 'Islami Jamhuria Pakistan' are inscribed in Urdu script.

Below the crescent and

on the top of two springs of wheat with arms curved upward, there is the year of issuance-2023. The face value of coin in numeral '50' in bold letters and 'Rupia' in Urdu script are written on the right and left sides of the crescent star respectively.

On the reverse side and in the center of the coin, Insignia of the Senate of Pakistan is shown with the artistic numeral wording of 50 on the right hand side. Along with the periphery on the top of the insignia is inscribed with wording 'Pakistan Senate Golden Jubilee' in Urdu script. The duration of golden jubilee (1973-2023) is written below the insignia.

# ‘Future of Islamic Banking is very bright’: SVP FCCI

FAISALABAD (APP): Future of Islamic Banking in Pakistan is very bright but to harvest its full potential at the grass root level, "Riba" should be eliminated instantly, said Dr. Sajjad Arshad Senior Vice President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

Addressing an awareness session on Islamic banking organized by the Bank Al-Falah Islami at FCCI here on Friday, he said that the share of Islamic banks and branches of Islamic banking was 54.5% and 45.5% respectively. He said that currently five complete Islamic banks and Islamic windows of 17 traditional banks were

working in Pakistan.

He further said that Islamic banking was decelerating at the global level but in Pakistan its growth is 17%. He appreciated the efforts of Bank Al-Falah Islami and said that it should introduce new products to cater the entire needs of the business community strictly in accordance with the Islamic "Sharia". Mufti Aqeel Akhtar and Mufti Osama Ihsan, Sharia Advisors of Bank Al-Falah said that its services and products were in conformity with Islamic values, however more awareness sessions should be held to dispel the reservations of Muslim clients.

Hafiz Aqeel of State

Bank of Pakistan said that the share of Islamic banking has crossed the limits of Rs.42bn and it was still increasing with a steady pace. He said that SBP was encouraging Islamic banking, however an organized and persistent campaign should be launched to dispel the apprehensions of the clients. A question answer session was also held.

The participants particularly expressed their reservations about car and house financing and said that, "by just changing the names of these loans as 'Musharakah' and 'Mudarabah', we could not legalize the Riba based system".

# Oil prices slightly rise as traders cash in on low prices

ANKARA (AA/APP): Oil prices edged higher on Friday after traders took advantage of profit-taking from low prices through the week despite a policy rate hike of the European Central Bank (ECB) and deepening economic worries after the collapse two major US banks.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$74.92 per barrel at 9.26 a.m. local time (0626GMT), up 0.29% from the closing price of \$74.70 a barrel in the previous trading session.

At the same time,

American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$68.55 per barrel, a 0.29% increase after the previous session closed at \$68.35 a barrel.

Both benchmarks have lost around 10% this week over fears of a global economic recession and low demand caused by the financial crisis in the US after collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank. Intensifying concerns about the spillover effect of the US banking sector crisis, Zurich-based banking company Credit Suisse announced that it

would borrow up to 50 billion Swiss francs (\$54 billion) from the Swiss National Bank after its shares dropped nearly 30%.

Also, the ECB decision to increase its policy rate by 50 basis points to 3.5% on Thursday also put some downward pressure on prices, increasing expectations for a similar move in the US.

"Inflation is projected to remain too high for too long," the ECB said in a statement after announcing its decision.

Oil prices have seen their lowest level since

ence with their art in the event.

Nova City, a famous name in the housing sector in Pakistan, has announced the date of balloting of commercial plots, an important milestone in the journey from file to plot acquisition, maintaining the traditions of the past. In one of his messages, the chairman of Nova Group informed the dignitaries that the grand ceremony of the first commercial balloting of Nova City General Block is being held on March 19. Chairman Nova Group Chaudhary Junaid Afzaal said that the administration is engaged

and openness of the society through developmental works as well as preparations for the balloting, which is a great honor for us. According to the details, the balloting ceremony will be held at Pakistan Sweet Home, H-9 Islamabad. In which Nova City will for the first time conduct a Balloting for commercial plots in the general block and the plots will be allotted to the lucky members. Famous singers and artists of the country, including Sehar Gul Khan, Natasha Hussain, Farhan Saeed and Kaifi Khalil will entertain the audience with their art.

# Grand ceremony of Nova City Commercial Balloting is being held on March 19

## F.P Report

ISLAMABAD: The administration is busy with the development works for the expansion and openness of the society as well as handing over of timely possession of plot. Which is an honor for us. Chaudhry Junaid Afzaal (Chairman Nova Group)

The event will be held at Pakistan Sweet Home, H-9. It is being celebrated with the kids of Pakistan Sweet Home, who has a special place in the heart of Chairman Chaudhary Junaid Afzaal. Famous singers, artists of the country will entertain the audi-



## In brief

## Karachi women FC wins semi-final

KARACHI, (APP): In the 1st semi-final match of Karachi Super Women Football Cup the Karachi Women FC won by 4-0 by defeating Madhu Muhammadan Football academy. The football cup was organized by Marta Women Football Club with the support of High-Q, Shafaq cooking Oil and DKT International, said a communiqué. Karachi Women FC's player Sara scored 2 goals at 10th and 25th minutes of 1st half while Ayesha scored 2 goals at 5th and 10th min of 2nd half. Madhu Muhammadan could not score any single goal. A large number of fans were present to encourage the players on this occasion.

## Ronaldo picked for Portugal

P O R T U G A L (Agencies): Cristiano Ronaldo has been picked in Portugal's squad for their Euro 2024 qualifiers against Liechtenstein and Luxembourg this month. There were question marks about the 38-year-old forward's international future following the 2022 World Cup. He left the pitch in tears after Portugal were eliminated by Morocco at the quarter-final stage. Roberto Martinez has since replaced Fernando Santos as the team's manager and picked Ronaldo in his first squad. Martinez said Ronaldo "is very important for the team" and "I do not look at the age". Portugal host Liechtenstein on 23 March and are away to Luxembourg three days later. Ronaldo, who has scored a men's record 118 goals in 196 appearances for Portugal, left Manchester United in November following a controversial interview in which he criticised the club before joining Saudi Arabian side Al Nassr on a free transfer in January. He has scored eight goals in nine appearances for Al Nassr.

## Kent sign India bowler Arshdeep

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Arshdeep Singh, India's left-arm swing bowler, has agreed to play five County Championship matches for Kent. Subject to approval, Arshdeep will be available for home fixtures against Surrey and Warwickshire as well as travelling to Northamptonshire, Essex and Nottinghamshire in the LV= Insurance County Championship in June and July. Arshdeep enjoyed a breakout season for Punjab Kings in IPL 2022, becoming their go-to bowler in the death overs and ultimately taking 10 wickets from 14 games at an economy rate of 7.70. The 24-year-old Arshdeep made his T20I debut in England last July. He played all three of his ODIs to date in New Zealand in November and now has 29 international appearances for India, for whom he was a standout performer at the 2022 T20 World Cup in Australia. In seven career first-class matches to date, he has taken 25 wickets at an average of 23.84 and economy rate of 2.92. Arshdeep said he had heard good things about Kent from Rahul Dravid, India's current men's head coach who played for the club in 2000. "I am excited to play red-ball cricket in England and continue to improve my skills in the first-class game," Arshdeep said. "Rahul Dravid has already told me it is a club with a great history." He joins Kane Richardson, the Australia pace bowler who will play in the Vitality Blast, and South African spin-bowling allrounder George Linde, who is in the second half of his two-year deal as an all-format player, as overseas players confirmed for the county so far.

## Muhammad Ammad wins Qatar Jr Open Squash title

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan's prominent and current ranking No. 2 Muhammad Ammad clinched the most coveted Qatar Junior Open title Navida Laqman of Sri Lanka in the straight sets final played here on Friday.

Muhammad Ammad, whose current world ranking is 350 till last December, took no time in defeating his rival in the final, the score was 11-3, 11-2 and 11-3.

Muhammad Hamad fully dominated the Qatar Junior Open and right from the first round after defeating Omar Afifi of Egypt in straight sets with 11-2, 11-1 and 11-2.

He marched to the final before defeating Muhammad Al Emadi of Qatar in the quarter-final 3-0, with score 11-4, 11-1 and 11-1 and another rival Adair Chandramouli of Singapore in the semi-final. The score of the semi-final was 11-3, 11-4 and 11-3.

Trained and coached by Tahir Iqbal, Munawar Zaman and Karam Khan (PAF), the jubilant Muhammad Ammad thanked Director General Sports Khalid Khan for extending financial help to him to play the Qatar Junior Open.

Before recording victory in the Qatar Junior Open Squash, Muhammad Ammad played the quarter-final of the US Junior, Muhammad Ammad is expected to represent Pakistan in the World Junior in Australia in July 2023 and also participate in the forthcoming Asian Junior Squash Championship in August in Hong Kong. "I am working hard to win more titles for Pakistan," Muhammad Ammad said.

"I am also thankful to the support of PAF and President Pakistan Squash Federation," he added.

## Australia's Paine retires from domestic cricket

HOBART (Agencies): Former Australia captain Tim Paine has retired from domestic cricket after playing for Tasmania in their Sheffield Shield match against Queensland.

The 38-year-old wicketkeeper was given a guard of honour as he left the field at Bellerive Oval following the game. Paine played 35 Tests for Australia, with 23 of those as captain after he took over from Steve Smith.

Smith was stripped of the role after a ball-tampering controversy during Australia's 2018 tour of South Africa. Paine has not played international cricket since January 2021 and last played domestic white-ball cricket in December 2022.

Under Paine's captaincy, Australia retained the Ashes in 2019 with a 2-2 draw, becoming the first Australia side to do so in England since 2001.

They won 11, lost eight and drew four Tests during his tenure as captain. He also played 35 one-day internationals for his country and 12 Twenty20s.

Paine stepped down as Australia Test captain in November 2021 before the Ashes over a historical investigation into sexually explicit texts to a female colleague. He said he was "exonerated", but stepped down as he had learned his texts were set to be revealed publicly.

Paine then took a leave of absence from the game, with his manager saying the player was taking "an indefinite mental health break", before he returned to play for Tasmania in October 2022.

He did not receive a Cricket Australia contract in 2022. "He's been a phenomenal player," said Tasmania captain Jordan Silk. "It's an incredible effort to have the longevity that he's had."

He's certainly going to be missed behind the stumps. "I'm sure a lot of guys who are playing now will say that there will never be another keeper as good as Tim Paine in Australia. So we've been incredibly blessed down here."

## Madrid gets Chelsea, City to meet Bayern in Champions League

NYON (Agencies): Real Madrid's path to another Champions League title will have to go through Chelsea in the quarterfinals for the second straight year.

Friday's draw takes Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti back to face his former club, which were eliminated by a goal from Karim Benzema in extra time a year ago.

This time, the first leg between the past two Champions League winners will be in Madrid instead of London — on April 11 or 12. Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola also has a reunion with a former club. The English champions were drawn to face Bayern Munich, which have won all eight of their games in the competition this season and will play the first leg away from home.

Bayern twice kept Paris Saint-Germain forward Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappé from scoring in the round of 16. The team will now face the tournament's leading scorer Erling Haaland, who had five goals on Tuesday in City's 7-0 rout of Leipzig.

The winner between City and Bayern will go on to play Madrid or Chelsea in the semifinals. That half of the draw includes four of the top-five teams in the UEFA rankings by results in European competitions over the past five years. The other half of the draw is dominated by Italian clubs with the possibility of a Milan derby in the semifinals. AC Milan will first face Napoli, the run-away Serie A leader which are making their debut in the quarterfinals of the Champions League or the old European Cup. The first leg is at San Siro.

Inter Milan will play at Benfica in the first leg, returning to the country where it eliminated Porto in the round of 16. Inter are playing at this stage of the competition for the first time in 12 years, while Milan are ending an 11-year wait. Inter are ranked No. 12 by UEFA and seventh-time European champion Milan are down at No. 36.

Six former champions who have combined for 34 titles in the 68-year history of the competition were in the draw. Only Napoli and Man City have yet to be European champions. The first legs will be played on April 11 and 12. The return games are scheduled for April 18 and 19.

The semifinal matches will be played between May 9-17 and the final is set for June 10 at the Ataturk Olympic Stadium in Istanbul. In the Europa League quarterfinals, Manchester United will play yet another Spanish club. Man United, which eliminated Barcelona and Real Betis in the last two rounds, will next face Sevilla — a record six-time champion of the competition. The winner will face either Juventus or Sporting Lisbon in the semifinals.

The other half of the draw paired Feyenoord and Roma — a rematch of the inaugural Europa Conference League final last year won by the Italian team — and Bayer Leverkusen with Belgian club Union Saint-Gilloise. The Europa League quarterfinals will be played on April 13 and 20, with the semifinals on May 11 and 18 and the final set for May 31 at the Puskas Arena in Budapest.

## All-round Qalandars down Zalmi to set up PSL 8 final clash with Sultans

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): In the first four years of the PSL, the Lahore Qalandars squad would have been on holiday, or back home in front of the telly by this stage of the competition. But those dark days are a distant memory now, with the defending champions sweeping past a valiant challenge from Peshawar Zalmi by four wickets to book their spot in their third final in four years.

It was very much a collective team effort, with a clinical bowling performance keeping Zalmi to 171 in spite of a blistering 54-ball 85 from Mohammad Harris. The chase, too, was down to several cameos from the top and middle order, all threaded together around a half-century by Mirza Baig. Zalmi dragged the Qalandars to the final two overs, but in truth, Shaheen Afridi's men were always one step ahead.

Zalmi opted to bat at the toss, fully cognisant that the Qalandars were yet to win chasing this season, and no chasing side had triumphed yet at the Gaddafi Stadium this year. Saim Ayub was cleaned up early by Zaman Khan, but Babar Azam and Harris struck up an imposing partnership to set a platform. Harris was in superb striking form once more, a six and a four off the first three balls he faced from Shaheen a statement of intent. Babar joined in from the other end and by the end of the powerplay, Zalmi had put up 54, set up to go bigger.

Babar failed to take the next step up, though, and his strike rate stalled. Harris Rauf was hard to get away in the middle overs, but Harris clobbered Rashid Khan for 14 in his first over to keep Qalandars under pressure.

Baig got the Qalandars



Even Babar went after Rashid with a pair of boundaries to kick off his second. But Rashid hit back, taking two wickets in his third, breaking the stand with Babar's wicket and removing Tom Kohler-Cadmore for a duck. And while Harris continued to club away, plundering another 13 off Rashid's final over, the runs from the other end were drying up.

Shaheen had held Harris back for three overs at the death, and Zalmi found him difficult to get away. David Wiese's variations in pace, too, proved tricky to attack, while, crucially, Shaheen nabbed Harris off the final ball of his spell. The young Zalmi batter had kept his strike rate up, but as he departed for 85, Zalmi's momentum was ebbing away. Harris said at the halfway mark that the 171 they had posted was well above par, but the Qalandars weren't to be fooled.

Baig got the Qalandars

running with a six in the first over, but Zalmi had a huge breakthrough immediately. Fakhar Zaman swung and missed as Azmatullah Omarzai hit middle stump, and rookie allrounder Azmat Hafeez departed soon after following a breezy 15. Abdullah Shafique, too, was only at the crease for a short while, contributing a 31-run stand with Baig before a mix up ran him out.

But Zalmi might have been lulled into a false sense of security with these regular breakthroughs. The Qalandars didn't have a huge individual scorer a la Harris, or one big stand like the Babar-Harris partnership, but these small cameos and gritty partnerships were furtively knocking off the runs. Sam Billings and Baig put on 50 in 28 balls to guarantee the run rate was no longer an issue before Baig feathered one through off Aamer Jamal, but the match situation

was set up perfectly for finishers like Billings and Sikandar Raza.

They wouldn't be there till the very end, but they got close enough. There was a 28-run partnership, and a 28-ball 21 for Billings complemented by 23 off 14 from Raza. Both had their stumps knocked back with the Qalandars still a trickle of runs away, but the dam Zalmi had set up in defence of their total had finally burst.

The coup de grace was delivered, in style, by the Qalandars' swaggering young captain, a wallop over mid-on followed by a lofted straight drive for six by Shaheen Afridi to seal the win.

He held that Adonis-like pose for exaggerated effect as the Qalandars booked their spot in the final, a repeat of last year's trophy match between the defending champions and Multan Sultans. He may yet go on to hold the trophy once more.

## Shami, Rahul fire India to victory in ODI opener against Australia

MUMBAI (Agencies): Mohammed Shami's bowling figures of 3-17 and an unbeaten 75 by KL Rahul helped India beat Australia by five wickets in the first one-day international on Friday.

Australia were bowled out for 188 in 35.4 overs after a dramatic collapse following opener Mitchell Marsh's 65-ball 81 at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai.

In a tricky chase, India were in trouble at 39-4 before Rahul stayed calm and put on key partnerships including an unbeaten 108-run stand with Ravindra Jadeja, who made 45, to achieve victory in 39.5 overs. The hosts lead the three-match series 1-0 with the two teams warming up for the 50-over World Cup later this year in India.

Bowlers ruled in the ODI opener with Shami and Mohammed Siraj taking three wickets each to make Australia slide from a strong 129-2 after being invited to bat first. The Australian innings turned on its head after Marsh, who is playing as a specialist batsman after recovering from an ankle injury, departed in the 20th over.

He put on 72 runs for the second wicket with skipper Steve Smith and smashed 10 fours and five sixes to take the wind out of the Indian bowlers who hit back with wickets. Marsh reached his fifty with a boundary and another four got Australia past 100 before he fell to Jadeja in his attempt to go after the left-arm spinner and got caught.

Australia suddenly lost their way as Shami with help from Jadeja and Siraj ripped through the rest of the Australian order. Josh Inglis, who donned the wicketkeeping gloves after Alex Carey was ruled out sick, looked good in his knock of 26 before being bowled by Shami.

## National Open Polo C'ship for Quaid-e-Azam Gold Cup 2023: BN, MP/Newage in main final

LAHORE (APP): BN Polo and Master Paints/Newage Cables breezed into the main final of the Century Ventures National Open Polo Championship for Quaid-e-Azam Gold Cup 2023 after winning their respective semifinals here at Lahore Polo Club on Friday.

In the first semifinal, BN Polo defeated Diamond Paints 9-6. From BN Polo, Hamza Mawaz Khan played tremendous polo and smashed in superb six goals while Juan Ruiz Guinazu hammered a hat-trick. For Diamond Paints, Chulo Corti thrashed in three goals while Nico Roberts banged in a brace and Mir Huzaifa Ahmed scored one goal.

BN Polo began the match with two back-to-back goals to gain a 2-0 lead, while Diamond Paints also struck one to reduce the margin to 2-1. They played well in the second chukker by banging in a brace against one by BN Polo to level the score at 3-3. Diamond Paints scored

one more in the start of the third chukker to earn a 4-3 lead, but BN bounced back brilliantly by hammering a hat-trick to take a 6-4 lead.

Both the teams converted one goal each in the fourth chukker, with BN still enjoying a 7-5 lead while in the fifth and decisive chukker, BN Polo scored two goals against one by Diamond Paints to win the match by 9-6.

In the second semifinal of the day, Master Paints/Newage Cables beat Master Paints by 7-6.

From Master Paints/Newage Cables, Simon Prada did the magic with mallet and polo pony and slammed in all the seven goals. For Master Paints, Manuel Crespo pumped in three goals while Pelayo Berrazadi banged in a brace and Agha Musa Ali Khan struck one goal.

Both the teams were off to a flying start as they thrashed in two goals each to level the score at 2-2.

The second chukker was also evenly poised but this time, they scored one goal each to equalize the score at 3-3. Master Paints/Newage played better polo in the third chukker by hammering two goals against one by Master Paints to get a slight 5-4 edge but in the very next chukker, Master Paints converted one to level the score at 5-5.

Master Paints/Newage once again took a 6-5 lead in the beginning of the fifth chukker, which couldn't last long as Master Paints also scored an equalizer to make it 6-6. In the dying moments of the match Simon Prada smashed in the match-winning goal to steer Master Paints/Newage to a thrilling 7-6 victory.

The final will be played on Sunday (March 19) between BN Polo and Master Paints/Newage Cables while DS Polo will compete against FG Polo in the subsidiary final.

## Indian Wells

## Swiatek, Rybakina reach semifinals

INDIAN WELLS (AP): Top-ranked Iga Swiatek breezed past Sorana Cirstea 6-2, 6-3 to reach the semifinals of the BNP Paribas Open on Thursday.

Swiatek, the defending champion, took a 4-0 lead in the second set and converted her second match point to close it out.

"I'm happy that I played so intense that I could start both sets well," Swiatek said. "I'm feeling like I'm handling things pretty well and just playing my game."

Next up for Swiatek is No. 10 seed Elena Rybakina, who outlasted Karolina Muchova 7-6 (4), 2-6, 6-4. It will be a rematch from the Australian Open in January, when Rybakina won 6-4, 6-4 in the quarterfinals.

Jannik Sinner beat defending champion Taylor Fritz 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 to become the first Italian man to reach the semifinals of the 47-year-old tournament.

Sinner, the 11th seed, advanced to the semis at a Masters 1000 for the second time. He will meet top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz, who beat No. 8 Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 6-4. Alcaraz needs to

win the title to reclaim the world's No. 1 ranking.

Sinner had 32 winners to 25 for Fritz; both had 17 unforced errors. Sinner connected on 80% of his first serves and won 15 of 18 points at the net. Fritz

said Sinner handled the windy conditions better down the stretch.

"I'd say the two games that I got broken in the third, I just didn't really feel like I could do much in the points," Fritz said. "I

had to just kind of like hope that he'd get a miss, just because of how strong the wind was in my face."

Sinner said he stepped in against Fritz's serve in the middle of the match and tried to take the ball earlier



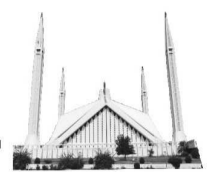
Iga Swiatek, of Poland, returns to Sorana Cirstea, of Romania, at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament.

to throw off the American's rhythm. "I moved a little bit in, especially on the deuce side," he said.

"But only on first serve, because I felt like I didn't have any chance to see the ball toss or where he was serving. So I tried at least, if the ball is there, to catch it as soon as possible to give him less time."

Rybakina became the first woman from Kazakhstan to earn a semifinal berth at Indian Wells. She dropped her first set of the tournament in the second, but turned it up in the third. The 2022 Wimbledon champion won 15 of 16 first-serve points and never faced a break point in the set.

"I served much better in the third," Rybakina said on court. "I didn't start that well in the beginning of the match, I was a bit slower than usual and here the conditions are not that easy for me. In the end, in the important moments I played well." Rybakina and Swiatek are 1-1 against each other in their careers. "In Australia, I just know that when I went to play against her, I had really nothing to lose. She's number one and kind of pressure on her in that moment," Rybakina said.



## In brief

### IRSA releases 85,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 85,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 66,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1427.95 feet and was 29.95 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 23,000 cusecs while outflow as 36,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1098.45 feet, which was 48.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded 22,600 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur has recorded 49,200, 34,600, 31,500 and 8,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### NHMP issues advisory

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) has issued an advisory for the safety of motorists here on Friday, amid recent rains continuing in various parts of the country. "A westerly wave is likely to persist till March 20 and rain-wind thunderstorm (with isolated hailstorm) is expected in Islamabad, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Kashmir, eastern Balochistan and eastern Sindh," said the advisory. The NHMP has stressed the road users to follow safety precautions while driving on wet roads because high speeds in wet conditions could lead to a higher risk of the vehicle slipping and becoming uncontrollable and avoid unnecessary travel during rain. "The motorists should maintain a low speed and increase the distance of their vehicle from next vehicle while driving in wet weather," said the advisory. "The road users must ensure that their vehicle wipers are in proper condition and should use headlights and hazard lights to improve visibility during driving in rainy season," it added.

### General body meeting of ASA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), Prof. Dr Nasir Mahmood on Friday urged the authorities to provide a conducive environment for teaching and research. Addressing the general body meeting of the Academic Staff Association (ASA) of AIU, the VC said, "It is my desire to provide better development opportunities to the employees of the university and to further improve the university system." He assured of working together for the development of the institution and staying committed to taking every possible measure for the welfare of AIU employees. The main purpose of this general body meeting was to communicate Vice Chancellor about the problems being faced by the teachers. Speaking at the occasion, President ASA, Dr Moinuddin Hashmi asked VC AIU for the publication of an advertisement for promotions of faculty members and asked him to review the faculty development programme, faculty workload, research grant, and transport policy. The VC assured to get the approval of the Supreme Body (Executive Council) of the University for the immediate resolution of demands, while he instructed the ASA to review the ongoing projects and come up with a workable solution.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the French Agency for Development and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation called on Federal Health Minister Abdul Qadir Patel.

## Climate finance system reset required to tackle 21st Century Climate Change crisis: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Friday said that climate change was rapidly changing its scale and impact with every passing year that demanded a serious reset in the climate finance system to tackle the 21st century crisis of environmental degradation.

In her keynote opening remarks at the launch of the World Bank Pakistan Country Climate and Development Report highlighting the country's vulnerabilities due to climate change and opportunities in shifting its development and policy paradigm to address climate mitigation and adaptation for achieving sustainable development, the minister said the effects of climate change have had a severe impact

on Pakistan. Senator Rehman said climate change and development were common problem of the world, whereas the environment was changing faster than planned.

She said that global emissions continued to rise at a massive rate today, adding, "We need collective action as climate change cannot be tackled alone by one country or region." The minister said Pakistan was at the forefront of the most impacted countries due to climate change. She also added that international organisations and all countries had to find solutions together to combat climate change.

"Climate change is happening faster than we think. Pakistan accounts for less than one per cent of carbon emissions," the

minister said. The federal ministry was making climate change policy and giving it to the provinces whereas the provinces should make their own laws in this regard in view of their needs. The government had also launched the National Clean Air Policy, she added. The floods of 2022 created a great human tragedy. The government of Pakistan distributed an amount of Rs70 billion to the flood victims as Rs25,000 per family was given through Benazir Income Support Program, the Minister said.

"We saw humanitarian crises during floods and other climate change events in 2022. We have many lessons to learn from last year's environmental disasters," Sherry Rehman said.

## ANF recovers 13 kg drugs, 350 heroin-filled capsules

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) recovered over 13 kg of drugs, and 350 heroin-filled capsules in six operations and arrested eight drug smugglers including two women, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that in an operation at Islamabad International Airport, ANF recovered 123 heroin-filled capsules from the possession of two Jeddah-bound passengers including a woman. In another raid at

International Mail Office Rawalpindi, the Ice drug which was soaked and absorbed into curtains was recovered. The parcel weighing 8.4 kg was booked for London.

ANF in an operation near Islamabad Park Road managed to net two accused for possessing six kg charras. They were allegedly involved in supplying drugs in posh areas of Islamabad.

In the fourth operation at Sialkot Airport, ANF and ASF recovered over 6.9 kg

of liquid Ice and arrested an accused resident of Swabi.

145 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of two Bahrain-bound passengers, residents of Islamabad and Mianwali while in another operation 82 heroin-filled capsules were also recovered from the possession of a female passenger resident of Kohat.

Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process, he added.

## 5th Vice Chancellors' Forum of Islamic countries to begin in Islamabad

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Over 250 academic leaders are converging in Islamabad for a two-day 5th Vice-Chancellors' Forum (VC Forum) on Universities in the Islamic World: Towards Disruptive Technology in a Globalised World, set to begin on Sunday, 19th March 2023, at a five-star hotel.

The 5th VC Forum is jointly being organized by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC), in partnership with COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI), the British Council Pakistan and the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), and the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training. The Forum aims at building on the previous forums, held in Pakistan and Türkiye, from 2012 till 2017.

Over 40 heads of universities from 20 OIC counties and 200 Vice Chancellors from local universities would be among the 250 Vice Chancellors, Rectors, and Presidents of Universities / Higher Educational Institutions of the Islamic World that will be participating in the VC Forum this year. These countries include Azerbaijan, Benin, Chad, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Niger, Nigeria, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Türkiye, UAE, Uganda, and Yemen.

Among the keynote speakers at the VC Forum are Dr Salim M. AL Malik, Director General, ICESCO, and Ambassador Mustafa Turker Ari, Advisor to the President Council of Higher Education (CoHE), Turkey. The Forum will provide a platform for

sharing experiences, networking, pooling resources, fostering collaborations, strengthening networks of excellence, and encouraging dialogue on the future of Higher Education in the Islamic World. These engagements would inspire and enable participants to plan future programs and set targets for leveraging the collective wisdom of worthy academicians and professionals gathered from around the Islamic World and Pakistan.

Panel discussions and invited talks are an integral part of the proceedings of the VC Forum. This year the four major themes around which panel discussions and invited talks would revolve are: 1) Transforming Traditional Faculties; 2) Improving Online Education; 3) Tools for Innovation and 4) Technology Commercialization and Forming Higher Education Re-Opening for International Students.

Quick adoption of technology in education, commerce, agriculture, and healthcare has radically transformed the mandate of universities, from merely being centres of traditional education to becoming hubs of cutting-edge disruptive technologies, capable of swiftly developing superior solutions to meet the ever-changing international demands.

This poses an immense challenge for academia to rethink its role, beyond just conferring degrees upon students, to developing critical thinkers who can adapt and respond to fast-changing global trends with agility and creating lifelong learners, with the relevant skillsets is essential for the survival of universities in the future.

## Two vehicles smuggling flour impounded with 1151 bags

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on Friday caught two vehicles with 1151 flour bags while four accused were sent behind the bars.

According to a district administration spokesman, the food Department Rawalpindi and Potohar Division Police conducted raids in the Naseerabad area and rounded up Majid, Azam, Wahid and Ghufuran on recovery of 1151 flour bags.

He informed that the authorities of the food department along with Potohar Division Police conducted raids in their respective jurisdiction and rounded up the flour smugglers. He said that the accused were trying to illegally ship flour out of the Rawalpindi division.

## Federal govt to remove concerns of AJK regarding census: Kaira

ISLAMABAD (APP): Adviser to the Prime Minister on Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs Qamar Zaman Kaira said that the federal government would make every effort to remove the concerns of the government and the people of Azad Kashmir regarding the ongoing census in AJK.

He was presiding over a meeting of the committee constituted by the Speaker of Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly, said a press release issued here Friday. The meeting was also attended by Azad Kashmir Law Minister Faheem Rabbani, Members of Legislative Assembly Ahmad Raza Qadri, Ali Khan, Faisal Rathore and high officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior and Bureau of Statistics. The Advisor said that the region of

Azad Kashmir is of utmost importance for Pakistan and Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif. He said that all matters of Azad Kashmir should be resolved on a priority basis.

Azad Kashmir Minister Law Faheem Rabbani and other members of the committee informed the participants of the meeting about their concerns regarding citizenship, language and residence in the ongoing census in Azad Kashmir and said that Azad Kashmir would be affected by the ambiguity and reservations in the ongoing census in Azad Kashmir. The Chief Station of the Statistical Institute informed about the technical and administrative situation and mandate related to the ongoing census in Azad Kashmir.

## Railways to replace old, obsolete signal gear from Lodhran-Shahdara

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has worked out a plan to replace old and obsolete signal gear from Lodhran-Multan-Khanewal-Shahdara Bagh mainline section during the current fiscal year.

Pakistan Railways had allocated Rs 1 billion for the project titled 'Replacement of old and obsolete signal gear from Lodhran - Multan - Khanewal - Shahdara Bagh mainline section,' an official told APP.

He told APP the other day that the signalling system of 44 stations was automated by Computer Based Interlocking (CBI) over Shandapur-Mirpur Mathelo and Lodhran-Shahdara Bagh sections.

The initiative, he said, had considerably improved

the arrival and departure timing of trains owing to swift operation in the automated section. The engineering restrictions on tracks were being removed to curtail the running time of passenger trains.

"Pakistan Railways is rigorously pursuing the Main Line-I project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to upgrade its track which faced delay during the last four years," he said.

He said Rs 5 billion were already allocated for the ML-I project in the current fiscal year 2022-23. The project would increase trains' speed from 120 to 160 km per hour, he added.

The official said the journey time would be reduced by half after the implementation of the project.

## IESCO notifies 2-day power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday issued 2-day power suspension programme for Saturday and Sunday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work.

According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period on Saturday from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM Rawalpindi City Circle, Westridge, Rajahabad, Golra, P&T Wini, Jhangi, Azharabad, Shams Colony, Quaid-e-Azam International, Zircon Heights, MFM, Dhok Chowdhury, NRC, Charing Cross, Weasa, E Block, Ghousia Colony, Hydari Chowk, A Block, New Milpur, Faizabad.

## Traffic jams playing havoc with Pindites

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi is one of the biggest and busiest cities of the country that has been experiencing an unprecedented rise in the number of vehicles on its roads in recent years and traffic snarls have become a common sight in the city.

The factors contributing to the rising vehicles' number in Rawalpindi and the impact it is having on traffic flow in the city is becoming a serious headache for the residents and the civic agencies.

One of the primary factors contributing to the rising vehicle population is the increasing urbanization as the city continues to expand - more and more people are moving in, leading to an increase in the number of vehicles on the roads. This trend is not unique to Rawalpindi, as many cities across the world experience a similar phenomenon as they grow and develop.

According to City Traffic Officer (CTO) Tamoor Khan, there was no doubt that population of vehicles was creating traffic snarls on the roads but the City Traffic Police were making all out efforts to maintain the flow of traffic. He pointed out that Marrir Chowk and Liaquat Bagh were the busiest spots on Murree Road that had been made signal free with the aim to provide relief to the motorists.

He said that now the main traffic blockade was at Qasr-e-Shireen point near Committee Chowk underpass that was a troubling point. Chandani Chowk was another point with traffic blockage, he added. There was no blockage on Airport Road whereas traffic congestion on Swan Road due

to construction work was impeding smooth flow of traffic, he said.

The CTO informed that over 1,100 traffic wardens were performing their duties to maintain flow of traffic in the garrison city. He also pointed out that there were so many factors causing traffic blockage, and encroachments are the major cause of road mess at Raja Bazaar, Kohati Bazaar, Naz Cinema, College Road, Bara Market, Bohar Bazaar, Fowara Chowk, Ganjmandi and other areas of the city. He said Rickshaw, Quinqui, and motorcycles in large number easily available on installments were proliferating in the traffic fleet which is another factor of traffic blockage.

"Rawalpindi Ring Road project which is need of the hour, would prove a game changer for Rawalpindi city, definitely and it would help curtail the traffic load on the city roads," Muhammad Suleman, a road user said.

He said that there was a dire need to revamp master plan of Rawalpindi according to modern needs and growing population of the city. Talking to APP, Prof. Dr Suleman Shah said the inadequate public transportation system in Rawalpindi has also played a role in the rising vehicle population. The public transportation system in Rawalpindi is not very efficient, with limited options available to commuters. As a result, many people choose to purchase their own vehicles as a more convenient means of transportation. Dr Shah was of the view that another factor contributing to the rise in vehicle population is the lack of proper urban planning and road

infrastructure in Rawalpindi. The city's road infrastructure has not kept up with the increasing vehicle population, leading to congestion and traffic snarls during peak hours.

"The traffic congestion has led to increased travel times, reduced productivity, and an increase in air pollution levels in the city. The traffic snarls have also contributed to an increase in road accidents, which is a significant concern for the safety of commuters on the city's roads," he said. In addition to the impact on traffic flow, the rise in the number of vehicles on Rawalpindi's roads has also had a significant impact on the environment. The increase in air pollution levels due to vehicular emissions has led to deterioration in air quality, posing a significant health risk to the residents of the city.

Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Spokesperson, Hafiz Muhammad Irfan said that RDA has constructed a parking plaza to lessen burden of traffic in Raja Bazaar. He said that Sixth Road, Chandni Chowk, Amar Chowk projects were completed to ease the traffic flow while underpasses and flyovers would also be constructed at Kutichery Chowk and Defence Chowk that would help in mitigating the sufferings of the motorists.

According to a district administration Spokesman, the administration was striving to start the construction work on Lai Expressway, Kutichery Chowk and Defence Chowk projects. Lai Expressway project would help in addressing the traffic congestion problems on the city roads, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Federal for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman addresses at the launch of World Bank's Country Climate And Development Report of Pakistan at a local hotel in Federal Capital.

UN extends Afghanistan mission

KABUL (Agencies): The United Nations Security Council has renewed the UN Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for another year while also asking for recommendations on the best way for the international community to continue its work in the Taliban-ruled country. The 15-member council on Thursday unanimously adopted two resolutions, both drafted by the United Arab Emirates and Japan.

Free english courses

KHOST (TOLONews): A teacher in Khost province cycles several kilometers each day to a village where he has been providing more than twenty children and teenagers free English lessons for the past five months. Due to a lack of facilities and a suitable location for teaching, the classes take place in the open air. He said that on stormy or rainy days, some locals let him use their guest homes to teach children. Nazratullah, the teacher in Khost, added that the students use carpets because there aren't any chairs available.

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

OIC to send team of scholars for dialogue with Islamic Emirate



KABUL (TOLONews): The Organization of the Islamic Cooperation is to send a team of scholars to Afghanistan for dialogue on women's education and work. Speaking on the first day of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's meeting in Mauritania, the Secretary General Hissein Brahim Taha said that the OIC will continue its efforts and dialogue with the concerned authorities in Afghanistan and in coordination with the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), and will send an expanded team of scholars to Afghanistan for dialogue on aspects related to Islam's position on women's education and work. The 49th meeting of the OCI was held on March 16-17 in Mauritania, where the representatives of more than 40 countries participated. The Islamic Emirate said that the issue of female education takes time but it is trying to solve it as soon as possible. "We are trying to solve our problems in education and employment in terms of women's issues. Efforts are underway but it takes time. The issue will be solved soon," said Zabiullah Mujahidi, Islamic Emirate's Spokesman. Speaking at the same meeting, Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari urged the international community to continue engagement with Afghanistan. "Despite the challenges, the international community must continue engagement with Afghanistan's interim government, maintain humanitarian assistance, revive the Afghan economy, release Afghanistan's national assets and support the implementation of the shovel-ready connectivity projects," he said. "We are emphasizing peace and stability in Afghanistan and ask the caretaker government to engage with different factions in this country," said Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister. This comes as the delegation of the UAE that arrived in Afghanistan discussed the issue of female education with the Islamic Emirate's officials. According to a statement of the Interior Ministry, acting Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani told the delegation that the ban on female education is not permanent and that the Islamic Emirate is committed to providing Sharia rights for the whole nation. It has been nearly two-years since the Islamic Emirate came to power, but the fate of female students in grade 7-12 have yet to be determined.

Kabul welcomes renewal of UNAMA mandate

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate welcomed the renewal of the UN Assistant Mission in Afghanistan, saying that the activities of the diplomatic mission are effective for the extension of diplomatic relations of Afghanistan and the world. The UN Assistant Mission in Afghanistan has been extended until March 7 2024. "The extension of the UNAMA mandate is a good step for Afghanistan because as much as the UN and other countries are preserving their relations via diplomatic ways, it benefits all sides," said Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid. On Thursday, the UN Security Council adopted two resolutions on Afghanistan. The first resolution was the renewal of the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the second resolution requests that the Secretary-General conduct an independent assessment that provides recommendations for an integrated and coherent approach among different actors in the international community in order to address the current challenges facing Afghanistan. Members of the council also stressed the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. "The United States fully supports UNAMA, and its mission and we



are proud to support a one-year extension of UNAMA's mandate," said Robert Wood, the US ambassador to the UN. "UNAMA is critical to working toward the peace and stability that we all agree is so important for Afghanistan and the world. With the extension of UNAMA's mandate, the UN will be able to continue its important work to restore Afghans' ability to exercise their human rights, especially those of women and girls and members of minority communities." Speaking at the meeting of the UN to extend UNAMA's mandate, the UAE ambassador to the UN Lana Zaki Nusseibeh, said: "Afghanistan faces an exceptional set of challenges, from the severe deterioration of women and girls' rights to the rise of humanitarian needs and the escalating security threat as well as the unsustainable economic situation." "At a time when the Afghan people are facing a set of profoundly difficult challenges, the council has responded with a strong and unified message. Afghanistan and in particular its women and girls will not be abandoned," she said. Addressing the same meeting, the Chargé d'Affaires of the Afghanistan Permanent Mission to the UN, Naseer Ahmad Faiq said: "We hope the coming months, we will see sustained and paralleled progress on all aspects of the UN's mandate, especially in relation to the political dialogue that leads to the start of meaningful political process for an inclusive and legitimate governance." However, the human rights defenders said UNAMA is not doing enough. "The people are not satisfied that the decisions about the closure of the girls schooling is taken by a small group of people. UNAMA should play its role, so that a national dialogue is launched in Afghanistan," said Torek Farhadi, political analyst.

Daesh in Afghanistan could threaten US interests in 6 months: CENTCOM

KABUL (TOLONews): The head of US Central Command, Michael Kurilla, said that Daesh in Afghanistan will be able to attack American or Western interests outside the country in less than six months "with little to no warning," as reported by Star and Stripes. He made the remarks on Thursday at a Senate Armed Services Committee, saying that Daesh is rapidly developing the ability to conduct "external operations" in Europe and Asia. "My commanders estimate that they can do an external operation against US or Western interests in under six months with little to know warning. In a classified session, I would talk about why I made that assessment. It is much harder for them to be able to do that against the homeland," he said. The Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid rejected Kurilla's remarks on Daesh's ability to attack the US within six months and said that the group is being eliminated in Afghanistan. "We deny these allegations. Afghanistan is not a place for anyone to threaten other countries anymore or make problems. Daesh is being eliminated in Afghanistan. Daesh has been hit hard and the world also knows it," he said. Meanwhile, the US democratic Senator Jack Reed said that the President Joe Biden pledged that Afghanistan will not become a harbor of terrorist groups. "The Biden administration has maintained its commitment to ensure that Afghanistan cannot be used as a base for ISIS, al-Qaeda or other terrorist groups to conduct attacks against United States or its allies," he said. The political analysts gave various opinions in this regard. "Daesh neither has the goal to attack US interests nor the capacity to do so. It even doesn't have the capacity to attack the weak countries. It is only a misery for the people of Afghanistan," said Asadullah Nadim, a military veteran. This comes as the Islamic Emirate killed two key members of the Daesh group within the last month.



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KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Interior Minister Serajuddin Haqqani has renewed the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' (IEA) commitment to men and women education in Afghanistan, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) said on Friday. During a meeting with Ulema delegation from the United Arab Emirate (UAE) Haqqani acknowledged that Islam made seeking education compulsory on men and women and the IEA was committed to grant all rights of its people in the framework of Islamic Sharia Law. On its Twitter handle, the MoI said that visiting UAE delegation on Friday met Interior Minister Serajuddin Haqqani and discussed political, economic and security matters. It added both sides discussed the expansion of relationship between Kabul and Dubai. Haqqani thanked UAE for handing over the Dubai Consulate General to the IEA and added



establishment of ties with Afghanistan was in the interest of neighbouring countries. The MoI quoted Haqqani as saying that Afghanistan was a strategic area and the world should refrain from maintain a double policy with Kabul. "Those want to isolate Afghanistan were wrong because Afghanistan has owner and we will not allow that our country is ignored again," he said. Umar Jabtour Al Dare, head of the visiting UAE delegation, said: "For durable relationships there are some issues including the women and girls education and work that we are looking forward for its resolution." The delegation assured interior minister of full cooperation in different areas and termed support to Afghanistan as their moral responsibility. UAE delegation arrived in Kabul on Thursday evening and held meetings with different government officials.

Swedish committee helped facilitate 675 classes in Paktika: Officials

PAKTIKA (TOLONews): The Swedish Committee helped facilitate 675 general educational classes for more than 22,000 students including 14,000 girls, in 15 districts of the south-eastern province of Paktika, officials said. An official of the Swedish committee in Paktika, Samar Gul Samsor, said that 675 classes have been held in various districts of Paktika.



"In Paktika province, we can say that around 22,000 children have been provided with education by the Swedish committee in Afghanistan. Around 14,000 of them are girls," The Paktika department of education said that if the facilities were provided, they would establish schools in areas where the residents were deprived of schools previously. "We have cooperated with them (organizations) within our capacity and ordered the relevant departments to provide them with all types of assistance," said Abdul Qayom Farooqi, head of the Paktika department of education. TOLONews reached out to the Zarandhi area of Orgoon district of Paktika province. The students expressed

happiness about the classes but said that there is no school for the girls and that the classes should become permanent. "We are very happy about this class. We want a permanent, official school," said Suraya, a student. "We are very happy. I have learned a lot of things in this class. We want schools to be built for us," said Nazia, a student. "Since I came to school, I have learned a lot of things," said Nooria, a student. A teacher told TOLONews that many residents of the area are interested in sending their girls to the classes. "All (residents) of the village want to send their children to come here and learn. Those who there is space for fit in, they come here, but those who do not fit in, they will come next year," said Nooria, a teacher. "We want schools for the female students," said Amanullah, a tribal elder. The calls for the construction of permanent schools for girls comes as the Islamic Emirate banned girls in grades 7-12 from going to school.

No change in India's position on not recognising Taliban: Foreign Ministry

KABUL (Agenices): The External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said on Thursday there had been no change in India's position on not recognizing the de facto government in Kabul; the remarks came amid the reports of an Afghan policy body asking officials to attend an online program under the ITEC initiative. At a media briefing, the spokesperson also said that the Indian side does not issue any note verbal to any entities that New Delhi does not recognize. The comments came after the beginning of a four-day online course for Afghan diplomats, including Taliban officials. The Online course was conducted by the E-ITEC from March 14 and will continue till 17 of this month with 18 Afghan participants. This was the first initiative since the Taliban retook power in Kabul. However, the MEA spokesperson said there had been no change in India's position on the Taliban regime. "These courses are also open to nationals of various countries, including

Afghanistan. Several Afghan nationals, based in India and Afghanistan, have been participating in these ITEC courses," Arindam Bagchi said. "Of course, the online courses do not involve travel to India," he said. The MEA spokeswoman stated that India's stance on the Taliban regime has not changed.

"Our position on how we see developments in Afghanistan has not changed. I do not think anything should be read into ITEC courses vis-a-vis that. We certainly would not be issuing verbal notes, which are inter-governmental notes, to entities that are not recognized," he said. India has not yet recognized the Taliban administration in Afghanistan. It has been pitching for an inclusive and representative government while insisting that Afghan soil must not be used for terrorist activities against other countries. Meanwhile, India has extended its humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan to address the current humanitarian crisis in the country.



