

## IMF confirms SL loan package

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a \$2.9 billion loan package for Sri Lanka on Monday, almost a year after the country defaulted on its foreign debt amid a deep economic crisis. The vote by the Fund's executive board — first announced by Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe — clears the way for the release of funds and kicks off a four-year program designed to shore up the Sri Lankan economy.

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ISLAMABAD: Mr. Fatih Kemal Ebiclioglu, Chairman Dawlance along with a delegation called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

# Campaign against COAS intolerable: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that the "disgusting" smear campaign of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) against Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir, at the behest of Imran Niazi, deserved the strongest condemnation.

On Twitter, the prime minister said that Imran Niazi was stooping to unprecedented lows in his desperation for power and going to the extent of damaging the country and undermining its armed forces and their leadership. The campaign against the COAS was intolerable and the continuation of a conspiracy against the national institutions, according to a PM Office press release.

The prime minister urged overseas Pakistanis to raise their voice against the "foreign-funded" campaign. He said as the dirty political game was being played through the expatriates, they should not become part of the conspiracy. He said Imran Khan was violating the constitution by dragging the institutions and their leadership into his "dirty" politics.

The prime minister also instructed the interior minister to strictly deal with those running such a smear campaign against the institutions. He also warned of strict legal action against those fanning chaos and subversion in the country. A campaign against an army chief appointed purely on merit for the first time in the country's history could only be an agenda of the anti-Pakistan elements, he added. "The whole nation stands by its institutions and is united against miscreants," the prime minister remarked.

**Govt prioritizing steps to facilitate investors, indus-**

**trialists:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said the government was taking steps on priority basis to provide all possible facilities to the investors and industrialists.

He said there were immense opportunities for investment in information and technology, industry, energy, communication and infrastructure sectors of the country. The prime minister was talking to Dawlance Chairman Fatih Kemal Ebiclioglu, who along with a delegation called on him, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

During the meeting, Minister for Board of Investment Chaudhry Salik Hussain, PM's Special Assistant Jahanzaib Khan, relevant officials and Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan Mehmet Pacaci also attended the meeting. The prime minister observed that the destruction caused by the earthquake in Türkiye during February had no precedent in the recent past, adding that they were grieved over such scale of devastation.

He said Pakistan immediately sent rescue, relief and medical teams to Türkiye and the relief goods were still being sent to the quake-hit country. The prime minister reiterated that the people of Pakistan would fully support their Turkish brothers and sisters in the difficult time as Türkiye had always stood by them in hard times.

The delegation apprised the prime minister that huge investment was being made on the Dawlance unit already functioning in Pakistan, so that energy-efficient products could be produced with the use of the latest technology. Moreover, a strategy was being mulled to transform the Dawlance production plant in

## Maryam lashes out at Imran

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz has come down hard on former premier and PTI Chairman Imran for inciting people after the law came into action on his acts of terrorism. She taunted him for delivering a lecture on peace after launching an attack on state.

In her tweet posted on Monday, Maryam wrote: "Now this terrorist has realized that the law will come into action on his terrorism, so he has started to incite (people). After launching an attack on the state, injuring the heads of dozens of policemen, torching police vehicles, setting off petrol bombs and after the recovery of trained terrorists from the Zaman Park, now he has remembered to deliver a lecture on peace!"

Pakistan into a regional export hub. After Karachi, Dawlance had also established a research and development center in the National University of Sciences and Technology in Islamabad that would serve as a liaison between academia and industry. The center would also help in capacity building, besides providing technical assistance to the engineers. The delegation further apprised that Arcelik, a Turkish household industry, had been providing internships to Pakistani students in Türkiye for the last two years which was not only preparing them for the requirements of the industry besides, a number of students were employed in that company.

## PPP rejects Sindh local govt by-polls schedule

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari Monday rejected the by-election scheduled for Sindh's local body elections, drawing criticism from the JJ which demanded the foreign minister "accept the reality".

Bilawal, while speaking at the ceremony for laying the foundation stone of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Cardiovascular Disease at Karachi's Korangi, recounted his government's efforts to upgrade healthcare facilities in Sindh.

Countering those who said that his party had done nothing for people in the province, Bilawal said: "We have made a network of hospitals across the province. This network of hospitals provides world-class healthcare free of cost." Sindh's NICVD can compete against any hospital in India, US, or UK, he said.

The PPP chairman alleged that the "health card" being offered in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) was nothing but a fraud. "In the name of the health card, people's money was being given to private insurance companies instead of hospitals." Furthermore, he said: "I appeal to a certain political party to leave behind its extremist ideologies and its politics of hate."

Speaking on the matter of by-elections in the metropolis, he said that they were supposed to take place around a year ago. "While the first phase was carried out time; however, seeing that PPP was winning the second phase, they delayed the second phase consistently, citing various excuses."

# Coalition govt flays attacks on cops, Rangers

— vows to take action against miscreants

ISLAMABAD (APP): The coalition government Monday strongly condemned attacks and torture of police and Rangers on the orders of Imran Khan and said strong action would be taken against those who had violated the law. The prime minister chaired the important meeting of the allied parties, which continued at the Prime Minister House for six hours. The leaders, in a joint statement, said the police and Rangers, who came under attack, were only implementing the court orders.

During the meeting, the overall economic, political and internal, external situation of the country and peace and security were reviewed in detail. The participants were briefed in detail about the economy, revival of the IMF Programme and measures taken by the prime minister for relief to the public. The relief measures included farmers' package, supply of free flour during Ramazan to poor families, scheme to provide special relief of Rs 50 in the price of petrol to the low wage and low income people, special CSS examination for youth across the country, promotion of solar energy, interest free and

inexpensive loans for youth and rehabilitation of flood affectees and other programmes. The attendees appreciated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for revival of the economy and the IMF programme and for providing maximum relief to the people despite difficult economic conditions and expressed complete confidence in his leadership.

They said that it was matter of grave concern that violent and trained miscreants comprising persons belonging to banned organizations and carrying petrol bombs, sticks, catapults and weapons attacked officers and personnel of state institutions. This behaviour in no way was constitutional, legal, democratic and political, they said adding taking up arms against state, targeting of officers and jawans, shooting at them, burning of vehicles, besieging the court premises and rioting, throwing of police vehicles in canals and stopping and torturing policemen who were on duty was an extreme of lawlessness, which nobody state could tolerate.

The meeting expressed solidarity with officers and Jawans of state institutions and lauded their sense of duty and

declared that no leniency would be shown and strict action according to law would be taken against those elements who broke the law. "This is enmity against state which cannot be tolerated," they said.

It was stated that the whole nation saw that PTI was not a political party but was a gang of militants trained by banned organizations and all evidence and proofs were available about it, so it was decided that action would be taken according to the law. The leaders decided to call a joint session of the Parliament on Wednesday, March 22. During the joint sitting important decisions would be taken to ensure writ of the state. The participants severely condemned the campaign on social media and outside the country against institutions of the country especially against the army chief. They said that Pakistanis living abroad should not become part of this nefarious agenda. The elements who ran a dirty campaign against the martyrs of Lasbela, were sitting abroad and were running a condemnable campaign on social media and by holding demonstrations in different parts of the country.

# KP governor proposes polls across country on same day

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Governor Haji Ghulam Ali on Monday proposed the political parties to mull over conducting elections across the country on the same day.

While talking to the journalists in Peshawar on Monday, KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali said that he held a meeting with the chief secretary and Inspector General (IG) KP regarding the elections. He added that he will also meet the chief election commissioner (CEC) on Tuesday or Wednesday.

He vowed that they will pave way for organising fair and free elections in light of the decision of the Supreme Court (SC). Governor Ali urged the political parties to mull over the option of conducting elections across the country on the same day. He also asked the political parties to bring down the political temperature by promoting tolerance, traditions and politeness. He said that the election commissioner will announce the date of the polls as per the SC's order. He expressed hopes to resolve the issues related

to the elections with consensus.

The governor said that Punjab province is going through political turmoil, whereas, the law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is not good. He added that political tension on the basis of an arrest warrant was not good for the country. He added that elections will ascertain the popularity level of every political leader. He said that the provincial government conditionally agreed on conducting the polls. To a question, he replied that his ties with the chief minister are good and they met on multiple occasions.

Earlier in the month, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja said on Tuesday that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is bound to follow Supreme Court's (SC) orders to hold Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) elections.

The CEC said that security concerns were also shown in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that Article 218 mentions the organisation of peaceful and transparent elections. It is necessary to hold elections in a peaceful

## Contempt plea against KP governor filed

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Speaker Mushtaq Ghani has filed a contempt of court petition against KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali in the Supreme Court on Monday.

It was prayed in the petition that despite apex court's orders the governor has failed to give a date for holding general elections in the province. Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has also been made respondent in the case. Earlier, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has decided to file a contempt petition against Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governor in the Supreme Court for not obeying the court orders regarding holding elections in the province.

environment, he added.

"The ECP is bound to follow SC orders for holding elections for both provincial assemblies. On the occasion of the National Assembly (NA) polls, elected governments will exist in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa."

## NAB summons Imran, wife

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has summoned PTI Chairman Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi to appear before its investigation team on Tuesday (March 21) in connection with Toshakhana case. This was the second call-up notice to the former prime minister who opted to ignore the first one.

Imran Khan has been asked to appear before the investigation team in the NAB Rawalpindi office. A NAB team visited Imran Khan's residence in Zaman Park of Lahore on Monday to serve the call-up notice on Bushra Bibi. The former first lady has been summoned by the NAB to appear before it on March 21 in connection with Toshakhana case.

Another NAB team led by Head Constable Muhammad Shafi visited Zaman Park to deliver court summons in connection with foreign funding case.

The NAB team earlier contacted PTI leadership for delivery of notice for hearing of the case in the accountability court on March 21. The NAB kept waiting for some time but no PTI leader came to receive the notice which was later accepted by the house servants.

## Per litre petrol subsidy enhanced to 100: Malik

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Minister of State for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik said on Monday that on the directions of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, subsidy in petrol prices, under the petrol relief scheme, had been enhanced to Rs 100 from Rs 50 for the poor on every litre of petrol.

Addressing a press conference at Model Town, he said the prime minister had ordered for implementing the petrol relief scheme within six weeks, adding that under the relief scheme, low income people, who have motorcycles, 800cc cars or other small vehicles would be given relief to cope with high fuel prices. He said that no additional subsidy would be given from the government exchequer, as under the petrol relief scheme, those who could afford the petrol or upper class would be charged higher prices in per litre petrol and with that amount, the poor would be given relief of Rs 100 per litre of petrol, he added.

The minister said that the work to finalise a comprehensive mechanism of registration system, allocation of petrol quota or others to implement the relief package was in progress, adding that Rs 100 relief in 21 litres of petrol would be allowed to motorcyclists in a month. He said the relief package would continue as the PML-N leadership believed in serving masses, adding that the government announced biggest

Ramazan relief package for the deserving people to make them heave a sigh of relief.

The minister said that on the directions of the prime minister, similar relief scheme had also been introduced in gas sector from January 1, 2023 through which different rates had been implemented for the poor and those who could afford, in order to provide relief to the poor segment of society. The rich people would pay four times higher bill in gas tariff compared to the poor, he explained.

Dr Musadik Malik said the government, despite high inflation in international markets, was making sincere efforts to provide relief to the lower middle class, saying that a mechanism to ensure transparency in petrol relief package would be finalised in six weeks. He said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, while sitting in Zaman Park, considered himself above the law and Constitution, as he did not care for any court warrants, police or anything else, adding that former premier violated or resisted the court orders with the help of a violent mob and challenged the state writ.

Responding to a question, the minister said the alleged audio leak of former chief justice of Pakistan, in which he was apparently engaged in a conspiracy against PML-N leader Maryam Nawaz, should be investigated and if found real, cases should be registered against the accused.

**28 شعبان للعظم**  
**21 مارچ 2023**  
**سے باقاعدہ آغاز**

**وزیراعظم**  
**رمضان ریلیف**  
**پیکج 2023**

**برپا**  
**محبت**  
**برافائدہ**

**بنیادی اشیائے ضروریہ**  
**کی قیمتوں میں**  
**خصوصی کمی**

**19**

BISP صارفین اپنا CNIC نمبر (5566) پر بھیج کر OTP (ون ٹائم پاس ورڈ) حاصل کریں

**دیگر صارفین کیلئے**

**گھی**  
490 روپے  
کلو

**چینی**  
91 روپے  
کلو

**آٹا**  
10 فی کلو  
648 روپے

**BISP رجسٹرڈ صارفین کیلئے**

**گھی**  
300 روپے  
کلو

**چینی**  
70 روپے  
کلو

**آٹا**  
10 فی کلو  
400 روپے

**دودھ**  
30 روپے  
کلو

**جائے**  
100 روپے  
کلو

**دالیں**  
20 روپے  
کلو

**کوننگ آئل**  
25 روپے  
کلو

**چاول**  
20 روپے  
کلو

**بیسن**  
50 روپے  
کلو

**کچھور**  
50 روپے  
کلو

**مشروبات**  
30 روپے  
کلو

**مسالہ جات**  
10 روپے  
کلو

**اس کے علاوہ**  
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**پر خصوصی رعایت**

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8. Serial No	Name of work Executed During Last Two Years & in hand	Amount of Work (Rs)	Time Allowed in Months	Date of Commencement	Date of Completion	Percentage Progress of Works in Hand	Department performance Report on each work by E-in-C
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## Free flour distribution scheme: KP govt made special arrangements

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The caretaker government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has made special arrangements for the free flour distribution scheme in Khyber and other merged districts as well as in other parts of the province. Henceforth, in the next couple of days, distribution of free flour would be started to one lakh 68 thousand poor families in the three tehsils of Khyber, Bara, Jamrud and Landi Kotal under Benazir Income Support Program (BISP). It would be given at the rate of three bags per poor family under the supervision of the district and tehsil administration.

This was disclosed by the caretaker Minister for Labour and Excise Haji

Manzoor Khan Afridi and Minister for Food Haji Fazal Elahi in a meeting with a 80 members delegation of tribal elite of Khyber district at Civil Secretariat Peshawar.

Director Food and other officials of the KP Food Department were also present on the occasion.

The delegation led by Tehsil Chairman Mufti Muhammad Kafeel welcomed the free flour package in the holy month of Ramadan and praised the provincial government for this generous initiative.

However, the participants of the delegation also informed them of their concerns in flour distribution process.

The issues included non availability of Benazir cards with tribals in the

merged districts, delay in the clearance of beneficiaries due to lack of internet facilities, women not leaving homes due to tribal tradition and the possibility of mismanagement.

Upon this, both the provincial ministers explained that there is no need for women to leave their homes, but they can send any of their male heirs for receiving the free flour.

Similarly, distribution of flour will be completely transparent under Benezer Income Program, they added.

The ministers further said that despite the lack of resources, the provincial government is spending Rs 19 billion on this package in just one month. Regarding the poor mustahiqeen (beneficiaries)

outside the Benazir Income Program, they explained that in this regard, the district administration has also been instructed to register more beneficiaries as well so that more poor tribal families could benefit from the incentives of this BISP scheme later too.

Minister Excise Haji Manzoor Afridi further assured that the tribals could inform him of any of their problems in this regard and he would continue to serve them round the clock during Ramadanul Mubarak.

On this occasion, collective prayers were also offered for the progress and prosperity of the nation and country as well as the success of this poor friendly scheme.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker provincial minister Abdul Haleem presiding over 42th Provincial Seed Council meeting organized by Directorate General of Agricultural Research.

### Police obtains bribe in flour's transportation Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has ordered Inspector General of Police (IGP) and district administration to remove hurdles in transportation of flour from Punjab to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while ordered to submit progress report on next hearing, on Monday.

During hearing Flour Dealers Association counsel Ibrar-ul-Haq advocate argued that the petitioners are facing several problems during transportation from Punjab to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including provincial police obtaining bribe at several check-posts on the route.

The counsel added that the dealers are also facing problems in provision of subsidized flour in different areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including provincial metropolis Peshawar.

The divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice PHC Justice Qaiser Rashid and Justice Ijaz Anwar ordered district administration and police to sit with flour's dealers as well as with bread-maker association for taking concrete steps in this regard.

The divisional bench ordered IGP and district administration to submit progress report before 3rd May while adjourned further hearing.

### VJF scheduled election on 22nd March F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Video Journalist Forum (VJF) has scheduled election on 22nd March while president and general secretary has been elected unanimously, on Monday.

The unopposed elected cabinet members including Kashan Arshad as president, Shahzad Kazmi as general secretary, vice president Hazrat Bilal, Joint Secretary Ali Abbas and Asad Abid as finance secretary of VJF.

The executive committee comprising of Riaz Shahid, Hassan, Faisal, Nasir Bangash and Sardar Yousafzai of VJF.

### KCD celebrates Oral Health Day F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber College of Dentistry has commemorated World Oral Health Day 2023 on Monday. Chairman Board of Governance, Prof. Dr. Nadeem Khawar graced the event as the Chief Guest.

In his address, Chairman BOG appreciated Khyber College of Dentistry and expressed his admiration for the exceptional oral healthcare services provided to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and also for empowering people with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to secure good oral health and emphasize taking care of teeth and gums essential for a healthy smile and overall well-being.

Dean Khyber College of Dentistry, Prof. Dr. Syed Nasir Shah Acknowledged the college's role and efforts in providing the best oral healthcare services to the community.

## App based free-flour distribution to ensure transparency

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Imdadullah Bosal on Monday directed concerned authorities to deliver benefits of the provincial government's Ramzan relief package to deserving people. He gave the instruction while presiding over a high-level meeting on free flour to poor people during Ramzan.

Relevant administrative secretaries, commissioners, deputy commissioners, officials of Benazir Income Support Program and Utility Stores Corporation participated in the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, the Chief Secretary said administration of all districts should provide adequate facilities and seating arrangements to those who come to get flour, especially senior citizens and

women.

The Chief Secretary said that by using technology in the process of distribution of flour, vulnerable and poor people will be able to get relief packages with ease in a transparent manner.

The meeting was apprised that free flour will be distributed to more than 5.7 million households of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa registered with BISP. In total, more than 36.8 million people will benefit from the relief package, which is 91% of the total population of the province. Under the package, each deserving registered household will one time receive three flour bags of 10 kg. The provincial government requires 247,500 metric tonnes of wheat for the package, for which a subsidy of Rs 19.77 billion will be given. For distribution of flour, more than 7600 sales points

will be established, out of which 6000 points will be established by the food department and district administrations while 1600 sales points will be set up by the Utility Stores Corporation.

It was further informed that the Food Department has issued SOPs for the Ramzan package and has set up a 24/7 operational control room in the food directorate. A dashboard will be set up in the Chief Secretary's office for effective monitoring of the scheme. Similarly, trials of distribution of flour through the app have also been successfully conducted in Peshawar. The meeting was told that eligible families who are not registered with BISP can go to the nearest office for registration and become entitled to the relief package within 24 hours.

## Pakistan Sports Festival 2023 concluded

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: With the collaboration of district administrations and Frontier Corps North, Pakistan Sports Festival 2023, which started on February 1st concluded with great enthusiasm in Dir, Chitral, Bajaur, Mohmand & Khyber. The closing ceremonies were held in respective districts with Inspector General Frontier Corps North Major General Noor Wali Khan as the chief guest at the Khyber district's closing ceremony.

The players marched past, while children performed various tableaux and gymnastics. Local artists also performed traditional Khattak, Mehsud, and Chitrali dances and band displayed different traditional songs.

The festival had a total of 971 teams and 9375 players from various schools, madrasas and colleges participating in various sports activities included cricket, football, hockey, volleyball, table tennis, athletics, badminton, cycling and various snow sports activities. For the first time cricket & wheelchair matches for special differently persons were also held during

Pakistan Sports Festival. At the closing ceremony, IGFC North gave away prizes and trophies to the best teams and players that was attended by a large number of youth, elders, senior civil & military officials and other guests.

The festival has been a great success in promoting sportsmanship and healthy competition among the youth. The festival has not only promoted sports but also helped in building a sense of unity and camaraderie among the participants from different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## Maria gets 2nd Bint-e-Hawa achievement awards

PESHAWAR (APP): Captain of the Pakistani Women's Football team Maria Jamila Khan received Bint-e-Hawa achievement awards a joint venture of Bank of Khyber and Bint-e-Hawa. Chief Organizer Bint-e-Hawa Achievement Award Alam Zeb handed over the Award to her on Monday.

Maria Jamila Khan appreciated and showed her gratitude for the acknowledgment from Bint-e-Hawa organizers.

Maria Jamila Khan's dedication to the Pakistani women's football team is commendable and it's wonderful to see her being appreciated for her efforts.

Maria Jamila Khan is a well-known and brilliant footballer leading the Pakistan Women's team from the front in the UAE football tournament. She had also been declared the best player of the tournament. Maria Jamila Khan belongs to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and granddaughter of Hashim Khan the all-time great squash player.

It is worth mentioning here that the 2nd Bint-e-Hawa Achievements Awards took place in Peshawar on 8th March 2023 but she

did not join the ceremony.

Bint-e-Hawa Achievements Awards represented and recognized dynamic ladies of our entire society who have the ability to face the challenges of society and tackle them with their expertise, skills, and experiences and make a difference in today's male-dominant culture.

They had nominated 80 women from different categories for awards who have contributed to women's empowerment and were capable of contributing towards the betterment of women's well-being.

## Resolving businessmen issues among top priorities

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industry, Trade, Technical Education and Revenue Adnan Jalil on Monday said that solving the problems of the business community of the province is among the top priorities.

He expressed these views in a meeting with Vice President Regional office Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Umar Masoodur Rahman.

The caretaker minister of industry, trade, technical education and revenue Adnan Jalil assured that all the problems of the business community throughout the province will be solved on priority basis.

He said that I belong to the business community and understand their problems well. Our effort is to put the business community on the path of development and all possible steps will be taken for their development and prosperity.

On this occasion, Umar Masoodur Rahman from the business community in his address said that the Caretaker Minister Adnan Jalil, who belongs to our business community, is committed to solve the problems of the business community.

He expressed his satisfaction by appreciating the actions and efforts of Muhammad Adnan Jalil for the business community. Umar Masoodur Rahman said that Minister Adnan Jalil, who is also member of FPCC, is taking steps under an integrated strategy for the development of the business community.

Caretaker Minister Adnan Jalil has maintained constant contact with the business community of the entire province and is always engaged in serving them. Vice President Umar Masoodur Rahman added that since Adnan Jalil took over oath as caretaker minister, he has kept the business community engaged and are working day and night to solve their problems.

He reiterated this on behalf of all the business community and the Chamber of Commerce across the province and said that all the business community of the province is standing with the Caretaker Minister.

On this occasion, Umar Masoodur Rahman said that the business community of the province hopes that the problems faced by the business community from KPEZMC will be solved by the caretaker Minister Adnan Jalil as soon as possible.

He reiterated this on behalf of all the business community and the Chamber of Commerce across the province and said that all the business community of the province is standing with the Caretaker Minister.



PESHAWAR: Elders of Mohmand district holds placards during a protest rally. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

## Women input must for achievement of national uplift dream: Mayor

PESHAWAR (APP): City Mayor Mardan, Himayatullah Mayor advocate has said that the dream of national development could not be achieved without practical and effective participation of women in the political process of the country.

Addressing a district public assembly organized under the auspices of the Jazba Programme of the South Asia Partnership Pakistan in Town Municipal Administration (TMA) Hall on Monday, he said that it is our duty to agree with all political parties to ensure their due share and make all possible efforts for the empowerment of women.

Besides, the Local

Resource Person of the Jazba Programme Nusrat Ara, former ANP MPA Shahid Waheed, Aliya Nawab (PTI), Irfan Mohmand (PPP), Fakhruzzaman Tanoli (PML-N), social workers Mohammad Shahid Khan, Hassan Ehsas and others also attended the function. Furthermore, women leaders, councilors, women voter network, youth group and members of the Jazba Forum also participated.

On this occasion, awards were also distributed among the women poets while Local Resource Person of Jazba Programme Nusrat Ara, Rehana Shakeel and Nazreen Jan presented the charter of demand and called for ensuring of 33% representation of women in national, provincial and local governments and bounding political parties to issues 5% elections tickets to women for national, provincial assemblies and local councils.

Furthermore, the charter of demand also includes equal partnership of women in decision making for the operation of local government and appropriate and practical steps for guaranteeing women participation.

The local resource person of Jazba Programme, Nusrat Ara said that efforts are being made in various districts to ensure the participation of women in the political process and creating awareness in this regard is continued.

The purpose of the programme, she said, is guaranteeing gender equilibrium, awareness about women rights and promotion of the useful role of Pakistan in the national political process.

Other speakers called for the utilization of all available resources for the welfare and women empowerment and for making joint efforts for effective participation of women in the economic and political process.

The speakers also stressed special focus on the legislation for the protection of the rights of constitutional rights. They also pinpointed that the number of women in major offices in the political parties is also nominal.

former principals of KIMS Prof. Dr. Tariq Mufti, Prof. Dr. Salim Khattak, Prof. Dr. Lal Mohammad Khattak, present Principal Prof. Dr. Mussarrat Jabeen, former Principal of KIDS Prof. Dr. Aziz Marjan, present Principal Prof. Dr. Fahim Ullah, a large number of faculty and students were also present at the occasion.

## Young doctors to be equipped with modern medical skills: VC KMU

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Medical University Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq on Monday said that young doctors are the center of our hopes and it is our mission to equip them with modern medical sciences and skills as well as high medical ethics.

The shifting of KIMS and KIDS to the new buildings

will not only solve all the problems that were hindering their all-around development, but it will also help make them an ideal post-graduate education and research center for the southern districts. He expressed these views as chief guest at the white coat ceremony organized by the KMU-Institute of Medical Sciences, KIMS, and the KMU-Institute of Dental Sciences, KIDS, for the first-year students and the joint inauguration of the new buildings of the two colleges.

Former VC Prof. Dr. Muhammad Hafiz Ullah, Registrar Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saleem Gandapur, Deputy Commissioner Kohat Azmat Ullah Wazir,

former principals of KIMS Prof. Dr. Tariq Mufti, Prof. Dr. Salim Khattak, Prof. Dr. Lal Mohammad Khattak, present Principal Prof. Dr. Mussarrat Jabeen, former Principal of KIDS Prof. Dr. Aziz Marjan, present Principal Prof. Dr. Fahim Ullah, a large number of faculty and students were also present at the occasion.

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PESHAWAR: People buying spices in Peepal Mandi for upcoming month of Ramazan.





## In brief

### Provision of rights sought F.P. Report

BARA: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Enmir Sirajul Haq has said that it is mandatory for the state to ensure all basic rights to the citizens of the country. He asked for conducting elections in the entire country to let the people elect their own honest representatives. The conflicts among the ruling parties were for their own vested interests rather than to raise voice for the people's privileges. He expressed the views while addressing to a "Aman Jalsa" (peace gathering) held here at Minar Masjid, subdivision Bara, district Khyber. Sirajul Haq said beside the fact that the tribesmen had been rendered sacrifices for the sake of the country for the last seven decades although they had been subjected to insecurity, mal-administration, unemployment and they had been deprived of the basic human rights. "Due to the decaying security condition no one is safe in their own houses, added imposition of Islamic administrative system is the lonely remedy of the resolution of problems of the masses," he opined. He said that because of incompetent rulers, the fate of the people was decided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and price hiking and unemployment broke previous records in the country.

### Robbers loot Rs3.7m in Swabi F.P. Report

SWAIB: Two unidentified robbers riding a motorbike on Monday looted Rs 3.7 million from a citizen near a private bank in Topi Bazaar of Swabi district. According to police, the owner of an Easypaisa and mobile phones shop after withdrawing the amount from the bank when came out of the bank, two robbers held him at gunpoint and snatched Rs 3.7 million from him. Police said, on showing resistance, the robbers also fired at the victim however he remained unhurt. The robbers after looting the money escaped the area. The Topi police have started an investigation and search operation to arrest the escaped robbers.

### Nurzai tribe hold protest

QUETTA (PPI): Nurzai tribe staged a protest sit-in at Shaheed Sumbal Chowk near red zone area of the provincial capital by placing coffin, demanding the authorities to arrest perpetrators involved in killing Habibullah Nurzai and injuring his four friends in a firing incident at Killa Abdullah area of Balochistan province. Protest sit-in, which continued for seven hours, was called off after Babar Yousafzai, Spokesperson for Chief Minister Balochistan, authorities of district administration and police assured the protesters that perpetrators of the incident would be apprehended. According to detail, protest sit-in was staged by the tribesmen of Nurzai tribe by placing coffin on Shaheed Sumbal Chowk near red zone area of Quetta, demanding the authorities to arrest perpetrators involved in killing Habibullah Nurzai and injuring his four friends. The protest sit-in, which continued for seven hours, was called off after Babar Yousafzai, spokesperson for Chief Minister Balochistan, authorities of district administration and police assured the protesters that perpetrators of the crime would be apprehended. It is pertinent to mention that a one person namely Habibullah Nurzai was killed and four others namely Attaullah son of Saadullah, Ashraf Nurzai, Kaleemullah Nurzai and Fazal Din Kakar son of Siraj-id-Din Kakar sustained injuries after the vehicle they were travelling was sprayed by unidentified armed men in Killa Abdullah area of the province.

# Govt promoting renewable energy sources: Khurram

## F.P. Report

MANSHERA: Federal Minister for Power, Khurram Dastgir Khan here Monday said the federal government was promoting renewable and environmentally friendly energy sources for sustainable economic development and prosperity of people.

He said all renewable energy sources including wind, hydropower, coal, solar and bioenergy were being promoted in order to make Pakistan self-sufficient in electricity for speedy economic and agriculture growth and sustainable development inevitable for people's prosperity.

Addressing a function after inauguration of 220/765KV grid station at Swan Maira here, which would be constructed with an estimated of Rs24 billion in one year, the Minister said the mega project would significantly help improve power voltage and provide uninterrupted power supply to agriculture, industrial and domestic consumers.

He said 1,088 kanal land has been acquired for the grid station, adding it was the part of the mega energy infrastructure development project worth Rs132 billion under which transmission lines between Dasu Kohistan-Manshera and Islamabad-Manshera would be laid through NTDC.

Khurram Dastgir said the World Bank would financially assist in the execution of these mega projects in the Hazara division. He said these projects would generate many job opportunities for local people and professionals including engineers and technicians of Manshera.

The Federal Minister said that 132 KV grid stations at Bafa, Bakaryal, Ghari Habibullah and remaining selected areas of Manshera district would also be constructed to improve voltage and curb load shedding. He directed Managing Director NTDC to prepare feasibility studies of these grid stations at earliest so that practical work could be started on it. He said PMLN has the credit to establish Hazara Power Electricity Supply Company to address energy issues locally and expedite

pace of development here.

Khurram Dastgir said the government strongly believed in uniformed development of the country and has started scores of energy projects in different cities including Faisalabad and Thar to facilitate people. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, he said work on halted energy projects have been restarted, adding the Prime Minister would shortly visit Thar for inauguration of 2,000MW coal electricity generated projects there.

"Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had connected people of all provinces of Pakistan through motorways and Hazara motorway was an example of it," he said, adding. He said people of Pakistan would have to decide that whether they would vote for those who constructed a network of motorways, made Pakistan an atomic power and completed record development projects in the shape of great leaders Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif or those who deceived masses through hollow slogans of change and continued confrontation lies based politics in the shape of Imran Khan. He said that PMLN was constructing energy projects to abolish load shedding while our opponent group was involved in carrying out attacks on police with petrol bombs, ransacking public properties in Lahore and halting development works.

The Federal Minister said people of KP would reject PTI in upcoming elections after Imran Khan, known for lies based politics, himself negated his own foreign conspiracy narrative drama. Kurram Dastgir said people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were fed up with the politics of hollow slogans in last ten years rule of PTI and would vote PMLN for speedy progress and development of the provinces besides resolution of their issues. He said that the PML N government was the only party that could take the country out of existing challenges and put it on the road to progress and development besides addressing the problems of KP people.

# Unique education system launched at Buner

## F.P. Report

BUNER: A unique education system has been launched at Agarai area of Mandanr tehsil, district Buner in which students should learnt both spiritual and scientific knowledge under one floor at elementary level to flourish them as citizen of global village.

During inaugural ceremony, founder of the Subhan International System Mufti Subhan Ullah said that aim of the institute to equip students of deprived segments of society with modern knowledge and spiritual teachings. He claimed that one batch of English language has been graduated from the institution while

another batch is learning their syllabus.

The founder argued that more than 300 students are enrolled in the institute in religious degrees while other hundreds are already graduated and added that Subhan International School System should eliminate discrimination among education system in the premises. He said that the organization had already distributed 1600 winter packages among students of various madrassahs in Mandanr tehsil while committed to expend their welfare activities to facilitate marginalized segments of society.

Mufti Subhan Ullah said that Subhan International School System will focus

on primary and elementary educations to equip students with both spiritual and scientific knowledge. He added that elementary and primary students should be able to obtain admission most prestigious institutions across the country.

However, Hafiz Saad Principal of Subhan International School System said that the institute has been established to provide quality education at the rural areas of Buner. Moreover, the ribbon-breaking ceremony has offered by special person with disability to encourage students for presences at the classes and make emotional attachment with education.



JAMSHORO: Participants are holding awareness walk in connection with World Oral Health Day.

# GHA Khyber observes boycott from services at DHQ

## F.P. Report

KHYBER: Doctors and paramedical staff of District Headquarter Hospital (DHQ) Landi Kotal under the banner of Grand Health Alliance (GHA) refused to pay them that was injustice to them.

They blamed that the health center lacked services like facilities for emergency heart attack and free medicines for the patients but the MS had turned blinds eyes towards it. They demanded to set up a frame shop for local purchase and asked the health high-up to conduct an enquiry against the allegedly corruption in the hospital fund.

The protesters threatened that if their demands were not addressed then

they would also give up their duties in OPDs. When the MS Dr Jamshed Sherani was asked for his version on the matter he said that on the written direction of the health department, payment of shares of paramedical crew in the health center was halted.

The hospital was functioning in routine and departmental action would be taken against those staff who boycotted their duties, he added. He vowed that efforts were under process to provide quality treatment facilities to the locals at their door steps. Due to closing of the lab, X-rays and ultrasound in the hospital, the patients were compelled to avail the facility outside of the health center.

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HYDERABAD: Adviser to Chief Minister Sindh for Agriculture Manzoor Hussain Wassan inaugurating e-balloting ceremony.

## Solution to all problems in provincial autonomy F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Provincial chairman Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao has said that solution to all problems of the province is in provincial autonomy and called for implementation of the 18th Constitutional Amendment in letter and spirit and taking solid steps to redress deprivations of the provinces and people.

He expressed these views while addressing a joining ceremony at Mirza Dher, district Charsadda on Monday. On this occasion, the office bearers and workers of of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) including Haider Ali, Faqir Mama, Baharullah, Muslimur-Rehman, Naseer, Gul Faraz, Yasir, Daud, Suleman, Ijaz, Yasin, Yousaf Gul, Jan Sher, Shakeel, Nihar, Shahid Khan and Shehzad announced joining QWP along with their families and associates.

Criticizing the former PTI government, he said that due to incompetence of the chairman PTI Imran Khan, other countries of the region like Bangladesh also left our country far behind in economic development.

He said that due to the policies of the former PTI led government, the country is in the grip of price-hike and unemployment and people are facing difficulties in earning two meals for their families. He urged the government to take steps for arresting price-hikes and abolition of hoarding and profiteering to provide relief to the people.

## Charity organization gets Rs67m donations F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Local philanthropists and social activists donated Rs 67.3 million as cash to the Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF), a welfare organization, during a donors' conference held at a wedding hall at Timergara here the other day. Social and political activists, area elders and traders attended the conference. The event was addressed by the AKF provincial president Khalid Wiqas, central assistant general secretary Fazal Mahmood, district president Hafeezullah Khaksar, former MPA Izazul Mulk Afkari, president Dir Chamber of Commerce and Industries Mian Noor Alam, president Anjuman Tajirran Timergara Haji Anwarud Din and others. The speakers lauded the AKF services for the oppressed, orphans and widows across the country. They said that it was the Al-Khidmat Foundation which was trusted for generous donations. The AKF central representative Fazal Mahmood while sharing his experiences of his visit to Turkiya to take part in post-earthquake rescue and relief activities, said the people of that country helped each other in need.

# LG members seek fair distribution of flour

## F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Local Government (LG) councilors of thirty-one village councils and five neighborhood councils demanded of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) to ensure fair distribution of quota flour on subsidies price in subdivision Landi Kotal, district Khyber. It is to be mentioned here that the administration granted quota to eleven contractors who assigned the duty to distribute flour.

Last Friday, on public complaints, the councilors raided at the single shop of the distributors and halted the division process due to allegedly embezzlement and since the day, supply of quota flour had been suspended to Landi Kotal that was equal to deprive the

poor segments of the tribal society of their right, locals said.

Haji Sher, VC Chairman said that since long allegedly dishonesty of the government quota flour contractors was noticed by the public although because of lack of evidence they could not adopt any concrete steps to halt it.

On the other hand they had lodged their grievance in the office of Assistant Commissioner, Landi Kotal and other concerned officials but to in avail. He blamed that out of a total of 3243 bays (10 KG) of flour per day quota, they only sold 1200 bays at subsidized price and the rest were put on the open market.

Tribesmen also expressed reservation over the giving way of flour

quota to some of the non-locals and said it was right of the local traders who were well aware of the deserving ones in the area. They demanded an audit of the last five months distribution process of the contractors and asked for exemplary punishment for those who got involved in misuse.

On the other hand, the contractors rejected the allegation leveled against them and said they fairly carried out the division procedure and were ready for accountability. For the last five days as a protest they had stopped supply of the subsidized flour to the Landi Kotal. When the Deputy Commissioner, Khyber Abdu-Nasir was contacted for his comments on the issue he did not reply till filing the report.

# District, tehsil bar associations elect cabinet

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The annual elections for the district and sub divisional bar associations in Lower Dir were completed for the year 2023-24. Advocate Kifayatullah Bukhari of the Islamic Lawyers Forum was elected as president of the district bar Timergara for the year 2023-24 who bagged 98 votes compared to his rival Jehan Bahadar of the Grand Alliance Lawyers (GAL) who bagged 96 votes.

The ANP, PPP, PTI, JUI-F and PML-N affiliated lawyers had formed the Grand Alliance Lawyers. The district bar annual election was supervised by a senior lawyer advocate Ziaul Haq. Advocate Muhammad Yar of the Grand Alliance Lawyers bagged 109 votes and elected as vice president, Ajman Nawab of the GAL was elected as general secretary who got 103 votes. Advocate Imdadullah of the

GAL with 108 votes was elected as joint secretary and advocate Khurshid Ali of the Islamic Lawyers Forum was elected as finance secretary who got 111 votes while Junaid Khan of the GAL was elected as librarian who bagged 96 votes and Muhammad Yousaf as member executive council.

Moreover, Advocate Nagin Khan of the Malgari Wakilan was elected as president unopposed and Mian Amjad Ali of the Insaf Lawyers as general secretary of the Samarbagh sub divisional bar for 2023-24. The bar election was supervised by advocate Muhibullah at Samarbagh here on Saturday. Wiqas Faisal of the Malgari Wakilan was elected as finance secretary and Habibur Rahim as member of executive council.

The newly elected Sub-Divisional Bar President Nagin Khan thanked all the

members and said that the trust shown by the lawyers would not hurt the trust of the lawyers and he would continue to fight for the rights of lawyers.

Meanwhile advocate Wajid Khan was elected as president and Jaidar Khan as general secretary of the Chakdara sub divisional bar for the next term. The election held at Chakdara bar, was supervised by advocate Ifitikhar Khan Advocate, in which a total of 75 members voted. According to the results Wajid Khan of the district lawyers' forum was elected as president while Grand Alliance Lawyers grabbed the rest of the slots. The Alliance's candidate Muhammad Ifitikhar was elected as vice president, Jaidar Khan as general secretary, Muqadar Khan as joint secretary, Ihsanullah Khan as finance secretary and Zeeshanudin Din as librarian for the year 2023-24.

# 104th meeting of ASRB held



## F.P. Report

KOHAT: The 104th meeting of the Advance Studies & Research Board (ASRB) was held on March 17, 2023 under the convener-ship of Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan, the Vice Chancellor

of Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST). A total of 33 cases were on the main agenda, where 12 cases were on the Supplementary agenda.

The board approved 05 PhD summary cases and 5 PhD synopsis. However,

01 PHD synopsis was referred back. In addition, the board approved a total of 24 synopsis for M.Phil/MS and 02 synopsis were referred back. The board also granted one semester extension in two M.Phil/MS cases.

# Students to be equip with education

## Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Chief Executive Officer Education Hafizabad Wazir Ahmad Agha said that no any nation can survive without promoting education and teachers plays vital role in progress and prosperity of the nations

that is why, cultured nations accorded due respect to their teachers.

He expressed these views while addressing farewell party hoisted in honour of teacher Muhammad Ashraf Mehar who was retired from service. CEO Wazir Ahmad Agha stressed the need of

focus on technical and science education to combat different challenges confronting by the nation.

He also called upon teachers and head teachers to ensure cleanliness in the schools and improve education quality to come up on the expectations of the nation.





## Tourists hoping to see Arizona falls forced out by flooding

PHOENIX (AP): Shannon Castellano and Travis Methvin should have spent this weekend seeing world-famous waterfalls on the Havasupai Tribe Reservation in northern Arizona. Instead, the two friends from San Diego spent along with 40 other hikers camped out on a helipad. But sleep was elusive because tribal members warned that an emergency services helicopter could potentially land anytime during the night.

"Yeah, so we didn't really sleep," Castellano said while driving to a hotel in Sedona. "I just kept one eye open really and one ear open ... You just do not expect any of that to happen. So, I think I'm still in shock that I'm not even there right now." Tourists hoping to reach the breathtaking waterfalls on the reservation instead went through harrowing flood evacuations. The official Havasupai Tribe Tourism Facebook page reported that flooding had washed away a bridge to the campground. An unknown number of campers were evacuated to Supai Village, with some being rescued by helicopter.

The campground is in a lower-lying area than the village of Supai. Some hikers had to camp in the village. Others who weren't able to get to the village because of high water were forced to camp overnight on a trail. But floodwaters were starting to recede, according to the tribe's Facebook post. Visitors with the proper permits will be allowed to hike to the village and campground. They will be met with tribal guides, who will help them navigate around creek waters on a back trail to get to the campground. Tourists will not be permitted to take pictures. The back trail goes past sites considered sacred by the tribe.

Meanwhile, the tribe said in its statement that it has "all hands on deck" to build a temporary bridge to the campground. Abbie Fink, a spokesperson for the tribe, referred to the tribe's Facebook page when reached for comment. Methvin

and Castellano decided to leave by helicopter rather than navigate muddy trails with a guide. Despite losing money on a pre-paid, three-day stay, Methvin says they can still try to salvage their trip. Having only received permits last month, he feels especially sad for hikers they met with reservations from 2020. "They waited three years to get there," Methvin said. "At least we have the ability to go do something else versus having that whole weekend ruined. It sucks, but it's making lemonade for us."

From Supai to Sedona, several areas of northern Arizona have been slammed this week by storms. The resulting snow combined with snowmelt at higher elevations has wreaked havoc on highways, access roads and even city streets. The flooding of the Havasupai campground comes as the tribe reopened access last month to its reservation and various majestic blue-green waterfalls - for the first time since March 2020. The tribe opted to close to protect its members from the coronavirus. Officials then decided to extend the closure through last year's tourism season. At the beginning of this year, President Joe Biden approved a disaster declaration initiated by the Havasupai Tribe, freeing up funds for flood damage sustained in October. Flooding at that time had destroyed several bridges and left downed trees on trails necessary for tourists and transportation of goods into Supai Village.

Permits to visit are highly coveted. Pre-pandemic, the tribe received an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 visitors per year to its reservation deep in a gorge west of Grand Canyon National Park. The area is reachable only by foot or helicopter, or by riding a horse or mule. Visitors can either camp or stay in a lodge. Castellano is already planning to try to get a permit again later this year if there are cancellations. "We just want to see i in all its glory, not muddy falls," she said.

## China urged to release all Covid-related data

GENEVA (Reuters): Advisors to the World Health Organization have urged China to release all information related to the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic after new findings were briefly shared on an international database used to track pathogens. New sequences of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, as well as additional genomic data based on samples taken from a live animal market in Wuhan, China in 2020 were briefly uploaded to the open access GISAID database by Chinese scientists earlier this year, allowing them to be viewed by researchers in other countries, according to a statement from the WHO's Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens (SAGO).

The sequences suggested that raccoon dogs were present in the market and may have also been infected by the coronavirus, providing a new clue in the chain of transmission that eventually reached humans, according to the WHO. Access to the information was subsequently restricted "apparently to allow further data updates" by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the statement added. WHO officials discussed the matter with Chinese colleagues, who explained that the new data were intended to be used to update a preprint study from 2022. China's CDC plans to re-submit the paper to the scientific journal Nature for publication, according to the statement.

WHO officials say such information, while not conclusive, represents a new lead into the investigation of COVID's origins and should have been shared immediately. "These data do not provide a definitive answer to the question of how the pandemic began, but every piece of data is important in moving us closer to that answer," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. "These data could have - and should have - been shared three years ago." "We continue to call on China to be transparent in sharing data, and to conduct the necessary investigations and share the results," he said. SAGO was tasked by the WHO to continue to investigate the origins of the pandemic that has killed nearly 7 million people worldwide.

The Chinese CDC did not immediately respond to the WHO's latest statement. When asked by Reuters why the sequences were not uploaded before, George Gao, professor at the Institute of Microbiology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and former head of the Chinese CDC, said the data uploaded were "nothing new." He added that GISAID, the Munich-based pathogen database, took down the sequences, not the Chinese scientists, and that he was in contact with WHO. It's "too early for any conclusion," he added in an emailed statement. "All this must be left for scientists to work on, NOT for journalists or public. We are eager to know the answer."

A spokesperson for GISAID said it does not take down data. They said the sequences had been "recalled" and "are currently being updated with newer and additional data as part of a manuscript currently under review". The Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan was shut down by Chinese authorities after the novel coronavirus emerged in the city in late 2019. The market has since been a focus of study of whether the virus had infected several other species before jumping to humans.

## Kim leads 'nuclear counterattack' simulation drill

SEOUL (AFP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un led two days of military drills "simulating a nuclear counterattack", including the launch of a ballistic missile, state media reported Monday. Kim expressed satisfaction over the weekend drills, which were held to "let relevant units get familiar with the procedures and processes for implementing their tactical nuclear attack missions", said the report by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

The drills were the fourth show of force from Pyongyang in a week and came during Freedom Shield, the biggest US-South Korea military exercise in five years. North Korea views all such exercises as rehearsals for invasion and has repeatedly warned it would take "overwhelming" action in response. The weekend drills in North Korea were divided into exercises simulating the shift to a nuclear counterattack posture and a drill for "launching a tactical ballistic missile tipped with a mock nuclear warhead", KCNA said.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said that the short-range ballistic missile flew 800 kilometres (500 miles) before landing in the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan. They branded it a "serious provocation" that violated United Nations sanctions. Kim said the weekend drills had filled the North Korean military units "with great confidence", according to KCNA. He also noted that North Korea "cannot actually deter a war with the mere fact that it is a nuclear weapons state", and that it could only reach its goals "when the nuclear force is... actually capable of mounting an attack on the enemy."

Yang Uk, a researcher at the Asian Institute for Policy Studies, said the weekend drills demonstrated that



North Korea's nuclear posture was becoming "a little more realistic". "It seems North Korea is trying to show it possesses enough practical nuclear attack capabilities to conduct comprehensive tactical trainings for its frontline units," he said. Seoul and Washington have ramped up defence cooperation in the face of growing military and nuclear threats from Pyongyang, which has conducted a series of banned weapons tests in recent months.

It has also pushed South Korea and Japan to mend fences over historical disputes and try to boost security cooperation. North Korea test-fired its largest and most powerful intercontinental ballistic missile, the Hwasong-17, its second ICBM test this year. That followed two short-range ballistic missiles and two strategic cruise missiles fired from a submarine. The UN Security Council is expected to hold an emergency meeting on Monday over the ICBM launch at the request of the United States and Japan, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported.

North Korea's nuclear claims cannot be taken at face value, said Leif

Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. Photos published by North Korean state media showed Kim and his young daughter surrounded by uniformed officers watching the ICBM launch. "If these firing drills were practice for real conflict, the leader would not be in the field with his daughter, posing with missiles for the cameras," Easley told AFP. Analysts previously said North Korea would likely use the US-South Korea drills as an excuse to carry out more missile launches and perhaps even a nuclear test. This is turning the Korean peninsula into "a flashpoint with higher potential for a nuclear war", said Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University's Institute for Far Eastern Studies. "As the intensity of the South Korea-US exercises increases, the possibility of unforeseen situations increases, and as a result, mutual physical clashes may occur," he added. Last year, North Korea declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear power and Kim recently called for an exponential increase in weapons production, including tactical nuclear weapons.

## Iraq and Iran sign deal to tighten border security

BAGHDAD (Reuters): Iraq and Iran signed a border security agreement, a move Iraqi officials said aimed primarily at tightening the frontier with Iraq's Kurdish region, where Tehran says armed Kurdish dissidents pose a threat to its security. The joint security agreement includes coordination in "protecting the common borders between the two countries and consolidating cooperation in several security fields", a statement from the Iraqi prime minister's office said.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council secretary Ali Shamkhani signed the deal with Iraq's National Security Advisor Qasim al-Araji, in the presence of Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed al-Sudani, the

prime minister office said. "Under the signed security deal, Iraq pledges it would not allow armed groups to use its territory in the Iraqi Kurdish region to launch any border-crossing attacks on neighbour Iran," said an Iraqi security official who attended the signing. The frontier came into renewed focus last year when Iran's Revolutionary Guards launched missile and drone attacks against Iranian Kurdish groups based in northern Iraq, accusing them of fomenting protests that were sparked by the death of a Iranian Kurdish woman while she was being held in police custody.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, speaking in Tehran, said

"Shamkhani's current trip to Iraq has been planned since four months and is focused on issues related to the armed groups in northern Iraq". The Islamic republic of Iran will in no way accept threats from Iraqi territories, he added. Iran has also accused Kurdish militants of working with its arch-enemy Israel and has often voices concern over the alleged presence of the Israeli spy agency Mossad in the autonomous Iraqi Kurdish region. Last year, Iran's Intelligence Ministry said a sabotage team detained by its security forces were Kurdish militants working for Israel who planned to blow up a "sensitive" defence industry centre in the city of Isfahan.

## UN to deliver diagnosis, prescription for climate crisis

UNITED NATIONS (AFP): The United Nations was poised to release a capstone report Monday distilling nearly a decade of published science on the impacts and trajectory of global warming, and the tools available to prevent climate catastrophe. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 30-odd page "summary for policymakers" -- compressing 10,500 pages authored by more than 1,000 scientists -- is as dense as a black hole and will deliver a stark warning.

"We are nearing a point of no return," UN chief Antonio Guterres said last week as diplomats from 195 nations gathered in Interlaken, Switzerland, to hammer out the final wording, finalised by exhausted and sleep-deprived delegates two days behind schedule. "For decades, the IPCC has put forward evidence on how people and planet are being

rocked by climate destruction." Since the last IPCC synthesis report in 2014, science has determined that devastating impacts are happening more quickly and at lower levels of warming than previously understood. With Earth's average surface temperature 1.2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels so far, the planet has seen a steady crescendo extreme weather, including tropical storms made worse by rising seas. On current trends, the world is on track to warm by an additional 1.6 degrees. In 2022, climate change quantifiably amplified deadly heatwaves in South America and South Asia, massive flooding in Nigeria and Pakistan, and record-breaking drought in Western Europe and the United States, according to the World Weather Attribution consortium, which includes many IPCC authors.

Science in the last decade

has also elevated the danger posed by so-called tipping points in Earth's climate system that could -- beyond certain temperature thresholds -- see tropical forests in the Amazon morph into savannah, and ice sheets in Greenland and West Antarctica shed enough water to lift oceans by metres. But most of the wrangling at the week-long IPCC meeting centred on potential solutions, especially on how to decarbonise the global economy quickly enough to avoid crippling impacts, according to participants. Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, nations vowed to collectively cap warming at "well below" 2C, and at 1.5C if possible. A 2018 IPCC special report made it alarmingly clear that the more ambitious aspirational goal -- since adopted by governments and business as a hard target -- was a better guarantee for a climate-safe world.

## Donald Trump could be charged any day - what happens next?

NEW YORK (Reuters): Donald Trump could be charged in New York as soon as this week for allegedly covering up hush money payments to a porn star during his 2016 presidential campaign, nearly seven years after the money changed hands. But any trial of the former US president would still be more than a year away, legal experts said, and could coincide with the final months of the 2024 presidential campaign as Trump seeks a return to the White House.

In a social media post, Trump said he expected to be arrested and called on his followers to protest, though a spokesperson later said Trump has not been notified of any pending arrest. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg has presented evidence to a New York grand jury about a \$130,000 payment to porn star Stormy Daniels in the waning days of the 2016 presidential campaign in

exchange for her silence about an alleged affair, according to sources. Trump has denied the affair, and his lawyer has accused Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, of extortion. Were he charged, Trump would become the first former US president to face criminal prosecution. Polls show him leading other potential rivals for the Republican nomination, including Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who is widely expected to mount a White House bid.

The average criminal case in New York takes more than a year to move from indictment to trial, said Karen Friedman Agnifilo, former Manhattan chief assistant district attorney, and Trump's case is far from typical. That raises the possibility of Trump having to stand trial in the middle of the 2024 presidential campaign, or even after Election Day, though putting a presi-

dent-elect or president on trial for state charges would enter uncharted legal waters. If elected, he would not hold the power to pardon himself of state charges. "This is so unprecedented that it's hard for me to say," Agnifilo said when asked whether a judge would put Trump on trial close to the election. "I think it's tricky."

The New York case is one of several focused on Trump, including a Georgia election interference probe and a pair of federal investigations into his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the US Capitol by his supporters trying to overturn his defeat and into his retention of classified documents after leaving the White House. In his early career in real estate, as a television celebrity and then in politics, the famously litigious Trump has employed aggressive counter-attacks and delay tactics when confronted with legal chal-

lenges. Trump has accused Bragg, an elected Democrat, of targeting him for political gain and could try to seek dismissal of the charges on those grounds. Trump would likely pursue other avenues as well, some of which could present thorny legal issues that take time to resolve.

While serving as president, Trump reimbursed Cohen for the Daniels payments, and federal prosecutors who charged Cohen said in court papers that the payments were falsely recorded as for legal services. The New York Times, citing sources, has reported the most likely charges against Trump would be for falsifying business records, typically a misdemeanor. To elevate that charge to a felony, prosecutors must prove that Trump falsified records to cover up a second crime. One possibility, according to the Times, is that prosecutors could assert the payment itself

violated state campaign finance law, since it was effectively an illegal secret donation to boost his campaign. Using state election law to elevate a false business record charge is an untested legal theory, experts said, and Trump's lawyers would be sure to challenge it. Trump could also challenge whether the statute of limitations - five years in this instance - should have run out. Under New York law, the statute of limitations can be extended if the defendant has been out of state, but Trump may argue that serving as US president should not apply.

"There's a whole host of possibilities," said David Shapiro, a former FBI agent and prosecutor and a lecturer at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. "This is a dream case for defense attorneys." In the near term, any indictment would require Trump to travel

to the district attorney's office in downtown New York to surrender. In white-collar cases, the defendant's lawyers and prosecutors typically agree on a date and time, rather than arresting the person at home. Trump would have his fingerprints and mugshot taken and would appear for arraignment in court. He would likely be released on his own recognizance and allowed to head home, experts said. Trump's lawyer, Joe Tacopina, told CNBC that Trump would surrender if charged. If Trump refused to come in voluntarily, prosecutors could seek to have him extradited from Florida, where he currently resides. In an ironic twist, DeSantis would typically have to give formal approval for an extradition demand in his capacity as governor, though Florida legal experts said his role would be strictly administrative.



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JALIL AFRIDI  
Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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# Sikh freedom struggle and UN’s self blindness

THE second phase of the global Khalistan referendum of Sikh freedom seekers is underway across the world while the latest polls were held on Sunday in Brisbane, Australia. According to the reports, more than 11,000 Sikh men and women took part in the voting amid recurrent cyber attacks by Indian hackers to disrupt the operation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). However, Sikh Community shortly resolved the fault and completed their referendum successfully.

Presently, the Sikh nation in India and across the world striving hard to achieve independence from the unjust and brutal rule of India, as the Indian security forces and Intelligence agencies have not only squeezed its land for Sikh freedom seekers but the Indian government is actively haunting down Sikh dissidents across the world from Canada to Australia and South Africa to Malaysia. The Sikh Community residing in India and abroad demands a separate and independent Sikh State that encompasses the Sikh majority regions including Indian Punjab and Uttar Pradesh with Shimla as the capital of Khalistan. The Indian government has not only revoked the NRI status of the Sikh diaspora abroad but also confiscated their properties and prosecuted their families/relatives in the country. However, Sikh sainiks displayed the utmost courage and resilience in the face of Indian inhumane atrocities, unjust killings, and unlawful victimization of Sikh youth in Indian-held Punjab over the past several decades.

Historically, Sikhs in British India started their freedom movement during the colonial period in the early 1920s. While Sikh leaders fell prey to Congress Chanakya politics and compromised to live with Hindus on the promise to be granted an autonomous state within India. However, shortly after independence, Hindus' extremism and communal bias made them realize to reignite their struggle for sovereign independence and a free homeland. Sikh nationalism arose again in the early 70s when famous Sikh leaders Jagjit Sindh Chohan, Balbir Singh Sandhu, and Sant Jarnail Singh Bhandranwale led the Khalistan freedom movement and got unimaginable support from Sikh youths in Punjab as well as across India. However, India crushed the Sikh freedom movement through brutal force, and hundreds of Sikh activists including dozens of innocent religious devotees were killed in the notorious Operation Blue Star conducted by the Indian military inside the holy Sikh shrine Golden Temple in June 1984.

Presently, a worldwide referendum has been arranged by the Sikh Community living in India and across the globe to give its verdict regarding the independence of Indian-held Punjab. Millions of Sikhs raising in Canada, the US, the UK, Australia, and several other countries including Pakistan and India have massively supported the Khalistan freedom movement by exercising their right to vote conferred by the UN charter and other global and humanitarian laws.

Shamefully, India, the so-called self-claimed biggest democracy in the world, has now been turned into the biggest penitentiary in the universe, as millions of Sikhs, Kashmiris, Mousists, and Dalits are currently serving lifelong imprisonment in an open prison of Nehru's so-called secular Bharat. The global community is not ready to support the voice of impoverished and suppressed minorities in India due to its vested economic interests. After the decades-long struggle for freedom, Sikhs around the globe have initiated a referendum campaign to raise their voice at the international level and sensitized the UN and powerful countries in the world regarding the Khalistan issue.

Realistically, the Sikh nation has paid a huge price for its intent for freedom which cost thousands of Sikh lives, while manhandling of Sikhs' farmer protests by the Modi government was another manifestation of New Delhi's hegemonism in recent history. The ongoing Khalistan referendum is an important milestone in the freedom struggle of the Sikh nation, which must be acknowledged and supported by the global community. It is high time that the UN come forward and play its due role in serving justice to the Sikh nation by supporting its right to self-determination through the creation of a separate and free Sikh homeland in the world.

# A million lives later, I cannot forgive what American terrorism did to my country, Iraq

IN early 2003, I was living in Cairo and carrying out research for my doctoral dissertation on a famous Iraqi poet who lived in my hometown, Baghdad, in the 10th century. But I was increasingly anxious about the Baghdad of the 21st century. Like millions of people across the world's major cities, I took part in the massive protests against the then imminent invasion of Iraq. Tahrir Square, the centre of the revolution that toppled the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, eight years later, swelled with tens of thousands of angry Cairenes. We headed to the nearby US embassy, but the riot police pushed us back with batons.

The drums of war had been beating for months. While there was popular opposition throughout the world (there were coordinated protests in 600 cities in February 2003), the war's architects, merchants and cheerleaders were vociferous and dismissive of those of us who warned against the catastrophic aftermath for Iraqis and the region, labelling anyone who questioned the war a supporter of dictatorship. Many of us who had stood against Saddam Hussein's dictatorship and his regime wrote and spoke against the planned invasion for what were already obvious reasons. We challenged the false narrative of Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). After 700 inspections, Hans Blix, the head of the UN's weapons inspectors, and his teams had found no weapons in Iraq. The "mushroom cloud over Manhattan" that Condoleezza Rice warned about was a propaganda cloud to intensify hysteria. George Bush, after all, had reportedly decided to strike Iraq the week after 9/11. The corporate mediascape in the US was an echo chamber for state propaganda. It wasn't just the Manichaean worldview of post-9/11 national security hysteria, but a deep-seated colonial mentality - variations on the white man's burden. An analysis of US TV news in the few weeks preceding the invasion found that sources expressing scepticism of the war were massively underrepresented. The media performed its function quite well in manufacturing consent and parroting official propaganda. In March 2003, 72% of American citizens

supported the war. We should never forget this. (Up until 2018, 43% of Americans still thought it was the right decision.)

In Cairo, I watched as the US began its "shock and awe" campaign - a terrifying rain of death and destruction on Baghdad. Poetry was my refuge and the only space through which I could translate the visceral pain of watching the violence visited on Iraq and seeing my hometown fall to an occupying

*the wind leaned against a palm tree  
A satellite inquired:  
Whereto now?  
The silence in the wind's cane murmured:  
"Baghdad"  
and the palm tree caught fire.*

I had always hoped to see the end of Saddam's dictatorship at the hands of the Iraqi people, not courtesy of a

Sinan Antoon

optimistic about the occupation. "But a lot of these people the US is bringing to rule are thieves and crooks," I told him. "My son," he replied, "if they steal half of our wealth we'll still be better off with the other half." I remember that conversation whenever I read about the astronomical figures and massive corruption of the post-2003 Iraqi regime.

Some Iraqis we inter-

When the nonexistent WMDs were not found, there was a shift in the propaganda narrative to "democracy" and "nation building". The war's lethal effects were rationalised as the necessary birth pangs for a "new Iraq". The country would be a model in the Middle East for what global capital and free markets could offer. But promises and plans of reconstruction became black holes for billions of dollars and fuelled a culture of corrup-

a US TV channel showing an embedded reporter with American soldiers in a Humvee about to leave a base near Baghdad on a patrol. When the Humvee exits the gate, one of the soldiers tells the reporter: "This is Indian country." This, I learned, is a common, although unofficial, term, used in the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan to refer to "hostile and lawless territory". NBC's Brian Williams recounted how a US general giving him a tour in Iraq used it too.

The colonial frame and embedded notions of white supremacy illuminate how most Americans, military or civilians, can view, make sense of, or simply ignore what their government does. It was another frontier between the forces of an advanced and well-meaning civilisation and a hostile and violent culture, ungrateful for what was offered and burdened by its violent past.

The Iraq that the invasion began to be one of the most corrupt states in the world. Iranian-backed militias (whose rise was a byproduct of the dynamics the invasion created) dominated the lives of Iraqis and terrorise opponents. They helped the regime brutally crush the 2019 uprising, which was spearheaded by Iraqi youth who rejected the political system that the US installed. One of their slogans in the uprising's early days was: "No to America, no to Iran!" Today, there are 1.2 million internally displaced persons in Iraq, most of them in camps. An estimated 1 million Iraqis have died, directly or indirectly, as a result of the invasion and its aftermath. It is not just the body politic that is disfigured, but the body itself: the depleted uranium left by occupying forces has been connected to birth defects still today, especially in Fallujah, where there are also elevated rates of cancer.

Last December, the US navy proudly announced that its next amphibious assault ship will be named "Fallujah". This may seem shocking, but it is part and parcel of settler-colonial culture. Apache, Lakota, Cheyenne and other names of native tribes still suffering the ongoing effects of American settler-colonialism are now the names of lethal weapons. A million lives later, this is what American terrorism has done to Iraq.

*Four months after the invasion I returned to Baghdad as part of a team to film About Baghdad, a documentary about the war and its aftermath. The chaos was already evident. One of the tens of interviews we conducted that simmering July was with a man who was optimistic about the occupation. "But a lot of these people the US is bringing to rule are thieves and crooks," I told him. "My son," he replied, "if they steal half of our wealth we'll still be better off with the other half." I remember that conversation whenever I read about the astronomical figures and massive corruption of the post-2003 Iraqi regime. Some Iraqis we interviewed were obviously seduced by or took American promises seriously. Others were too drained and desperate after more than a decade of another war in the form of the genocidal sanctions from 1990 to 2003, and thought "so be it". There were those, inside and outside, who knew that this was colonialism and stood against it. But there were colonised minds aplenty. A group of Iraqi writers, poets and professionals later penned a thank you letter to Bush and Tony Blair. When the nonexistent WMDs were not found, there was a shift in the propaganda narrative to "democracy" and "nation building". The war's lethal effects were rationalised as the necessary birth pangs for a "new Iraq". The country would be a model in the Middle East for what global capital and free markets could offer. But promises and plans of reconstruction became black holes for billions of dollars and fuelled a culture of corruption. American war advocates themselves benefited from the war. The invasion did bring about a new Iraq. One where Iraqis have daily encounters with the consequences of the war on terror: terrorism. The "new Iraq" that the warmongers promised did not bring Starbucks or startups, but car bombs, suicide bombings, al-Qaida and later Islamic State - the latter hatched in the US's own military prisons in Iraq.*

army. Some of the lines I wrote in the early days of the invasion crystallise my melancholy:

*The wind is a blind mother  
stumbling over the corpses  
no shrouds save the clouds  
but the dogs are far quicker  
The moon is a graveyard for light  
the stars are women  
wailing.  
Tired from carrying the coffins*

neocolonial project that would dismantle what had remained of the Iraqi state and replace it with a regime based on ethno-sectarian dynamics, plunging the country into violent chaos and civil wars.

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In the first few months of the invasion I saw a report on

# Russia returns to the graveyard of empires

EVEN as Russia struggles to achieve military and political success in Ukraine, its leaders have turned their attention to another regional objective: restarting business in the so-called graveyard of empires. Six months ago, Moscow inked a deal with the Taliban to supply gasoline, oil and wheat to Afghanistan. Some of those commodities are now arriving by road and rail from Central Asia, providing Afghans with much-needed supplies - and Russia with much-needed customers.

The Taliban-led government has also created a consortium of companies, including some in Russia, to fuel investments in power, mining and infrastructure. The group plans to allocate up to \$1 billion for infrastructure and energy projects, and Russia is expected to act as a key investor and contractor. For the Kremlin, key economic goals in

Afghanistan include the construction of coal-fired power plants and a facility for turning coal into oil products. Currently, Afghanistan produces only 30 percent of the electricity it consumes and remains heavily dependent on energy imports. Kabul has made it clear that it wants 1 million barrels of oil from Russia, and would prefer to trade for it - with minerals, raisins and medicinal herbs. If that does not suit Russia, Kabul can also pay with money, said Haji Nooruddin Azizi, the Taliban-appointed minister of commerce and industry.

There is no doubt that closer economic cooperation with Russia would help the Taliban-led government ease the international isolation that has cut it off from the global banking system. To a certain extent, it would also help Russia, especially now that the country is living under the weight of Western sanctions. The trouble is, the Taliban is not ready to man-

age foreign investment. Although Afghanistan is one of the world's most resource-rich countries, political unpredictability and economic unreliability are impeding major foreign actors, including Russia, from launching large-scale business projects in the country. Last month, top security officials from Russia, India, Iran, China and across Central Asia met in Moscow to discuss what could be done to improve the situation in Afghanistan. Tellingly, the Taliban was not even invited.

Russia labeled the Taliban a terrorist organization in 2003. While the Kremlin held numerous meetings with the Afghan group in subsequent years, the first official contact between the Russian Foreign Ministry and the Taliban in the post-9/11 era was in 2015. More recently, Russia's special envoy to Afghanistan, Zamir

Nikola Mikovic

Kabulov, visited Kabul in January to discuss the prospect of recognition of the Taliban by the international community, including Russia. However, that does not mean the Kremlin will delist the Taliban as a terrorist organization anytime soon. As Nikolai Patrushev, secretary of the Security Council of Russia, stressed at the recent summit in Moscow, the socioeconomic situation in Afghanistan is "rapidly degrading," chaos that he blamed on the "current Kabul authorities." The Russian ambassador to Tajikistan, Semyon Grigoryev, offered a similar view in January, noting that "practically all the promises that the Taliban made when they came to power have not been fulfilled." In his view, Afghanistan is riddled with terrorists and led by a divisive government that fuels the global drug trade. The "plight of the Afghan people

completes this sad picture," Grigoryev said.

His statement could be viewed by Tajikistan - Afghanistan's smallest neighbor and the poorest country in Central Asia - as reassurance that Russia will not allow Afghanistan to be used to destabilize the former Soviet republic, where the Russian Federation has a large military base. Tajikistan hosts several Afghan leaders who oppose the Taliban's rule, including the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan leader Ahmad Massoud, making it a ripe target. Aware of this vulnerability, Emomali Rahmon, the Tajikistan president, has called for a "security belt" to be built around Afghanistan to protect neighboring states. Despite being Moscow's ally in the Collective Security Treaty Organization, Tajikistan represents a relatively easy target not only for the Taliban, but also for other radical groups operat-

ing in Afghanistan. And yet, given how poorly Russia has conducted its war in Ukraine, it is not clear that Moscow could uphold its security commitments if called upon to do so. It is also doubtful that the Russian-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization could protect Tajikistan in the event of a cross-border attack. For now, Russia will continue to balance its military and political alliance with Tajikistan as it plans to strengthen its economic position in Afghanistan. But it will do so slowly, painfully aware that Moscow's involvement in Afghanistan has not always gone to plan.

Still, unlike most Western nations, Russia did not close its embassy in the Afghan capital after the American withdrawal from the country in August 2021. That gives Moscow a leg-up on efforts to turn the Taliban into a reliable trading partner.

# The ugly truth about Iraq’s miserable situation

TWENTY years have passed since the controversial US-led invasion of Iraq to free its people from their leader's atrocities. However, Iraqis continued to suffer due to the actions of successive governments, which have, unfortunately, made them miss the horrible days of the dictator Saddam Hussein, who brought Mesopotamia to what it is now. What has happened since 2003? And why did the ruling class fail to build an institutional state that respects the law and defends human rights, as the Iraqi opposition preached for years prior to the fall of the Baath Party regime?

Saddam dragged his country into endless wars. He imposed severe punishments on his people and dealt with his opponents and critics with an iron fist that knew no mercy, causing millions of citizens to flee their

homeland in fear of his tyranny. Therefore, it is logical that Iraqis and the international community were divided over regime change and its repercussions, regardless of their political or religious affiliation. A large number of those who suffered from the injustices of Saddam and his Baathist regime supported the American intervention, not out of hatred for Iraq but because they genuinely believed that, in a police state, a regime change process from within was nearly impossible. Even those not personally affected by the arbitrary nature of the regime dreamed of helping their fellow citizens live a decent and free life. As for those who opposed the intervention of the US, they also had their reasons, even if the majority were motivated by personal factors.

So, who were the naysayers? On the top of the list were the Baath Party and

Saddam loyalists, who committed crimes against their own people and reported many of their fellow citizens to the security forces for even cracking a joke about the nation's leader. If the oppressive regime collapsed, they would lose what little power they had and be prosecuted by the new government.

Then came the leftists, who still believed in communism and socialism even though these ideas had failed in their own origins. This group hated everything that came from the West and instead supported the Chinese, Russian and North Korean models, disregarding the loss of dignity and rights of the people in these countries. This makes us question the ideology and goals of the Iraqi Communist Party, which opposed the Baathist regime back in the 1970s and many of whose members

Dalia Al-Aqidi

fled to communist Eastern Europe. They believed the people who believed Saddam's stunts and slogans in the name of Arabism. However, they had no objection when the former dictator invaded an Arab and Muslim country, cheering the naming of Kuwait as Iraq's 19th province. The nationalists literally worshipped Gamal Abdel Nasser's ideology, which was the core of the Egyptian collapse.

The last group contained the very few Iraqis who were ready to die to change the regime. However, after several failed attempts to assassinate the former dictator, they continued to oppose the Baathist regime in silence. Having said that, the US - while being ill-advised by some of the Iraqi opposition's key players - made fatal post-invasion mistakes that paved the way for the pro-Iran elements to take

over. Independent Iraqi American opposition figures who lived in Washington, including me, warned of the consequences of the last group. Still, the US administration ignored our concerns. The dissolution of the Iraqi Army and the creation of the Supreme National Debaathification Commission were not wise measures in the people's interest. Rather, they granted absolute power to the opposition parties to decide the fate of the people without restrictions or conditions.

This was the main reason that the Iraqis who celebrated the tyrant's fall and welcomed the liberating forces with flowers and gratitude ultimately changed their stance and blamed the US for their misery. Iraq today is better than it was under the rule of the Baath Party, even if it is only moving slowly toward democracy and human freedoms. As an American of Iraqi descent, I

thank the US for liberating my motherland and pulling it out of its long, dark tunnel. However, I blame the Iraqis who failed to run the country effectively and stole the nation's wealth before the eyes of the citizens, who continued to reelect them in every parliamentary session. Today, the Iraqis that applauded Saddam for decades are now applauding the corrupt murderers just the same.

America did not tell them to steal from or loot their country instead of building a prosperous and bright future for their children. A strong, democratic and developed Iraq would have become the greatest ally of the US and the West, which would have given them a source of great strength. Only the Iraqis themselves bear responsibility for the miserable situation in their country. So, they should stop throwing blame on others. Unfortunately, this is the ugly truth.



# 20 years later: The legacy of the Iraq war

“They will commit suicide at the gates of Baghdad” barked Iraqi Minister Mohammad Sa’id El Sahhaf, days before the US invasion of his country started on March 20, 2003. He was referring to US troops planning to occupy his country at the orders of then-president George W. Bush. That conflict - coined the Second Gulf War - is exactly twenty years old now. Although active combat operations would carry on for the next decade, the war’s high drama concluded with the fleeing of Saddam Hussein and the toppling of his 12-meter statue in Firdoss Square on April 9, 2003.

It had been erected the year before on the occasion of Saddam’s 65th birthday. Its crash marked the end of an era: for Iraq, the US, and the world at large. President Bush had begun giving serious consideration to invading Iraq shortly after 9/11. In his January 2002 State of the Union address, he famously coined Iraq a member of the “Axis of Evil.” Next September, he formally called on the international community to support his upcoming war, based on claims that among other things, Saddam was hosting Al Qaida, threatening the US, destabilising the region, and developing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). A report from the Joint Chiefs of Staff later that month challenged those claim, saying: “Our knowledge of the Iraqi nuclear weapons program is based largely - perhaps 90% - on analysis

of imprecise intelligence.”

UNSCR 1441 authorised a new round of joint weapons inspections by the UN’s arms monitoring branch and the IAEA, making the main inspectors, Hans Blix and Mohammad Elbaradai, household names in the Arab World. Both found no evidence that Saddam was developing nuclear weapons or threatening world peace.

Then came US Secretary of State Collin Powell’s February 2003 presentation at the UN, where he erroneously claimed that Saddam was hiding unconventional weapons based on flimsy intelligence gathered from Iraqis in the Diaspora. Large anti-war demonstrations broke out in almost every capital across the world and the UN refused to cover-up for the invasion, insisting that it was legally unjustified.

George W. Bush went ahead regardless, with the full support of allies like Great Britain, Australia, and Poland. The rest of course, is now history. No traces of WMDs were found. Saddam went into hiding before he was captured and executed. So were his two sons Uday and Qusay.

Iraq collapsed into uncontrollable chaos with a sharp peek in violence in 2005-2005. That violence snowballed into a sectarian war warfare. Death squads began roaming the streets of Baghdad, abducting and assassinating people. Some were

Sami Moubayed

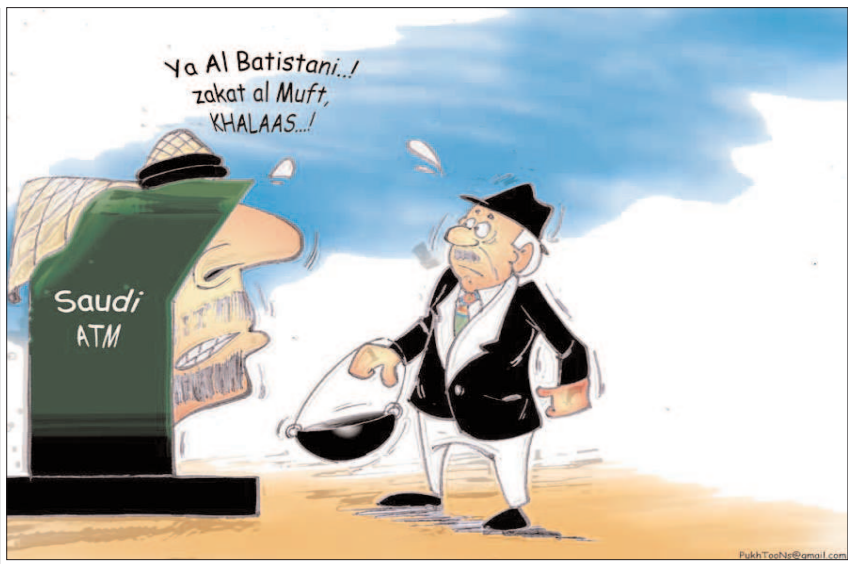
given mock trials. Others were shot at close range. That came hand-in-hand with the US-led systematic process of de-Baathification, which outlawed Saddam’s party and arrested anyone trying to revive it. Baath Party founder Michel Aflaq’s grave was bulldozed and his Baghdad home, torn down by the Americans. Saddam himself was caught in a miserable condition, and after a mock trial broadcasted live on television, was sent to the gallows. His top generals were also arrested, tried, and executed. Some of them managed to escape, led by former vice-president Izzat Al Douri. They took off their military attire, forming the nucleus of what would later be known as Daesh. By 2014, they managed to overrun important cities like Mosul and Saddam’s hometown of Tikrit, creating a self-proclaimed caliphate. Looking back twenty years later, one might ask what the Iraq War actually achieved for Iraq? Stability is still absent, and so is economic prosperity.

Some would automatically mention “democracy” as a product of the Iraq War although that too is questionable. Iraq’s democracy was put into question last June - along with the US’s entire legacy - when members of Moqtada Al Sadr’s movement stormed premises of the Iraqi Parliament in the Green Zone, staging a sit-in that captured world headlines. They were trying to prevent

their Shiite rivals in the Coordination Framework from naming a new prime minister while quarrelling with them on who actually controlled the lion’s share of parliamentary seats after the October 2021 elections.

The Sadrists transformed parliament into a circus, greatly belittling Iraq’s Chamber of Deputies, one of the symbols of post-Saddam “democracy.” Another setback of the Iraq War was brunt faced by the country’s Sunni community, which has never managed to reassert its influence in the post-Saddam order. Iraq’s 2005 constitution transferred powers from the presidency to the premiership, which has since been reserved for a Shiite. Over the past twenty-years, certain Sunni figures would rise to prominence in different governments, only to be sidelined either because of their weakness, or inability to stand up to Shiite majority, despite being inserted into high profile, yet ceremonial jobs. The list includes Tarek Al Hashemi (vice-president in 2006-2012) and Saleh Al Mutlaq (deputy premier in 2010-2015), among others. As we mark the 20th anniversary of the Second Gulf War, it is clear that the conflict has left a lasting impact on Iraq and the wider world. The flimsy claims used to justify the invasion, and the lack of stability and economic prosperity in Iraq today is a testament to the failure of the war’s intended goals.

Gulf News



## Turkiye, Syria more interested in point-scoring

Yasar Yakis

**As a matter of routine, a summit at the ministerial level is preceded by a lower-level meeting to identify the subjects to be debated. The Turkish Foreign Ministry announced earlier this month that the deputy foreign ministers of Türkiye, Russia, Syria and Iran would meet on March 15-16 ahead of planned talks at the ministerial level. However, the initial meeting was postponed "for technical reasons."**

All preparations were completed, but it appears that Syrian President Bashar Assad asked that "the relations should reach a stage where Türkiye is clearly and unambiguously ready for the full withdrawal of the Turkish military from Syrian territory, for the cessation of supporting terrorism and restoration of the situation to the state it was before the start of the Syrian war." As these comments came after Assad had a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, we may presume that they had Putin’s blessing.

This attitude does not, however, preclude the holding of preparatory meetings at the level of ministers or deputy ministers. Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Ayman Souasan has in fact said that the Moscow meeting is "still under discussion." Putin has been trying to push Türkiye and Syria to revive their relations. It was common knowledge that the side that was dragging its feet was Damascus, but it was still thought that preliminary talks could be held. On the Turkish side, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has never given up on his plan to carry out a new military operation in Syria. He has been repeating it for more than a year, but now it has become like a political commitment that has to be met

before the forthcoming elections. Whether such a promise can be fulfilled under the present circumstances is another issue. Even if it does take place, it would be a symbolic act to give the impression that Erdogan had fulfilled his promise.

Turkiye and Syria are aware that their present relations are harming the interests of both sides, but it was Erdogan who used harsh rhetoric against Assad, referring to him as a murderer and a terrorist. He previously demanded Assad’s removal before UN-sponsored talks on Syria could take place in Geneva. As time went by, Erdogan gave signals that he was willing to talk with the Syrian leader, saying that there should not be enmity between the two neighbors.

Another issue is the number of Syrian refugees currently residing in Türkiye. Their number is estimated to be about 3.7 million, but more realistic predictions put this figure much higher. To send them back to their country would raise a number of problems. Many Syrian refugees have invested in or established business in Türkiye. To undo their businesses would cause several problems. Furthermore, they may have committed crimes in Syria and the Syrian authorities may not be prepared to pardon them. Even if they were to be pardoned, to transfer their business to Syria may also cost money. The opposition coalition parties in Türkiye claim that they will be able to persuade the bulk of the refugees to return, but a more realistic guess is that millions of Syrians will find a way to stay in Türkiye. Many of them were born and have grown up in Türkiye. Some may not speak Arabic. Therefore, there will be a lost

generation. Some 18,000 Syrians are estimated to have returned home as a result of last month’s earthquakes in Türkiye. This trend may continue, but the number of those leaving may not reach the millions, as the Turkish government was expecting. The remains of about 1,600 Syrian earthquake victims have been sent back to Syria to be buried in their family cemeteries.

At the end of a ministerial Cabinet meeting last May, Erdogan said that the Turkish government, in cooperation with international aid organizations, would build 200,000 briquette houses in 13 different locations in northern Syria, complete with hospitals, schools and industrial and agricultural areas. On the same lines, the Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Authority announced in September that the Ankara government had completed the construction of 68,000 briquette houses - out of 86,000 planned - in 284 locations in Syria, again with the financial support of international aid organizations.

Now that Türkiye is in dire need of dwellings as a result of the cataclysmic earthquakes that devastated 10 southern provinces of the country last month, we will have to wait and see how the government copes with such problems on the threshold of the elections. As if that was not enough, hundreds of tents were flooded last week as a result of heavy rains. Any measure that is taken by the government will be harshly criticized by the opposition parties in the pre-election weeks and months. A mountain of problems waits to be negotiated between Türkiye and Syria, but both sides are more focused on scoring points.

Arab News

## Rejoin the EU

**A budget for growth? Sorry, pull the other one. Below the spin, even the official forecasts are laden with gloom. Funny enough, it is 50 years since one of Jeremy Hunt’s chancellorial predecessors, Tony Barber, produced a “budget for growth” that really worked - indeed, rather too well. It resulted in the “Barber boom”, when gross domestic product rose by some 6% in real, adjusted-for-inflation, terms in one year. They don’t come like that any more, which is just as well, because the Barber boom ended in tears. (In truth it was the Heath boom, because the prime minister was really in charge.)**

What Europeans such as your correspondent are especially appreciative of when it comes to Edward Heath is not his overambitious growth plans, but his strong championship of our entry to what was then the European Economic Community. We joined in 1973, with a confirmatory referendum in 1975, deftly handled on Labour’s side by prime minister Harold Wilson. On the Conservative side, few were more passionately pro-EEC than the then up and coming Margaret Thatcher. Now, the majority of the rightwing Tories who inflicted Brexit upon us consider themselves Thatcherites. They know that Thatcher enjoyed the huge support of her chief press officer, Bernard Ingham. Well, I have news for them: my brother Victor and I had a most interesting lunch with Bernard shortly before he died recently, at the ripe old age of 90.

Ingham himself was an unashamed Brexiter. But he, who knew Thatcher’s views as well as anyone, told us in no uncertain terms that his boss would have undoubtedly voted to remain in the European

William Keegan

Union. She fought her - and our - corner in many a EU dispute, but she knew where our economic interests lay; and, of course, she was godmother to the single market. It is the shadow of Brexit that hangs over current economic policy, and limits the chancellor’s room for manoeuvre. John Springfield of the Centre for European Reform estimates that the negative impact of gratuitously imposing trade barriers on our nearest trading partners - via higher import prices, loss of vital immigrant workers, and general uncertainty affecting business confidence - had cost our economy 5.5% of GDP by the summer of 2022.

Our former partners in the single market are - surprise, surprise - faring a lot better because, not to put too fine a point upon it, they too may have problems, but do not believe in self-harm. Talking of which, I should like to reiterate my wonder at the fact that Rishi Sunak, when arguing the case for the Northern Ireland deal - in which he was supported by Keir Starmer - emphasised that Northern Ireland could continue to enjoy the benefits of being part of the UK and the single market. If that’s good for Northern Ireland, Mr Sunak and Sir Keir, what about the rest of us, who, in addition to the economic consequences of Brexit, have lost our freedom of movement within the single market we helped to set up? It is surely time that Sunak, whose Brexit position has been shown to be flawed by his own comments, demonstrated his reputation for pragmatism by owning up to the catastrophe.

As for Starmer, on a recent visit to the historical wonders of Cairo, I contemplated the sphinx and wondered just

which modern politician came to mind: and yes, it was the Labour leader. He is quite sphinx-like in his attitude towards Brexit; a remainder who rules out rejoining the EU and single market, notwithstanding all the palpable damage from Brexit. Unfortunately this economy, for which both leaders have mysterious growth plans, is evidently fared with the biggest drop in living standards since 1956. The obvious growth plan, which would restore business confidence, would be to grasp the nettle and rejoin the single market. Now, 1956 was the year of the Suez disaster - a memory that certainly came back to me in Cairo. That misadventure came to an end when the Americans refused to prop up the pound. It is interesting that American pressure from President Biden seems to have concentrated Sunak’s mind on resolving the Northern Irish impasse on Brexit.

Meanwhile we all await the ineffectual Jacob Rees-Mogg’s list of the “benefits of Brexit”. Given the recent banking emergencies in the US and Switzerland, I greatly look forward to Rees-Mogg’s views on the putative benefits of a restoration of the light-touch regulation that brought us the financial crisis of 2008. Talking of which, a senior banker recently told me that, when the prime minister was suggesting there was a clamour in the City for the relaxation of financial regulation, he - the banker - asked his counterparts in other financial institutions whether they were lobbying for it; nearly all of them said no. He said Goldman Sachs was the exception. This called to mind the wonderful, ironic chapter in JK Galbraith’s The Great Crash, entitled: “In Goldman Sachs We Trust.”

The Guardian

## Trouble in paradise as Bali loses patience with Russians, Ukrainians fleeing war

WITH its balmy beaches, laid back lifestyles and holiday vibe, the tropical paradise of Bali has much to offer any world weary traveler - let alone those fleeing a war zone. So perhaps it should be no surprise that since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Indonesia’s most famous holiday island has once again become a magnet for thousands of Russians and Ukrainians seeking to escape the horrors of war.

Some 58,000 Russians visited this Southeast Asian idyll in 2022 following its post-Covid reopening, and a further 22,500 arrived in January 2023 alone, according to the Indonesian government, making them the second biggest group of visitors after Australians. Adding to their number are the more than 7,000 Ukrainians who arrived in 2022, and some 2,500 in the first month of this year. But for those fleeing the violence - or the draft - there’s trouble in paradise. Balinese authorities this week called for the end to Indonesia’s visa-on-arrival policy for citizens of Russia and Ukraine, citing a spate of alleged incidents involving misbehavior and various examples of visitors overstaying their visas and working illegally as hairdressers, unauthorized tour guides and taxi drivers. The move has been met with dismay by many Ukrainians on the island, who say that most of the incidents involve Russians and that they are being unfairly tarred with the same brush. “Whenever we get reports about a foreigner behaving badly, it’s almost always Russian,” a local police officer in the town of Kuta told CNN, declining to be identified due to sensitivities surrounding the issue.

“Foreigners come to Bali but they behave like they are above the law. This has always been the case and it has to finally stop,” he said. Badly behaved tourists can be a touchy subject in Bali, where foreigners of various nationalities regularly make headlines for drunk and inappropriate

behavior, public nudity and disrespecting sacred sites. But the Balinese authorities appear ready to make an example of Russians and Ukrainians amid rising public debate over perceptions of their conduct. “Why these two countries? Because they are at war so they flock here,” Bali governor Wayan Koster told a news conference this week. The influx of Russians and Ukrainians into Bali comes despite Ukraine having banned all men aged 18 to 60 from leaving the country. Russia has no official blanket ban, but has mobilized 300,000 reservists to join the fighting, prompting many young men to flee abroad rather than be drafted. CNN reached out to the Russian embassy in Indonesia and Ukrainian consulate in Bali. Russian embassy officials did not immediately respond; Ukraine’s Honorary Consulate in Bali said Ukrainians in the country were mostly females there for family unification reasons rather than tourism and that they did “not want to violate the rules and regulations.”

While Bali was a favorite with Russian tourists even before the war, its attractions have become only more appealing in the wake of Putin’s grinding invasion and subsequent mobilization. And it is far from the only refuge in Southeast Asia. The island of Phuket in southern Thailand, often lauded as among the world’s best beach destinations, has seen a sudden influx of Russian arrivals - many of whom have invested in property to ensure they can enjoy long-term stays. “Life in Russia is very different now,” a former investment banker from St. Petersburg who bought an apartment near Phuket’s Old Town district told CNN. He declined to disclose his identity for fear of retaliation from Russian authorities. “No one wants to stay and live in the middle of war,” he said. “It is stressful thinking about the possibility of returning to Russia and being punished... (so) it makes sense

Heather Chen

to invest in a place which costs less than Moscow and is safer.”

In Bali, part of the attraction has been down to Indonesia’s policy that allows nationals of more than 80 countries - including, at least for now, Russia and Ukraine - to apply for visas upon arrival. The visa is valid for 30 days but can be extended once to a total of 60 days. That might be plenty of time for those planning lengthy vacations, but those seeking a more prolonged stay are not allowed to work. Indonesian authorities said several Russian tourists had been deported in recent months for overstaying their visas, among them a 28-year-old from Moscow who was arrested and deported after he was found to be working as a photographer. Others who arrived hoping to find work have since returned home, risking Moscow’s wrath if they are suspected of fleeing the draft. Among the wave of Russians to have traveled to Bali was Sergei Ovsiekin, a street artist who created an anti-war mural in the middle of a rice paddy field - a “mural” that reflected his stance on military conscription and the war.

“Like many others forced to leave our native country, I came to Bali as a tourist,” Ovsiekin said. “Russia remains in a difficult political situation. I am against wars, no matter where they take place,” he said. “A lot of people who disagreed with the war flew to Bali - Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and others,” he added. “We all get along well with each other... and understand that ordinary people did not start this war.” News of the possible change to the visa rules has rattled some of the Ukrainians on the island, many of whom left their homeland when war broke out and have been living on savings ever since, leaving and reentering every 60 days to avoid flouting the rules.

“Bali is a good place,” said one Ukrainian named Dmytro. “It is beautiful, the weather is great and it’s a safe

place for Ukrainians - there may be big groups of Russians, but there are no Russian soldiers.” Ukrainians on the island were a tightly knit community that largely kept away from Russians and had been surprised by the possible move, he added. “Ukrainians respect Balinese law and culture. We do a lot for our local communities and don’t represent any risk for people in Bali,” Dmytro said. “Many back in Ukraine have questions about Bali and would also love to come.”

“It’s very sad that Ukrainians are being put in the same (category) as Russians. Russians are the second largest tourist group in Bali and if you read the news, you’ll see how often it is Russians breaking local laws and disrespecting Balinese culture and traditions,” he added. “So why do Ukrainians have to suffer when it isn’t us causing problems in Bali?”

Ukraine’s Honorary Consulate in Bali said in a statement to CNN that there were around 8,500 Ukrainian citizens on the island as of February 2023, holding various temporary and permanent visa permits. “Ukrainians do not come for holiday to Bali at this current moment as our country is being invaded. The Ukrainians coming to Bali now are for family unification (reasons) and are mostly female,” said spokesperson Nyoman Astama.

“We reaffirm that Ukrainians in Bali do not want to violate the rules and regulations,” Astama added. “It is imperative to enforce the law and implement the consequences for any breach of the law as voiced now by the people in Bali.” Still, for now at least, anyone from either country still hoping for a visa on arrival can take some comfort in the fact that the central government is yet to decide on whether to grant the request by the Balinese authorities. “We will discuss it in detail with other stakeholders,” Indonesian Minister of Tourism Sandiaga Uno told local reporters on Monday.

CNN

females in Nauru, including by those paid to protect them”. Speaking of supposed “protection”, Panamanian authorities have now come under fire regarding allegations of sexual and other abuse at migrant reception centres in Darién province. Forgive me my pessimism at the prospects for justice.

During my stay in the Darién region, I also spoke with Marilen Osinalde, the mental health manager for MSF in Metetí, who regularly attends to patients who have suffered sexual and other violence. She remarked to me that, while there is a persistent Western stereotype of rapists as “psychopaths who grab you in the street in the night”, the phenomenon is rather more complex. In the case of the Darién Gap and other migrant trajectories, she explained, the landscape of sexual aggression against people crossing it has to do with asserting power, status, and impunity - as well as with marking territory. The use of rape as a “weapon” in the Darién also objectifies and dehumanises the migrant “Other”, she said, further solidifying power structures. Zoom out from the Darién, and we find ourselves in a world of borders that dehumanise and criminalise refugee seekers and other have-nots, all in the interest of marking territory and reinforcing power structures. The US penetrates international borders at will while fortifying its own - and converts spaces like the Darién Gap into physical and psychological weapons.

From Panama to Libya to Nauru, a war is being waged against people who are deprived not only of the right to cross borders but also of the right to control the very boundaries of their bodies. And that is a violation of humanity indeed.

## Rape as a weapon of war against asylum seekers

THE first time I spoke with survivors of the Darién Gap - the notoriously deadly stretch of jungle on the border between Colombia and Panama - was in 2021 during my brief imprisonment in Siglo XXI, Mexico’s largest immigration detention centre, located in the Mexican state of Chiapas near the border with Guatemala. I was the only detainee who hailed from the United States - the very country responsible for Mexico’s migration crackdown in the first place - and I had ended up in migrant jail purely on account of my own stupidity and laziness in renewing my tourist visa. My fellow inmates were facing rather more existential predicaments, and many of them - from Haiti, Cuba, Bangladesh, and beyond - had been forced to traverse the Darién Gap as they fled political and economic calamity in the hopes of eventually finding refuge in the US.

Within the walls of Siglo XXI, where dreams of refuge had been indefinitely put on hold, the Darién was a recurring topic of conversation - a sort of spontaneous exercise in group therapy, it seemed. Women recounted the numerous cadavers they had encountered during their journeys. Rape, it was clear, was rampant in the jungle - to the extent that even those who were not personally assaulted, were vicariously traumatised. Indeed, in this densest and most impenetrable of forests, sexual violence against refugee seekers has become institutionalised. This violence may be perpetrated by local inhabitants, paramilitaries, or an array of criminal actors whose activities are permitted to proceed with impunity in the general context of criminalised migration.

In February of this year, I travelled to Panama’s Darién region. I did not, of course, have to risk my life or physical integrity to do so - such being the obscene and arbitrary privilege conferred by the passport of the US, a country known for stirring up trouble worldwide and then militarising its borders against anyone wishing to flee the mess. In the town of Metetí in Darién province, I spoke with Tamara Guillermo, field coordinator for Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières, or MSF), who expressed horror at the “level of brutality” and extreme “viciousness” currently on display in the jungle - where sexual aggression, including against men, remained par for the course.

According to Guillermo, there had been a recent uptick in reports from people who had been held up by armed assailants in the Darién and forced to remove all of their clothing for a manual inspection of bodily orifices, to ensure that nothing of value had been tucked away. Often, the women were then separated from the group and raped. In Metetí, I also spoke with a young Venezuelan woman - we’ll call her Alicia - whose two-year-old son threw a foam ball at me and pinched my nose throughout our conversation, in between being distracted by a cartoon about velociraptors.

Alicia had spent 10 days crossing the Darién, she told me, and every night she had cried. She had not been raped, but she had heard about many rapes, and she had seen plenty of death - like the hunched-over body of an old man under a tree who “looked like he was cold”. She had met a Haitian woman whose six-month-old baby had just

Belén Fernández

drowned. She had been robbed of her puppy and then of all valuables that were not hidden in her son’s diapers when a group of 10 hooded men descended upon her group. In Spanish, the verb “violar” can mean either “to violate” - as in human rights - or “to rape”. And while Alicia may not have been physically violated in the latter sense, the DariénGap pretty much qualifies as one continuous violation. But the Darién Gap is not the only trajectory where refugee seekers must endure the brutal and often sexual violation of their dignity. Worldwide, we humans have demonstrated a sadistic knack for exploiting vulnerable people on the move - people whose status as “migrants” usually has much to do with the fact that they have already suffered tremendously in life.

Take Libya, a primary point of departure for Europe-bound refugees fleeing war and economic misery, which has played host to all manner of rape, slavery, and torture -including of refugee-seeking children. Try as the West might to pin responsibility for the whole sinister arrangement on the ever-handy fantasy of African savagery, the reality is that the blame lies right at the foot of Fortress Europe. Meanwhile, in northern Mexico, bipartisan xenophobic US policy has placed countless asylum seekers directly into the hands of rapists and kidnappers. And on the island of Nauru, the site of Australia’s preferred offshore asylum “processing” centre, a 2020 report jointly published by the Refugee Council of Australia and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre noted: “For years, there have been tragic accounts of rape and sexual abuse of

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# SCCI calls for establishment of a proper banking channel to promote regional trade

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: President, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Muhammad Ishaq called for establishing a proper banking channel and business to business contacts to promote mutual trade between Pakistan and Central Asian countries.

Similarly, he emphasized that both governments should take joint initiatives to simplify the visa issuance process and launch of direct cargo flights between regional countries.

Ishaq informed that SCCI has planned to organize 'Trade Fair' in three central Asian countries very shortly, expressing that hope that the events would play a pivotal role in improving bilateral trade between Pakistan and

regional states.

The SCCI chief was speaking to Pakistan's designated Ambassador to Tajikistan, Muhammad Saeed Sarwar here at the chamber's house on Monday.

Ejaz Khan Afridi, Vice President of the chamber, Secretary General Sajjad Aziz and Ammar Ansari and others were present during the meeting.

Ambassador-Designate to Tajikistan, Saeed Sarwar told the meeting that the government is keen to promote bilateral trade with central Asian states and the private sector, business community have played a vital role in this regard.

Sarwar said the government has always made practical steps to facilitate cross border trade.

He said Tajikistan is a brotherly Islamic country

and they would make vigorous efforts to bring Pak-Tajik business community closer to each other.

Essentially, he said pragmatic steps would be taken in consultation with the business community to resolve all issues in the way of bilateral trade with regional countries.

Ishaq linked Pakistan's economic future by bilateral trade with the central Asian states and African countries.

He noted the mutual trade between Pakistan and Tajikistan is very low, which needs to be improved at optimal level.

On the occasion, the SCCI president suggested the setting up a permanent Pakistan's trade bazaar in Tajikistan, proper banking channel and taking on board stakeholders for ami-

cable resolution of all issues, making policies flexible relating to visa and cross border trade so that the mutual trade volume between Pakistan and regional countries will be enhanced.

Saeed Sarwar agreed with proposals of SCCI president Muhammad Ishaq and assured that proactive measures would be taken in light of the chamber's recommendations to boost up bilateral trade relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan.

Earlier, the SCCI vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, Secretary General Sajjad Aziz and Ammar Ansari gave a number of proposals for removal of hurdles in the way of Pak-Tajikistan trade and enhancing the bilateral trade volume between the two countries.



ISLAMABAD: President International Federation of Accountants Asmaa Resmouki meeting with Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Finance Division.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Two ships, MSC Silver II and Easterly Beach Galaxy carrying Containers and Chemicals, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal and Engro Vopak Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile four more ships, MSC Marina, MSC Monica III, Abram Schulte and STI Gramercy carrying Containers, Soya bean and Mogas also arrived at the outer anchorage of the port during the last 24 hours.

A total of 02 ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a container vessel MSC Silver II left the Port on Monday morning, while another Chemicals carrier 'Easterly Beech Galaxy' is expected to sail today.

Cargo throughput during the last 24 hours stood at 23,483 tones, comprising 2,046 tones imports cargo and 21,437 tones export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 1,272 Containers (11 TEUs Imports and 1,261 TEUs export) was handled at the port.

There are 04 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, three ships, STI Gramercy, MSC Marina and MSC Monica & another ship CMA CGM Rabelais are carrying Mogas and Containers are expected to take berths at FOTCO and QICT respectively on Monday, and another container vessel Lisa is due to arrive at Port Qasim on same day, while two more ships, Maersk Chicago and Maria Elena are due to arrive on Tuesday.

## Tokyo shares end lower

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo shares ended lower on Monday, weighed by concerns about the global banking sector as well as a stronger yen.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index fell 1.42 percent, or 388.12 points, to 26,945.67, while the broader Topix index lost 1.54 percent, or 30.12 points, to 1,929.30.

The dollar stayed low at 131.79 yen, nearly unchanged from 131.80 yen in New York on Friday.

In early trade, the Nikkei briefly trended into positive territory on news that UBS agreed to take over its troubled rival Credit Suisse.

The deal "was the best alternative amid several horrible options; hence the market has avoided the dreaded worst-case gap-down scenario at the Monday open," said Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management.

Deep worries remain about a possible economic slowdown, IwaiCosmo Securities said in a note.

Meanwhile, the US Federal Reserve and other major central banks announced on Sunday a coordinated effort to improve their access to liquidity, hoping to calm worries rattling the global banking sector.

In Tokyo, many players took to the sidelines before a Japanese national holiday on Tuesday, IwaiCosmo added.

"Ahead of the holiday, many investors closed their positions for small- to medium-sized growth shares after gains of last week. As a result, the overall sentiment cooled," the brokerage added.

# President IFAC calls on Finance Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): President International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) Asmaa Resmouki Monday called on Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

SAPM on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM/Chairman RRM C Ashfaq Yousuf Tola, and senior officers from Finance Division attended the meeting, said a press release.

Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar welcomed Asmaa Resmouki, President IFAC and extended felicitations on becoming the first Muslim lady President of IFAC.

Highlighting the role of

accountants in the economic development of a country.

Finance Minister stressed high-quality corporate reporting based on international standards which is key to mobilizing financial resources and helping in reducing corruption and mismanagement.

Ishaq Dar also highlighted the economic and financial outlook of the country and expressed the resolve of the government to overcome the economic challenges and steer the economy towards growth.

Asmaa Resmouki, President, IFAC highlighted the role of IFAC as the global voice for the

accountancy profession and said that IFAC serves the public interest through advocacy, development and support for member organizations.

She also discussed the economic challenges globally and in this context appreciated the economic policies and programs initiated by the government in Pakistan for achieving sustainable economic development.

Asmaa Resouki became IFAC president in Nov, 2022. Prior to becoming President, she was appointed Deputy President of IFAC in Nov 2020 after serving the IFAC board since Nov 2017.

## Promotion of SMEs sector:

# Germany ready to start two projects

LAHORE (APP): Federal Republic Germany has proposed to start two new projects in Pakistan for promoting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) of textile industry and enhancing employment through women empowerment.

It was disclosed by a three-member delegation of the German Development Organization "GIZ (Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)" during a meeting with Farhan Aziz Khawaja, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) here on Monday.

The delegation comprised GIZ Advisors Ms. Nana Sikaba, Ms. Anke Green and Muhammad Ubaid, Component Manager of GIZ Projects. From SMEDA Ms. Nadia Jehangir Seth, General Manager Policy Planning and Ashfaq Ahmad, General Manager

Central Support Division attended the meeting.

Muhammad Ubaid said that a three-year project started in the year 2021 to develop labour and environmental standards in Pakistan's textile industry would be completed by end of the current year. The project successfully aimed at improving the competitiveness of Pakistani textile and fashion industry in the world market by improving and enhancing labour and environmental standards, he added.

He said that on successful completion of the aforementioned project government of Germany had decided to initiate two new projects; the one again for raising international standards of labour environment in textile industry and the other for promoting employment through women empowerment. These proposed projects

might start in January next year and would be completed by year 2026.

Earlier, SMEDA Chief briefed the delegation about Pakistan government's initiatives for women empowerment. He informed that key area of the recent SME policy had taken concrete measures to ensure key role of women entrepreneurship in the economy. Further, SMEDA was also active in formulating an exclusive strategy for development of women entrepreneurship both at provincial and federal level, he added.

He said that SMEDA would focus to promote rural businesses in the coming years so as to utilize the business potential of the agricultural sector. The marginalized businesses run by rural women artisans would be formalized by SMEDA through handholding and facilitation, he assured.

# Bank shares, oil prices slide despite Credit Suisse buyout

LODNON (AFP/APP): Global bank shares and oil prices slumped Monday as a UBS buyout of Credit Suisse and reassurances from financial authorities failed to calm investors spooked by a fresh crisis.

Europe's main stock markets steadied overall, however, helped by share-price gains for heavyweight miners and utilities.

Gold topped \$2,000 per ounce for the first time in more than a year Monday on haven demand.

The precious metal, seen as a safe store of value in times of economic turmoil, reached \$2,009.73.

It was the highest level since the Russia-Ukraine conflict started just over one year ago.

"How much further gold can gain will largely be determined by how many more financial institutions have to be bailed out or fail in the coming days," noted Rupert Rowling, an analyst at trading group Kinesis.

The \$3.25-billion buyout of Credit Suisse, in which Switzerland's biggest bank UBS will take over the nation's second-largest, was vital to prevent economic turmoil from spreading throughout the country and beyond, the government said Sunday.

But investors remained

on edge, with shares in UBS and rivals sliding in Monday deals.

Credit Suisse opened almost 64 percent lower at 0.68 Swiss francs per share, well below the takeover price. Asian stock markets closed sharply lower Monday.

Oil prices tumbled on fears the fallout would slow the global economy, which was already struggling to avoid recession as inflation remains elevated.

"If banks face tighter regulation and pressure to further improve their capital ratios, it could suggest that many consumers and businesses will find it harder to borrow money and that could feed into weaker economic activity," Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell, noted on Monday. Shares in Credit Suisse and lenders worldwide had already sunk last week over concerns of contagion to the rest of the sector from the failure of US regional banks.

It came after the Swiss bank had been shaken by other scandals, including its exposure to the 2021 collapses of investment firms Archegos and Greensill.

Financial authorities have rushed to reassure despite the latest crisis.

The US Federal Reserve

and other major central banks on Sunday announced a coordinated effort to improve banks' access to liquidity.

The European Central Bank on Monday described the continent's financial system as "resilient" with sufficient liquidity.

French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire welcomed the "good deal" for Credit Suisse.

"At the same time... it's a heavyweight in Europe, so we will remain extremely vigilant about the reaction of the markets," he told the BFM TV channel.

The losses came ahead of the Fed's policy meeting this week, with speculation mounting that it will pause its interest rate hikes to provide some stability to markets. The more dovish Fed outlook weighed on the dollar. The collapse this month of US regional lenders Silicon Valley Bank, Signature Bank and Silvergate sparked fears of contagion as worried customers withdrew cash.

It led US authorities last week to promise support for other lenders and depositors, while Wall Street titans including JP Morgan, Bank of America and Citigroup pledged to inject \$30 billion into under-pressure lender First Republic Bank.

# FFC hands over 67 reconstructed houses to affected populace



## F.P. Report

KARACHI: Torrential

rains and flash flooding had inundated a third of Pakistan last year with huge

losses to life and property of the victims. Fauji Fertilizer Company (FFC)

has a long history of standing with underprivileged community in testing times.

As part of recent flood rehabilitation activities, FFC strived to construct houses for flood affectees in the vicinity of Ghotki. Till date, 67 houses have been handed over to the residents of Ghotki, which includes six widows.

Efforts are in hand to complete construction and handing over of additional 22 houses before the onset of Ramadan Kareem so that the residents can joyfully celebrate Eid ul Fitr. FFC's Rehabilitation Project has garnered immense appreciation from locals for provision of solace and humanitarian support to underprivileged community.

# PSX's 100-index loses 411 points, closing at 40,918.45

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) declined by 411.50 points on Monday, showing a negative change of one per cent, closing at 40,918.45 points against 41,329.95 points the previous day.

A total of 195,477,553 shares were traded during the day as compared to 172,605,637 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs. 5,007 billion against Rs. 8,019 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 330 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 131 of them recorded gains and 178 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 21 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Unity Food Ltd with 25,054,065 shares at Rs.14.16 per share; WorldCall Telecom with 16,643,395 shares at Rs.1.21 per share and Fauji Foods Ltd with 15,140,985 shares at Rs.6.07 per share.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.56.00 per share price,

closing at Rs.18,256.00, whereas the runner-up was Premium Tex with an Rs.31.28 rise in its per share price to Rs.448.35.

Pak Services witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.112.00 per share closing at Rs.1,388.00; followed by Sapphire Tex. with Rs.85.47 decline to close at Rs.1054.26.

**Rupee sheds Rs 2.32 against dollar:** The

Gold prices decrease by Rs.1000 to Rs. 207,300 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.1000 and was sold at Rs. 207,300 on Monday against its sale at Rs. 208,300 the previous day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs. 858 to Rs.177,726 from Rs.178,584, whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went down to Rs.162,916 from Rs. 163,702.

The price of per tola silver and ten-gram silver remained unchanged at Rs. 2250 and Rs. 1929 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market dipped by US\$07 to \$1982 against its sale at \$1989, the association reported.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Tazeen Waisal Civil Judge VII/Judicial Magistrate/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No. 260/1. Institution 3/9/2022. Date of hearing. 28/4/2023. Mst. Husan Zeba VS Hadi Imran et. Notice to No. 9. Nazer Mohamad s/o Wali Mohamad resident of Kulyari tehsel Gagra district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 28/4/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court,

## Court Notice

In the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal No. 117/13. Institution 2/12/2022 Date of hearing. 31/3/2023. Shahi Bakht VS Mohamad Usman et. Notice to No. 9. Mst Bakht Zari d/o Gul Faraz. 15. Shah Sultan s/o Sarfaraz Khan. 27. Rehmanullah. 30. Ikramullah Khan sons of Wasil Den resident of Dagai tehsel Khadukhel district Buner. 31. Sher Mohamad s/o Sardar Khan. 32. Bakht Bahadur s/o Ali Bahadur resident of Panchman tehsel & district Swabi. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 31/3/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court,





## In brief

## Hamza wins ITC C'ships title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Hamza Asim battled hard against Yawar Ali to capture men's singles title of ITC OPEN Tennis Championships here at Islamabad Tennis Courts. Both Hamza and Yawar showed their class and played outstanding long rallies from the back of the court. In the super tie break Hamza showed powerful forehand and changed the match in his favour by 6-3, 4-6 (10-6). Fixtures in other categories also took place. Following are the complete results: Men Singles Main Results: Semifinal: Hamza Asim bt Zalan Khan 8-2; Yawar Ali bt Salar Khan 8-6 Final: Hamza Asim bt Yawar Ali 6-3, 4-6 (10-6) Super Tie break Men Doubles Results: Final: Yawar Ali and Zalan bt Murtaza Khan and Amin Khan 6-3, 3-6, (10-7) Tie break Ladies Singles: Final: Marukh Sajid bt Lalarukh Sajid 8-4; Under 18 Boys: Final: Mohammad Salar bt Haziq Asim 6-3, 5-7, (10-6) Tie break Under 14 Boys: Final: Haziq Asim bt Abdul Wasay 6-0, 6-3 Under 18 Girls: Semifinal: Marukh bt Ayesha 8-4; Lalarukh bt Amara Khan 8-4; Final: Marukh bt Lalarukh 8-2; Under 14 Girls: Semifinal: Lalarukh bt Aysa 8-4; Marukh bt Zara 8-1; Final: Lalarukh Sajid bt Marukh Sajid 8-3; Under 12 Boys/Girls: Semifinal: Abdul Wasay bt Sophei 5-3; Mahd Mehmood bt 5-2; Final: Abdul Wasay bt Mahd Mehmood 5-1; Under 10 Boys/Girls: Semifinal: Amir Maqsood bt Behroze 5-2; Ayesha bt Anaya 4-2; Final: Ayesha bt Amir Maqsood 5-3.

## WAPDA crowned Archery Champion

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): WAPDA reigned supreme in archery too, as it crowned National Archery Champion 2023. WAPDA won 10th DHA National Archery Championship with three gold, two bronze and one silver medals, while Pakistan Army finished as the runners-up with two gold, three silver and one bronze medals in the event. According to the details, WAPDA women's team comprising Kiran Muhammad, Nighat Naheed and Sadia Mai won gold medal in Women's team event, while WAPDA's archer Mubashar Nazar grabbed gold medal in Men's and WAPDA's archer Sadia Mai in Women's event. The Championship was held at Lahore under the aegis of Pakistan Archery Federation. Besides WAPDA and Pakistan Army, the teams hailing from DHA Lahore, HEC, Police, Railways, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh and Gilgit Baltistan participated in the Championship.

## Bangladesh-Ireland ODI washed out

SYLHET (Agencies): The second one-day international between Bangladesh and Ireland was called off due to rain in Sylhet on Monday after the home side posted their highest-ever ODI total. The rain prevented Ireland from starting their innings after the hosts reached 349-6 thanks to Mushfiqur Rahim's century, the fastest ODI ton by a Bangladeshi batsman. Match officials called the game off shortly after 8:30 pm (2030 GMT) with no prospect of the weather improving at Sylhet International Cricket Stadium. Bangladesh, fresh from beating England 3-0 in T20s, are 1-0 up in the series with one match remaining on Thursday.

# Revised itinerary of New Zealand's white-ball tour of Pakistan

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Cricket Board and New Zealand Cricket have unanimously agreed to make tweaks to the New Zealand men's cricket team's tour of Pakistan for five ODIs and five T20Is.

The side will now arrive in Lahore and will play three T20Is from 14-17 April, before traveling to Rawalpindi where the final two T20Is and first ODI will be played from 20-26 April.

The tour will culminate in Karachi with the remaining four ODIs to be played from 30 April to 7 May.

This is an additional tour by the New Zealand cricket team and the matches will count towards ICC Team Rankings. The ODIs will help Pakistan to prepare their side for the ACC Asia Cup and ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023, while the T20I will assist the PCB to continue with their rebuilding of the side for the ICC

Men's T20 World Cup 2024, which will be held in the USA and West Indies in June/July 2024.

**Revised Pakistan v New Zealand schedule:**  
14 Apr - 1st T20I, Lahore  
15 Apr - 2nd T20I, Lahore  
17 Apr - 3rd T20I, Lahore  
20 Apr - 4th T20I, Rawalpindi  
24 Apr - 5th T20I, Rawalpindi  
26 Apr - 1st ODI, Rawalpindi  
30 Apr - 2nd ODI, Karachi  
3 May - 3rd ODI, Karachi  
5 May - 4th ODI, Karachi  
7 May - 5th ODI, Karachi.

## Sindh Bank Crowned Champions



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The finals of the 19 th Governor Cup 2023 Inter Bank Regional Cricket Tournament of Karachi Region was held at the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Sports Complex on Saturday, March 18, 2023.

The final was played between Sindh Bank and SBP, and Sindh Bank was crowned champions by winning from SBP by 5 wickets and scoring 165 runs in a keenly contested game.

The 19 th Governor Cup 2023 Inter Bank Regional Cricket Tournament of Karachi Region was organized by SBP where 16 teams played in the tourna-

ment in pools of 4 comprising of 4 teams in each pool. Sindh Bank played and won all the 3 league matches and qualified for the quarter finals and won from HBL by 7 wickets. Sindh Bank then won by 5 wickets from Bank Al Habib in the semi-finals and then qualified for the finals.

A prize distribution ceremony was held at the SBP Sports Complex, on March 19, 2023, where the Chief Guest of the ceremony Syed Samar Husnain - Executive Director - SBP, Development Finance Group presented the winning team with the trophy. The ceremony was attended by the Sindh Bank

President & CEO Mr. Imran Samad and the Head of HR Mr. Baqir Hussain. Mr. Samad thanked SBP for organizing the cricket tournament and praised all the teams who played in the tournament.

Test cricketer Mr. Sarfaraz Ahmed was the Guest of Honour at the ceremony among the other executives of SBP and CEO's of commercial banks and senior management of SBP including Mr. Muhammad Ashraf Khan- Managing Director- Banking Services Corporation, Mr. Qasim Nawaz - Executive Director HR and Mr. Sajid Ali Shah- Chief Manager, Banking Services Corporation, Karachi.

## Pakistani Women Football Captain Maria gets 2nd Bint-e-Hawa achievement awards

PESHAWAR (APP): Captain of the Pakistani Women's Football team Maria Jamila Khan received Bint-e-Hawa achievement awards a joint venture of Bank of Khyber and Bint-e-Hawa.

Chief Organizer Bint-e-Hawa Achievement Award Alam Zeb handed over the Award to her on Monday.

Maria Jamila Khan appreciated and showed her gratitude for the acknowledgement from Bint-e-Hawa organizers. Her dedication to the Pakistani women's football team is commendable and it's won-

derful to see her being appreciated for her efforts.

Maria Jamila Khan is a well-known and brilliant footballer leading the Pakistan Women's team in the UAE football tournament. She had also been declared the best player in the tournament.

Maria Jamila Khan belongs to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and granddaughter of Hashim Khan the all-time great squash player. It is worth mentioning here that the 2nd Bint-e-Hawa Achievements Awards took place in Peshawar on 8th March 2023 but she did

not join the ceremony.

Bint-e-Hawa Achievements Awards represented and recognized dynamic ladies of our entire society who have the ability to face the challenges of society and tackle them with their expertise, skills, and experiences and make a difference in today's male-dominated culture.

They had nominated 80 women from different categories for awards who have contributed to women's empowerment and were capable of contributing towards the betterment of women's well-being.

## Karachi Women Football Club wins Super Football Cup final

KARACHI (PPI): The final match of Karachi Super Women Football Cup 2023 was played at Ansar Union Football Stadium Korangi with the support of High-Q, Shafaq Cooking Oil and DKT International under Marta Women Football Club in which Karachi Women Football Club beat Hazara Academy by 1-0 and won the final.

Yusra of the winning team scored the only goal in the 15th minute of the first half. Both teams performed well. Football fans in the stadium encouraged the players with great enthusiasm. Eight teams participated in the tournament. Zainab, the goalkeeper of Karachi Women's Football Club, won the award for the best goalkeeper.

The player of the tournament was Faiza Batul of Hazara Academy.

The chief guest and CEO of High-Q, Atif Iqbal, speaking on the occasion, said that women footballers are very talented. Special Guest Digital Marketing Manager TKD International Atifa said that, organizing women's football tournament is a good initiative.

Rais Khan, founder and president of the tournament organizer Marta Women's Football Club, said that they are trying to develop football under

On this occasion, Director MWFC Danish Parvez Khan, Zeeshan Zafar, prominent industrialist Kamran Khan, former international footballer Muhammad Siddique, Zia Khan, Fahmida Zameer, Ali Chingizi, match referee Islam Ansari, assistant Wasif and Saleh and match commissioner Hafs and others were also present.



WELLINGTON: New Zealand's players pose with the trophy after completing the series win.

## New Zealand beats Sri Lanka by an innings to take series 2-0

WELLINGTON (AP): Lanky fast bowler Blair Tickner and spinner Michael Bracewell slogged all day in a Basin Reserve gale to bowl New Zealand to an innings and 58 run win over Sri Lanka in the second test Monday and a sweep of the two-match series.

The win was completed with only minutes remaining on the fourth day and capped New Zealand's extraordinary summer of home test matches, which includes a one-run win over England at the Basin Reserve and a two-wicket win over Sri Lanka from the last ball of the first test.

Once again New Zealand couldn't win without drama as it pursued Sri Lanka's last two wickets in fading light and a blustering wind on Monday. Had it not bowled out Sri Lanka, it would have had to have returned to try to do so on the final day, when rain was forecast in Wellington.

Sri Lanka's last two pairs defied the New Zealand

bowlers for almost two hours before the home team secured the wickets it needed for victory. New Zealand had to bowl 142 overs to dismiss Sri Lanka in the second innings, after bowling 67 in the first innings before enforcing the follow on.

Dhanahaya de Silva made 98 and Dinesh Chandimal 62 to help Sri Lanka bat throughout all but a few minutes of the final day. Kusal Rajitha then batted for 2-1/2 hours, Prabath Jayasuriya and Lahiru Kumara for an hour each as the Sri Lanka tail gallantly tried to force the match into the fifth day when weather might intervene. Southey took 3-21.

New Zealand claimed an extra half hour as the light faded and Rajitha's long vigil ended when he fell to Tim Southee for 20 as Sri Lanka was all out for 358.

"Losing the toss and being asked to bat and being able to put a score on the board was very pleasing to see, and set up the performance the

bowlers produced over the last two days," New Zealand captain Tim Southee said.

"There are few weary bodies tonight so it's good to have that extra day off. We thought if we could put that one last push in tonight it was one less warm-up to do tomorrow." Double centuries by Kane Williamson and Henry Nicholls allowed New Zealand to post 580-4 in its only innings before it bowled out Sri Lanka for 164 and enforced the follow with the tourists 416 behind.

New Zealand came into the fourth day in a commanding position: Sri Lanka was 113-2 when play began, still 303 runs behind, and New Zealand found itself in a race to complete the win against the possibility of a rained-out final day. Dhananjay's partnerships with Chandimal and Nishan Madushka occupied most of the first two sessions and frustrated New Zealand. On both occasions Tickner was the partnership breaker.

## Punjab lifts National Women's Blind Cricket C'ship title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Punjab defeated Islamabad by eight wickets in the final to annex 2nd National Women's Blind Cricket Championship here at the Marghzar Cricket Ground Saidpur on Monday.

Punjab chose to field after winning the toss. Islamabad scored 108 runs for the loss of four wickets in the allotted 12 overs. In reply, Punjab chased the target in 9.3 overs at the loss of two wickets. Nisha and Noreen were the main contributors as they scored 55 and 20 runs respectively. Nisha was declared Man of the Match.

Four teams, including Punjab, Islamabad, Sindh and Azad Jammu and Kashmir participated in the championship. The championship was organized by the Pakistan Blind Cricket Association in collaboration with the Australian High Commission.

Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins, who was the chief guest at the closing ceremony, gave away trophies and prizes to the winner and runner-up teams.

**Australia HC organizes cricket training for blind women:**

The Australian High Commission (HC) organized a six-day cricket training for visually impaired women and girls from across Pakistan in collaboration with the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) and Serena Hotels here on Monday.

The training builds on Australia's support to PBCC since 2018 which led to the formation of Pakistan's first blind women's cricket team. The new team played its first international Twenty20 game in the same year said a news release.

Speaking at the award-

giving ceremony at the conclusion of the training, the Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Neil Hawkins shared that Australia's support aims to provide more women and girls with disabilities the opportunity to compete and demonstrate their ability while promoting inclusion in sport.

"We hope to break gender stereotypes and negative perceptions associated with people with disabilities through our support of this initiative. Australia and Pakistan share a passion for cricket, so we are happy to support the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council's efforts to bring women and girls living with disabilities into the sport," Hawkins added.

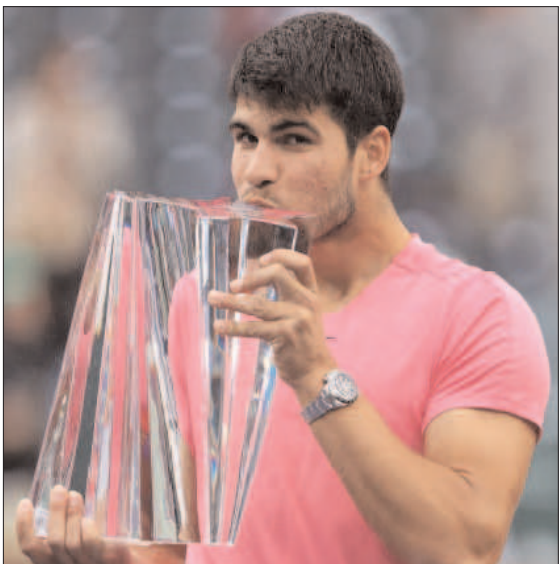
Coaches Abdul Razzaq, Tahir Butt and Bakhtawar Iqbal, who coached the national blind men's team, helped these players push

their boundaries.

The Chairman of the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council, Syed Sultan Shah, said, "Blind Cricket is a sport that has gained popularity in recent years for its unique approach to inclusivity. It provides an opportunity for people with visual impairments to compete at a high level, develop their skills and confidence, and become people of vision, both on and off the field. I hope that this initiative will inspire more people with disabilities to participate in sports and lead fulfilling lives."

Two blind factory workers invented blind cricket in Melbourne, Australia, in 1922 when they improvised the game using a tin can containing rocks. A few years later, in 1928, the first sports ground and clubhouse for blind cricket were built at Kooyong in Melbourne.

## Alcaraz back as world No 1 with Indian Wells win



Carlos Alcaraz of Spain with the winners trophy after defeating Daniil Medvedev in the final

INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): Carlos Alcaraz breezed past Daniil Medvedev to win the Indian Wells title and return to world number one.

Spaniard Alcaraz, 19, needed only one hour 11 minutes to seal a 6-3 6-2 win that took him above Novak Djokovic at the top of the ATP rankings. It is the US Open champion's third career Masters 1,000 title.

"It feels amazing to lift

the trophy here, to recover the number one. I would say this has been the perfect tournament," Alcaraz said.

Djokovic was forced to withdraw from the tournament in California because he was unable to enter the United States because he is not vaccinated against Covid-19. He will also miss this week's Miami Open, where Alcaraz is defending champion. Alcaraz broke Russian Medvedev early in the opening set to open up a

3-0 lead and never looked like relinquishing his grip on the match. He won the first 10 points of the second set to move into a 4-0 lead, before sealing victory without facing a break point.

"Daniil obviously didn't play at his best level, but I'm very happy for my performance and how I played this tournament," said Alcaraz. "I expected a tougher match. Against him is always a tactic match, and I did perfect today. That's why it looks easy - but it wasn't."

Alcaraz is only the second player after compatriot Rafael Nadal to win at least three Masters 1,000 titles as a teenager. He lost the world number one spot in January after Djokovic's triumph at the Australian Open, which Alcaraz missed because of injury.

He returned to action in February, winning the Argentina Open and reaching the final of the Rio Open. Alcaraz must successfully defend his Miami Open title in order to stay at the top of the rankings.

Defeat was Medvedev's

first in 19 matches, having come into the tournament on the back of successive wins in Rotterdam, Doha and Dubai. He struggled to cope with the windy conditions against Alcaraz and also appeared hampered by an ankle injury suffered in his fourth-round win over Alexander Zverev as well as a split thumb sustained in the quarter-finals against Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

"Why didn't I play my best? I don't know," said Medvedev. "Maybe it was his ball. Maybe it was the wind. The ankle, the thumb, the tennis, wind, whatever. But we almost made it. I will try to be better next time."

Nadal has dropped out of the world's top 10 for the first time since April 2005 - a run of 912 consecutive weeks.

The 36-year-old, who has slipped to 13th, has not played since injuring his left leg at the Australian Open, but is hoping to return on the clay of Monte Carlo next month.

## Rybakina beats Sabalenka to win Indian Wells title

Elena Rybakina avenged her defeat in the Australian Open final by beating Aryna Sabalenka in straight sets to win the Indian Wells title.

After a 78-minute opening set, Kazakhstan's Wimbledon champion Rybakina went on to win 7-6 (13-11) 6-4 for her maiden WTA 1000 triumph. It marks her first win over the world number two in five attempts.

In January, Belarusian Sabalenka beat Rybakina in three sets in Melbourne to win her first Grand Slam.

Sabalenka had dropped just one set en route to the Indian Wells final - her third this season - but under pressure from 10th seed Rybakina, the serving issues that plagued her last year returned as she hit 10 double faults in the first set alone.

Rybakina, who beat defending champion and world number one Iga Swiatek in the semi-finals, needed six set points - four of which were on her



Rybakina poses with the champions trophy after defeating Sabalenka in the womens singles final

own serve - before she could edge ahead in a lengthy tie-break.

The second set proved a considerably quicker affair, as Moscow-born Rybakina broke Sabalenka's serve to love in the first game.

After both players saw two break points apiece go begging, Rybakina went a double break up at 5-2 only for her opponent to break back in the next game.

But she served out the victory on her first match

point and has risen to a career-high position of seventh in the world rankings.

Rybakina, who missed out on 2,000 ranking points for her Wimbledon triumph last year after the tournament was punished for banning Russian and Belarusian players, says "the biggest goal" is to be number one in the world. In the men's final, Spanish top seed Carlos Alcaraz beat Russia's Daniil Medvedev 6-3 6-2.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 80,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 80,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 63,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1425.17 feet and was 27.17 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 22,700 cusecs while outflow as 30,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1095.30 feet, which was 45.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 20,800 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 35,600, 30,600, 28,100 and 9,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 12,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### More rain expected

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast another rain spell with heavy falls in various parts of Punjab, Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan from March 21-24. Another strong westerly wave is likely to enter in Pakistan from March 21 and likely to grip most parts of the country on March 22. In Balochistan, widespread rain-wind/thunderstorm with isolated heavy falls is expected in Quetta, Zhob, Ziarat, Khuzdar, Sibbi, Naseerabad, Jaffarabad, Dera Bugti, Barkhan, Harnai, Chaman, Pishin, Qilla Saifullah, Qilla Abdullah, Dalbandin, Nokkundi, Panjgur, Kalat, Gwadar, Lasbela and Makran Coast from March 21 (evening/night) to March 24. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, widespread rain-wind/thunderstorm with scattered heavy falls (isolated hail-storm) is expected in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Masehra, Abbottabad, Kohistan, Shangla, Buner, Hariapur, Karak, Peshawar, Kohat, Charsada, Nowshera, Swabi, Bajaur, Kurram, Waziristan, Mohmand, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan from March 21-24.

### Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Monday issued a power suspension programme for Tuesday 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 from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, Navy-I, Navy-II, Anguri, Shahpur, Shahdara, Mengyal, NIH, Athal, Punjab House, Bri Imam, Q u a i d - e - A z a m University, Khayaban Iqbal, Peer Suhawah, SCP, Mandala Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, BB Shaheed Hospital, Khanna Road, Gulazar Quaid, Airport, Gangal Feeder, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Islamabad Feed Mill, Jhata Hatial, Pind Jatla, Lab-II, Lab-I, Reliance Weaving Mill, Bhal, Jarrar Camp, Swan Garden-I, Swan Garden-II, River Garden, FECHS, SPD-II, PAF, RIC, Gracy Line, Rahmatabad-I, Jehangir Road Feeders, Attock Circle, Taxila-II, Taxila-I, Sher Shah Suri Feeders, Jhelum Circle, Shah Safer Feeder, Chakwal Circle, Sagarpur, Abdullahpur, CWO, Jalalpur, Sharif, Basharat, CS Shah.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf addressing the Senior Journalists & Anchorpersons of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists at Parliament House.

## NA panel briefs MoIB about draft legislation pertaining

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting on Monday was given a briefing on draft legislation pertaining to attached departments of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting including Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), Pakistan Information Department (PID), Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC), Associate Press of Pakistan (APP) and other related acts.

While briefing the panel, Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Shahera Shahid apprised that there were seven bills which were under consideration and the ministry will put forward the same to Cabinet Committee for Disposal of Legislative Cases (CCLC) after making amendments.

She said that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has been directed by the Islamabad High Court to consult all the stakeholders before

making the amendments.

She was of the view that the ministry was carrying out continuous engagements with the pertinent stakeholders, as directed by the IHC. She said that the ministry was also working on the protection of the journalists' draft bill and consultation was going on with the stakeholders in this regard.

The Secretary of Information mentioned that the cases pertaining to the protection of journalists and media professionals had been transferred from Human Rights Division to the Information Division, which has now transferred them to the Parliamentary Affairs Division.

The panel expressed dissatisfaction over the briefing given by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting regarding draft legislation.

The committee meeting chaired by Javaria Zafar Aheer, MNA directed that Minister for Information and Broadcasting should brief the committee on these amendments in its

next meeting.

The representative from the Islamabad Capital Territory Police briefed the committee on the progress of the cases pertaining to the protection of journalists and media professionals. He informed that the directions have been given to the patrolling officials of the ICT Police for the security of the media houses as well as the residences of the media professionals.

He also informed that as per directions of the court, only one FIR will be registered in one case. The committee directed that Minister for Interior may brief the committee regarding measures taken by the ministry for the protection of journalists in the next meeting. Later, the panel deferred the Private Member's Bill titled "The Indecent Advertisement Prohibition (Amendment) Bill, 2022" (moved by Muhammad Jamal-ud-Din, MNA) along with other legislative business and decided to consider the same in the next meeting.

### Mauritius embassy marks 55th Independence anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mauritius High Commissioner to Pakistan Rashidally Soobadar on Monday commemorated the 55th anniversary of Independence Day and 31st Mauritius Republic Day here at a local hotel.

The ceremony was commemorated by playing national anthems of both countries, which was also attended by the Dean of the diplomatic corps H.E. Mr Atadjan Novlamov, Additional Secretary Africa Mr Javed A. Umrani.

Speaking on the occasion Rashidally Soobadar lauded the deeply rooted cordial relations of both countries and said, today Mauritius is a safe and secure country, as it is one of the most peaceful countries on the African continent. He also thanked prominent personalities, diplomats, and excellencies and special thanks to the Deputy Head mission and staff for organising this event in a peaceful manner.

The high commissioner also highlighted the significance of independence and cherished the value of freedom. Mauritius has changed the whole destiny of the island in a short span of time, he added. On the occasion, his excellency offered sympathies with all the victims of natural calamities in Turkey, Syria and flood in Pakistan.

### World Poetry Day today

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Poetry Day will be marked on March 21 (Tuesday) across the globe including Pakistan, to appreciate and support poets and poetry around the world. It is held annually on March 21 and is an initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Many people around the world celebrate World Poetry Day on or around March 21 each year. Government agencies, educators, community groups and individuals get involved in promoting or participating in the day, which is an opportunity for children to be introduced to poetry in classrooms.

Poets may be invited to read and share their work with audiences at bookstores, cafes, universities and schools.

## Raja offers to mediate political reconciliation; vows to uphold journalists' rights

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has proposed to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation among political factions and stakeholders to overcome the current crisis and find a way forward.

Speaking to representatives of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), he emphasized the importance of a collaborative political culture where compromise is possible and stressed that parliament is the most important institution for resolving national issues.

The Speaker was of the opinion that politicians needed to let go of their stubbornness for the survival of the country.

The Speaker reaffirmed his commitment to upholding the fundamental rights of journalists and safeguarding their freedom and safety.

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting would take up their issues to voice their concerns and grievances and work towards finding effective solutions. The Speaker of the National Assembly has

emphasized the responsibility of journalists to maintain the quality of journalism and stressed the importance of upholding journalistic ethics and standards to ensure that the public receives accurate and unbiased information.

The Speaker has acknowledged the key role played by journalists in bringing politicians together on one platform.

He also recognized the sacrifices made by journalists in upholding democracy and stressed that they have a basic right to receive their salaries on time.

The Speaker announced the celebration of International Journalists' Remembrance Day on November 19th at Parliament House, where journalists from Pakistan will pay tribute to fallen colleagues and acknowledge the vital role of journalism in society. The newly elected officials of the Rawalpindi/Islamabad Union of Journalists (RIUJ) were administered the oath of office by the Speaker, reaffirming the National Assembly's commitment to supporting the welfare and professional development of journalists in the country.

## Pakistan Post issues commemorative postal stamp

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Post has issued the Commemorative Postal Stamp and Souvenir Sheet to mark the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Senate of Pakistan. According to the official source, the size of the Rs. 20 denomination commemorative stamp is 56 x 35 mm and is available for sale from March 15 at all important post offices in the country.

Along with the stamp, a souvenir sheet of Rs. 50 and two perforated commemorative stamps of

Rs.20 each are also being issued by Pakistan Post to mark the celebrations.

For the overseas orders of Stamps, the Manager Philatelic Bureau, Karachi GPO, or Manager National Philatelic Bureau, Islamabad GPO can be addressed while the request should be accompanied by a Bank Draft or Crossed Cheque en-cashable in Pakistan. Pakistan Post issues various commemorative stamps on important national and international

occasions, honouring great personalities and their achievements.

This tradition of commemorative stamps all around the world aims to put on record the legacies forged by various state institutions that merit a celebratory acknowledgment.

The Senate of Pakistan is celebrating 50 years of its advent, remembering and rejoicing in its pivotal role in strengthening the parliamentary system and promoting a free and fair democratic rule of law.

## Commissioner visits Pirwadhai Bus Stand to review cleanliness arrangements

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chhatta here on Monday visited Pirwadhai General Bus Stand and reviewed cleanliness arrangements.

The Commissioner visited different corners of the bus stand and directed the authorities concerned to provide all possible facilities to the passengers.

He expressed his annoyance over poor cleanliness condition particularly in washrooms. Zero tolerance policy would be adopted on cleanliness arrangements, he added. The Commissioner also visited the hotel

located at Pirwadhai General Bus Stand and reprimanded the hotel management for lack of facilities and poor cleanliness in the hotel. During the visit, he inquired about the facilities from the passengers.

He said all-out efforts would be made to provide high quality facilities to the passengers at Pirwadhai General Bus Stand.

Encroachments would be eliminated from IGP Road particularly from Rawalpindi side, the Commissioner said.

Later, he also visited the Pirwadhai petrol pump and directed the management to ensure cleanliness at the petrol pump and in its surrounding areas.

## Five bids to smuggle 3795 flour bags foiled

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police here on Monday foiled five bids to smuggle 3795 wheat flour bags.

According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities of the food department along with Potohar Division police conducted raids in different areas and rounded up five drivers namely Sabaz Ali, Noor Muhammad, Sahib Gul, Arab Gul and Wiki Khan and recovered 3795 wheat flour bags.

He informed that the accused were trying to smuggle wheat flour bags out of Rawalpindi division.

The Food Department Rawalpindi and district

police on the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) and City Police Officer, Rawalpindi also conducted raids at two godowns and recovered 230 flour bags besides netting Basit Khan and Hazrat Khan. He said strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against wheat smugglers and hoarders.

He further informed that District Administration on the directives of the Punjab government had set up 10 mega points to supply free flour to poor and deserving people. Four mega points had been set up in Rawalpindi while one each established at

tehsil level he said and informed that four counters were set up at each mega point including two for men and two for women. 232 trucking points would also be established in Rawalpindi district during Ramadan to facilitate the citizens, he said. He informed that 100,000 free flour bags would be distributed in Rawalpindi on a daily basis.

During Ramadan, three bags of free flour would be given per person and all-out efforts would be made to provide free flour to every poor and deserving citizen as the government was striving to provide relief to the people on priority.

## PR sells 3,705 metric tons scrap

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways (PR) has sold around 3,705 metric tons of scrap through fair and transparent bidding and reserved almost 11,836 metric tons for railways' use.

"The railways scrap is an asset of the country while scrap disposal target per annum is in billion of rupees which is added to the national exchequer," an official source in the Ministry told APP.

He said that copper scrap has not been disposed of for some time while some scrap was recently given on Government-to-Government basis and the department had received heavy amount in this regard.

Around 18,867 metric tons of scrap is yet to be auctioned and its estimated value was around Rs 2358.375 million at a cost of Rs125 per kg without taxes, he added.

He said Ministry of Railways has the concerned officers to speed up the sale auction process of pending scrap.

To a question, he said Pakistan Railways is trying its level best to transform itself into a profitable organization despite financial constraints. The department in this regard has developed a two-pronged action plan that included concentration on core activities and emphasis on revenue generation through non-core activities. He said Pakistan Railways has

been serving the nation since independence. There have been decades of neglect when it comes to investment in railway infrastructure and rolling stock. This neglect has adversely impacted the financial need of the department.

"During the first half of the current financial year 2022-23 brought more bad news for the department as the unprecedented floods due to climate change played havoc with the already dilapidated infrastructure," he added.

It not only resulted in revenue loss for Pakistan Railways as train operations remained suspended for more than 35 days but it also put a further burden on the department in terms of restoration of Railway traffic from its meager resources.

About the concentration on core activities, he said that Pakistan Railways has prepared a business plan in January 2023 to increase its revenue and reduce expenditure through improved governance. The plan is being implemented in letter and spirit. The recent initiatives towards digitization in form of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Railway Automated Booking and Travel Assistance (RABTA) also aim to increase efficiency and reduced the revenue expenditure gap.



ISLAMABAD: CDA workers fixing national flags on flyover at Srinagar Highway in connection with National Day of Pakistan.



**15 people suffer casualties**

WARDAK (Agencies): Afghan security officials on Monday said that fifteen (15) people were injured in a car accident in Sayeed Abad district of Maidan Wardak province of Afghanistan. The provincial's public health director acknowledged the incident to this news agency and said that a woman and five children were also among those injured in the accident. The injured were taken to the provincial hospital for treatment.

**Poppy farms destroyed**

KANDAHAR-FARAH (Agencies): The security officers destroyed several acres of poppy farms in Kandahar and Farah provinces, officials said Monday. According to local officials, 10 acres of poppy farms have been eradicated in Spin Boldak district of Kandahar province. Officials say that more poppy farms spanning 122 acres of land have been eradicated since the launch of counter-narcotics campaign in the province.

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

## Women in Herat create online education for female students

HERAT (TOLONews): A group of women in Herat have created an online educational program called Maktab to provide access to study subjects for female students above the sixth grade.

They said that female students can install the program on their phones and access all school subjects.

"We use this program "Maktab" so we can always have an open school for students so they can be educated," said Maryam Muneeb, executive director of the school program. They say schools and universities help them provide educational materials for this online program.

Meanwhile, some girls urged schools and universities to reopen in the country for girls. "Few days remain in the new academic year and all girls are waiting for schools to reopen for them," said Mahjabin, a student.

"We hope this new year that schools will be opened for girls and that they lift all restrictions and reopen all schools and



universities," said Parwen, a student.

While universities and schools remain closed for girls, the launch of online education courses for girls is considered an effective opportunity.

"Online education courses can be a good source of education for students," said Khadijah Mukhtar Zada, a lecturer.

According to a current government decision, it has been more than one year that schools and universities have been closed for girls.

## IE forces given chance to return to school



KHOST (TOLONews): Officials of the education department in Khost said that 500 of the Islamic Emirate security forces have taken the registration exams in order to return to school.

Officials said the exam will be given once every six months just to Islamic Emirate forces.

"They choose a class, and we will give the exam

to them and they pass, they can join that class," said Khirgul Khirkhah, deputy of the education department in Khost.

"The process is going very well and it's a transparent process," said Abdul Manan Haqqani, a member of the exam committee.

Some participants in this exam welcomed the process and said they are happy to

receive modern education.

"I studied a little bit in grades 9, 10, 11 and now I want to give an exam for 12th grade and study 12th grade classes," said Alif Khan, a participant in the exam.

"We welcome this work of leadership that provides us this opportunity," said Esmat, a participant in the exam.

## IEA ban Nowruz celebration in Daikundi

DAIKUNDI (Khaama Press): Taliban have banned the celebration of the Afghan festive Nowruz in the central Daikundi province, warning residents if they are caught celebrating the occasion, they will be treated accordingly.

Taliban's Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice in an announcement said the group's regulators have told people "Islam prohibits the celebration of Nowruz".

According to this announcement, Taliban observers have met with the worshippers of at least 35 mosques in Daikundi, and have asked them to resist the "Western ideas, Khawarij and rituals that are not in line with Islam".

In this declaration,

Nowruz is attributed to the "era of ignorance" and people are warned that the occasion is promoted by "foreigners" among Muslims.

The ministry of vice and virtue of the Taliban has warned ordinary people to refrain from celebrating "alien and un-Islamic customs, and days that are not holy in Islam".

The popular festival was banned during the Taliban's previous rule between 1996 and 2001. However, last year the group said they will not celebrate the Nowruz, but have no problem with those celebrating it.

Nowruz has been celebrated for more than 3,000 years, observed by adherents of both the main branches of Islam – Sunnis and Shias in Afghanistan,

Iran, Central Asia, and parts of the Middle East – and usually marked by a public holiday.

Banning the Nowruz celebration, which marks the arrival of spring in Daikundi, indicates the ruling regime's opposition to the popular festive, which prompted widespread criticisms in the past as well.

Nowruz celebration is one of the ancient rituals of the people of Afghanistan, being celebrated in different ways, similar to other countries so-called "Nowruz region".

The United Nations officially recognized the "International Day of Nowruz" with the adoption of Resolution 64/253 by the UN General Assembly in February 2010.

## Houses built for hundreds of families in Ghor



GHOR (Agencies): 1,505 families affected by war and natural disasters in Dawlat Yar district of Ghor provided with houses, local officials at the Department of Refugees and Repa-

triations of the province.

The provincial head of Refugees and Repatriations of Ghor, Mohammad Isa Iqbal, said that these houses were built in the villages of Mazar, Pashta Noor,

Qazi and Dawlat Yar district in cooperation with the Afghan Aid organizations.

He said that 401 of these houses were completely renovated and 1104 were restored.

## Afghan currency surges against Dollar

KABUL (TOLONews): The value of Afghan currency has recently increased against the US dollar in the Kabul market. One dollar was sold for 87 Afs in Sarai Shahzada, the country's biggest money market.

The money exchangers at Sarai Shahzada said that the prices of Afghan currency increased against the US dollar due to the auctions of the US dollar by the Central Bank.

"Da Afghanistan Bank had two auctions in one week. This has increased the value of the Afghan currency," said Zabiullah, a money exchanger.

"In the last week, the dollar has dropped by 50, 30, or 40 cent every day. One dollar was exchanged for 91 Afs but it is no less than 87 Afs," said Abdul Rahman Zirak, a spokesman for the Union of Sarai Shahzada Money Exchangers.

The Central Bank said that it has put up for auction more than \$64 million within the last 10 days.

"The reason is... that the dollar is increased in the rest of the world but drops in Afghanistan, it is a commercial move which is a plot against Afghanistan," said Sayed Masoud, an economist.

Afghanistan purchases the majority of its imports with US dollars.

100 uplift projects conducted in one year

LOGAR (Agencies): Many construction and development projects worth two billion Afghanis conducted in Logar during 1401 solar year, say local officials at the Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development of the province.

582 projects worth two billion Afghanis from the government budget in coordination with 27 aid organization has been conducted in Logar in a year, said Mawlawi Mohammad Qasim Rashid the head of Logar Rural Rehabilitation and Development in a press conference.

The projects include construction of roads, graveling of roads, construction of thousands of meters of retaining wall, streams, rivers, construction of canals, cleaning of canals, and construction of cisterns and digging of water wells, which have covered thousands of families, according to the department.

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## Ex-Australian soldier charged with war crime

KABUL (Agencies): A former member of the Australian military has been charged with a war crime over the killing of an Afghan civilian.

The 41-year-old man was arrested in New South Wales and charged with murder following a joint investigation between the Office of the Special Investigator (OSI) and the Australian Federal Police, according to a joint statement from the OSI and the police.

The former soldier has been remanded in custody and will appear in a Sydney court at a later date. "It will be alleged he murdered an Afghan man while deployed to Afghanistan with the Australian Defence Force," the statement said.

If found guilty, the former soldier, who is the first serving or former member of the Australian military to face war crimes charges, faces a life sentence. The police did not name the man, reported Al Jazeera.

The OSI was set up in the wake of 2020's Brereton Report, which found there was "credible evidence" that some of Australia's elite soldiers unlawfully killed 39 people while deployed in Afghanistan.

It recommended 19 current or former members of the special forces should be investigated by police over 23 incidents involving the killings of "prisoners, farmers or civilians" between 2009 and 2013.

## Inter-agency agreement to streamline official procedures for public

KABUL (TOLONews): An agreement to simplify the administrative process has been signed between the administration reform and civil service department, the Afghanistan Technical Vocational Institute, and the Higher Education Ministry.

The administration reform and civil services department said that in less than a year more than 300 work processes in different ministries have been simplified and citizens of the country can process their documents at government institutions with greater ease.

"We have simplified 304 work procedures in various ministries in the past 10 or 11 months," said Abdul Hanan Arifullah, head of the administration reform and civil services.

According to the Higher Education ministry, the documents that were processed in one month now are processed in just



ten days.

"We assured people, teachers, and students that we would solve their problems in an easy way, and we did it," said Nida Mohammad Nadim, acting minister of Higher

Education.

The Afghanistan Technical Vocational Institute pledged continued improvements to the process.

"Before when our brothers came for their docu-

ments the process took several days and they stayed here for a few days, but today the process is very short," said Ghulam Haidar Shahamat, head of the technical and vocational institute.

## Former military personnel in dire situation: HR Commission

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHR) in an announcement has called for immediate attention to be paid to the situation of former Afghan military personnel, adding some governments in the region deploy these soldiers in regional wars.

The Human Rights Commission in a fresh announcement on Sunday said unlawful detainment, tortures, and extra-judicial killings of the former government's army personnel have increased in

Afghanistan.

As per the announcement, some of these military officials who have moved to the neighboring countries earlier, with their visas expired, are now forced to live illegally in those countries.

Based on existing evidence, AIHR emphasizes that "some countries in the region use former Afghan soldiers as a combat force in regional wars".

AIHR points out at dire situation of the former military officials and their family members, most of

whom are poor and helpless, have fallen into the trap of criminal groups and suffer terrible stories – and an uncertain future awaits them.

As per the findings of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, the Islamic Emirate officials are accused of mistreating former Afghan military personnel, in some cases, the extreme tortures have ended in deaths.

The AIHRC calls on all those governments who fought in Afghanistan to

fight terrorism and recently irresponsibly left their allies alone to be accountable for their decisions and the painful fate of their Afghan allies.

Since the return of the Taliban to power, the human rights situation in the country has been dire. Under a heavy atmosphere of surveillance and censorship, systematic violations of human rights across the country have been reported by authoritative human rights bodies and civil society actors.

The general amnesty announced by the Taliban was never held, and hundreds of former military personnel have been subject to torture, unlawful detainment, and extra-judicial killings throughout Afghanistan.

## Female restaurateur provides jobs for 20 poor women



KABUL (Pajhwok): A Kabul-based woman entrepreneur has opened a restaurant in the capital, providing job opportunities for 20 needy females.

Two years ago, Samira Mohammadi established the eatery called "Banoan Afghan" at a cost of 100,000 Afghanis in the Khaikhana area of Kabul, where 20 women are currently working.

Ahead of the new solar year, the café owner said they had organised a Samanak party — an ancient traditional gathering of women.

She added 20 poor women were working at the restaurant, preparing delectable recipes like aushak, bolani, mantu, samosa, pizza and ice cream.

In addition to the 20 women, she said, 30 men

were also working in different sections of the eatery.

With regard to worker salaries, Samira said: "Since ours is a relatively new restaurant, it doesn't have a huge budget. We pay our employees to the extent that their daily expenses are met."

She promised providing jobs for 500 more women in the future in case of cooperation from donors.

## Deputy PM meets Takhar Governor

KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir met with Mawlawi Zia ul-Rahman Madani, the governor of Takhar.

The governor of Takhar shared details about the security situation of Takhar, said that the officials of the Islamic Emirate have affable connections with the people, adding that there is complete coordination between all the organs.

For his part, Deputy Prime Minister, Kabir expressed his satisfaction with the maintain of security in Takhar, termed the cooperation of the people necessary, and gave some instructions for the management of the situation in Takhar.

## Son of Depy Governor of Jawzjan fired

JAWZJAN (Agencies): Deputy Governor of Jawzjan province, Mawlawi Gul Mohammad Salim fired his son from his position.

Based on a decree of supreme leader of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on the dismissal of the sons and relatives of officials of the Islamic Emirate from positions in government organs, Mawlawi Gul Mohammad Salim, the deputy governor of Jawzjan province, fired his son from his position.

His son was working in a security post in the headquarters of Jawzjan province. Based on the decree issued by supreme leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, all the officials of Ministries and government organs have been directed to refrain from employment based on relatives' ties and such employment ordered to be separated.

## UK's MOD apologized to Afghan applicants

KABUL (Khaama Press): The UK's Ministry of Defence (MOD) has apologized to Afghan applicants for the 'reckless' error who were previously told to validate their documents with the Taliban-led government.

The British government confirmed on Sunday that 37 applicants to the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Police (ARAP) scheme, designed to relocate those who directly assisted British forces, asked to validate their documents with the Taliban government. However, the UK refuses to recognize the Taliban's

government.

Several applicants have received emails from officials requesting documentation to be sent with stamps from the Afghan government.

Following an earlier denial of the practice, the MoD has now expressed its "unreservedly for this error".

One MP compared the request to "asking them to sign their death warrant", and charities said that individuals were trying to flee the country and were being put in danger.

However, the Ministry

finally admitted to the mistake "we corrected the mistake and urgently strengthened our internal guidelines to ensure this does not happen again". The MoD spokesperson said. "We apologize unreservedly and continue to work tirelessly to move eligible people to safety," he added, reported by Guardian.

The British government promised to relocate up to 20,000 Afghans, but 11,212 Afghans have already done so in the UK as part of the ARAP programme, according to UK Home Office data.





MOSCOW: Chinese President Xi Jinping meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin at Kremlin.

## Xi and Putin meet in Moscow as Ukraine war rages

MOSCOW (Agencies): Chinese President Xi Jinping met his "dear friend" Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Monday, seeking both to deepen economic ties with an ally he sees as a useful counterweight to the West and to promote Beijing's role as a potential peacemaker in Ukraine.

Xi was the first leader to meet the Russian president since the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for him on Friday over the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia during its year-old invasion of Ukraine. Moscow said the charge was one of several "clearly hostile displays" and opened a criminal case against the ICC prosecutor and judges. Beijing said the warrant reflected double standards.

Russia is presenting Xi's trip, his first since securing an unprecedented third term this month, as evidence that it has a powerful friend in its standoff with a hostile West. The two men greeted one another as "dear friend" when they met in the Kremlin on Monday afternoon before dinner, to be followed by formal talks on Tuesday.

Putin told Xi he viewed China's proposals for a resolution of the Ukraine conflict with respect and was also "slightly envious" of China's rapid development in recent decades. "China has created a very effective system for developing the economy and strengthening the state. It is much more effective than in many other countries," he said.

For Xi, the visit is a diplomatic tightrope. China has released a broad 12-point proposal to solve the Ukraine crisis, while strengthening relations with Moscow. Beijing has repeatedly dismissed Western accusations that it is planning to arm Russia but says it wants a closer energy part-

nership after boosting imports of Russian coal, gas and oil.

"Both sides are continuously strengthening political mutual trust, creating a new paradigm of relations between major powers," Xi wrote in an article published in Russia ahead of his trip. Western sanctions made Russian energy cheaper, saving China billions of dollars, but its top trade partners remain the United States and European Union. Ukraine said China should press Russia to stop its invasion. "We expect Beijing to use its influence on Moscow to make it put an end to the aggressive war against Ukraine," Ukrainian foreign ministry spokesperson Oleg Nikolenko said. Xi said China's Ukraine peace proposal, an unspecific document released last month, reflects global views.

"Complex problems do not have simple solutions," he wrote in Rossiiskaya Gazeta, a daily published by the Russian government, according to a Reuters translation from Russian. Ukraine and its Western allies say any truce would just buy Putin time to reinforce ahead of a planned Ukrainian counter-offensive and that for Russia and China to uphold international law as they say they do, they must agree to Russia's withdrawal. White House national security spokesperson John Kirby reiterated that call, adding that US President Joe Biden wanted to speak with Xi to keep communication channels open.

Putin signed a "no limits" partnership with Xi last year shortly before he sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine to end what he said was a threat to Russia from its neighbour's moves towards the West. The year-long war has killed tens of thousands of people, destroyed cities and forced millions to flee. The Kremlin said

Putin would provide Xi with detailed "clarifications" of Russia's position, without elaborating.

Putin said Russia was helping to build nuclear power reactors in China and the two countries were deepening cooperation in space exploration and new technologies. As Western pressure on Russia grows, Putin's administration has told officials to stop using Apple iPhones because of concerns the devices are vulnerable to Western intelligence agencies, a newspaper reported on Monday.

"Either throw it away or give it to the children," the Kommersant daily quoted a participant of the meeting as saying. Justice ministers from around the world met in London on Monday to discuss support for the ICC, whose chief prosecutor Karim Khan called on Russia to repatriate the Ukrainian children to prove it is acting in their best interests as it says it is.

Several European Union countries agreed in Brussels to jointly buy 155 mm artillery shells for Ukraine, which sees them as critical as both sides fire thousands of rounds every day. Fierce fighting continued in the eastern Ukrainian town of Bakhmut where Ukrainian forces have held out since last summer in the longest and bloodiest battle of the war.

Giving its regular morning roundup from the front, Ukraine's military said defenders in Bakhmut, Lyman, Ivanivske, Bohdaniivka and Hryhorivka — all towns in the Donetsk region — had repelled 69 Russian attacks in the past day. British intelligence said Ukrainian supply lines both west of Bakhmut and west of the town of Avdiivka, further south, were under pressure. Ukraine's military said that Russian forces were on the defensive in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions to the south.

### Zaman Park incident: Punjab CM announces JIT

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday announced formation of a joint investigation team (JIT) to investigate the Zaman Park incident.

Addressing a press conference in Lahore today, he said the JIT would investigate the incidents took place during the last five to seven days. The caretaker chief minister said that the police have been given a "free hand" to establish the writ of the state in the province. Mr Naqvi claimed that there are terrorists in Zaman Park residence of Imran Khan. Free hand has been given the IGP with an order to deal with miscreants with iron hand, he added. The caretaker chief minister warned that any hand raised against the state would be broken.

He said that the PTI supporters destroyed a police vehicle and snatched arms from the officials. "No political worker acts like this. People from outside Punjab have been languishing in Zaman Park," he maintained. He said that the police cleared the Zaman Park area and restored traffic. "We do not want that the situation gets out of control. We do not want bloodshed. Maintaining writ of the state is foremost priority," Mr Naqvi stressed.

The caretaker chief minister said he was standing by the police force. "No one will be allowed to break the law. Whoever will break the law, will be dealt with sternly. Police have been ordered to take legal action against the law breakers," the caretaker chief minister added. Mr Naqvi claimed that Imran has told his workers to kill the police. "If he threatens police, he should return the police posse assigned to his security. Police cannot provide him security if he abuses the force," he concluded.

### Another audio-tape of Justice Saqib Nisar surfaces

ISLAMABAD (INP): A purported audio tape featuring a conversation between two voices believed to be that of former chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar and PTI Chief Imran Khan's lawyer Khawaja Tariq Raheem surfaced on Monday. Both former CJP Nisar and lawyer Raheem are talking about PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz in the purported audio tape.

While talking about Maryam, Raheem voice says: "The way she talks, she should be given a befitting reply. She must be sorted outside. This woman talks too much." On this, former chief justice Nisar replies: "I do you know what I think. I remember what elder Tarar Sahib used to say. He would say if someone barks, stay away from him." Raheem: "That's right. You have already given your reply on ARY."

Nisar: "Alhamdulillah, I have got courage and I can bear this. I don't want to get confused or depressed. If it's necessary, I will let you know to explode something. Then you should explode." Raheem: "Just let me know. I will do whatever you say." Nisar: "I will let you know." Raheem: "Anytime you like."

### PTI committed to hold 'mega power show'

LAHORE (INP): The central leadership of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has made it clear that they would definitely hold 'mega power show' with or without permission at Minar-e-Pakistan on Wednesday. PTI Chairman Imran Khan had earlier announced on Sunday a "mega power show" at Minar-e-Pakistan in Lahore on Wednesday, the eve of the Pakistan Day celebrations.

PTI recently tried to take out a rally in Lahore but was stopped by the caretaker government twice, however, this time around, the party is determined to proceed with its massive public gathering at the Greater Iqbal Park without or without the authorities' permission. Former Punjab governor Omer Sarfraz Cheema, while talking to a local newspaper stated that the party had applied for permission in compliance with the court's orders, however, instead of giving them the permission, the authorities prepared a list of hundreds of workers to arrest.

## Imran Khan dubs Maryam 'queen of liar' — electioneering being denied ahead of April 30 polls in Punjab

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Referring to alleged difficulties in running election campaigns in Punjab, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on Monday accused the government of creating hurdles in connection with the environment for the general elections despite the date drawing near.

Talking about the police action at his Zaman Park, Khan said that the Punjab police broke down the gate and walls of his house. The PTI chairman also urged his supporters not to take up arms, adding that the party did not want anarchy but the elections in the country. Attempts are being made to create "division" in the country, he added.

Recalling the police action at the Federal Judicial Complex, Khan

said his lawyers were baton-charged inside the compound. "A person who reached Islamabad for the rule of law and this happens..." "Namaloom Afraad" [unknown people] were present inside the judicial complex." The PTI chairman went on to say that he was mentally prepared for the arrest. "Democracy and the Constitution are being killed. Nobody cares about the Constitution," he added.

He also claimed that over 100 FIRs, including terrorism cases, had been filed against him. Turning his guns towards Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz, Imran Khan said the 'queen of liars' thinks as if Pakistan is her fiefdom. "She says that her father [Nawaz Sharif] is Nelson

Mandela. Forgive him," the ousted premier added.

"Law of the jungle" prevails in the country, Khan said, adding that the 'queen of liars' is above the law and dictating the authorities. Strongly reacting to the judicial complex incident, Khan said that a plan was in place to assassinate him at the complex. He said that they are collecting evidence and announced that the proof would be sent to the United Nations Human Rights Council and the European Union.

Moreover, the PTI leader also accused the Pakistan Democratic Movement — a 13-party ruling alliance — to bring the army and the PTI face to face to postpone the elections. "This is my country and my army. I will live and die here. I will not flee abroad," Khan categorically clarified.

## PTI leader, 7 others killed in attack on vehicle

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: At least seven persons including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) tehsil nazim Atif Munsif Khan were killed after unidentified assailants opened fire at a vehicle in Abbottabad on Monday.

PTI Tehsil Nazim Havelian Atif Munsif Khan along with six others killed in a horrific car firing incident in Abbottabad. Overall eight persons were present in the car which caught fire after heavy firing. The bodies present in the vehicle were completely burnt. District Police Officer (DPO) Umar Tufail told the media that the attack was apparently carried out by unidentified men due to

personal enmity.

DPO Umar Tufail said that the firing incident took place near Havelian and people are confirming the presence of the tehsil nazim in the vehicle. He added that the vehicle caught fire due to heavy firing resorted to by the attackers.

Tufail said the dead and the injured had been moved to the Abbottabad District Headquarters Hospital for treatment. Atif hailed from Basti Sher Khan and was the son of former provincial minister Munsif Khan Jadoon. He was elected the Havelian tehsil nazim as an independent candidate in the 2022 municipal elections.

PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry



offered well wishes for the deceased. PTI's Faisal Javed said the provincial government should "immediately bring the criminals to justice and punish them according to the law". Former KP chief minister Mahmood Khan also strongly condemned the "attack" on Atif and said such an assault on a political leader was "very tragic".

## Imran always sabotage economic uplift: Ahsan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Monday said Imran Khan Niazi, for personal gains, always attempted to cause a dent in national progress and sabotage development activities taking place in the country.

"Since 2002, this person (Imran Khan) has a track record of no constructive work. Every time he gets angry and goes out of the Parliament. Now he did a hat trick. He resigned in 2002, 2013 and 2018, besides dissolving two provincial assemblies due to his rigidity to collapse the system," he said while addressing a news conference here.

He questioned whenever Pakistan's wheel of progress started moving at a steady pace, why Imran Niazi always fanned lawlessness, caused political instability and agitation. He said the resignations and the assemblies' dissolution had not served his (IK) purpose of collapsing the system, adding the only option that remained with Imran Khan was to launch riots for creating anarchy and lawlessness.

"Now when Pakistan is trying to come out of IK government's failed economic policies which caused financial uncertainty, restoring economic contacts with the world and agreement with IMF... he (Imran) is again attempting to sabotage the national progress and economic uplift," he said.

Ahsan Iqbal said Imran Niazi always exhibited 'fascist attitudes' throughout his political career to press opponents for personal gains, using all illegal and unconstitutional means, adding, in 2018, Imran Niazi constantly ignored and bulldozed the parliament. He recalled that during the no-confidence motion against Imran Khan in the National Assembly, Speaker and Deputy Speaker took unconstitutional measures by disposing of the motion which was followed by the dissolution of the Lower House of the Parliament. But the apex court restored the National Assembly and declared all unconstitutional measures null and void, he added.

Khan because the person (IK) was getting decisions of his own choice, adding there should be the same facility for all litigants in court that had been extended to the PTI chairman. There should be one law for everyone, if a litigant does not come to the court in time for any reason, the court must wait for he/she instead of disposing of the case, he added.

The planning minister said almost the whole top leadership of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had been appearing and facing court cases, but contrary to it Imran Khan caused riots to avoid case hearings but no notice had been taken. "With a supersonic speed, bails are being granted in all cases to the VIP (IK). We too were citizens of this country, but our bail applications took weeks in taking up to the hearing... our leadership had to spend months even years in jails to get justice." He said evidences were surfacing that Imran Niazi in an organized way managed a riot to avoid appearing in a case at the Judicial Complex court by bringing with him 'professional people,' having experience in launching subversive activities, to beat the unarmed law enforcers who were just performing their duties to ensure court orders' compliance.

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The planning minister said Imran Niazi damaged the investment that was pouring into the country under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, adding the PTI government laid the foundation of inflation by devaluating the rupee against the dollar and in the last year opened the \$72 billion import to show artificial growth and benefit friends with issuing import licenses.

"Imran Khan's four years in power have shaken the foundations of the national economy, politics and socioeconomics. He only caused polarization and promoted the culture of using abusive language against opponents, making the party workers fanatic," he added. Ahsan Iqbal said it was high time to understand the evil designs of Imran Niazi to ensure rule of law and supremacy of the constitution, showing 'zero tolerance' for such miscreants who made the entire system 'hostage.' "There will be action against all those who have been involved in the riot, establishing writ of the state," he vowed.

### 198 PTI workers arrested

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Islamabad police have arrested as many as 198 workers of PTI for attacking police and vandalising public property, according to a report on Monday. Raids for further arrests are underway. The suspects are being ascertained with the help of CCTV cameras. Islamabad police had registered cases at Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) and Golra police stations over violent incidents by the PTI workers.

At least 58 police officials were injured due to stone pelting and vandalism by the PTI workers during protests. Four vehicles and 25 motorcycles of police were burnt while nine police vehicles were vandalised.

### PTI did not run any drive against COAS: Fawad

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice President Fawad Chaudhry said on Monday that his political party did not run any campaign against the army chief.

Fawad Chaudhry, while talking to the journalists today, said that PTI respects the army chief and it did not run any campaign against him. He said that the country cannot bear the consequences of ethnic riots. He asked the caretaker Punjab chief minister Mohsin Naqvi to give his statements carefully instead of playing with the fire.

He said that Naqvi should give balanced statements and refrain from supporting the violence. Chaudhry added that the chief minister should stop spreading hatred against a specific community. Reacting to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's statement, he said that the premier's statement is an attempt to create distance between the army and the nation. "PTI has neither run any campaign against the army chief nor is planning to do it. PTI respects the army chief."

The PTI vice president said that Imran Khan thinks if the military becomes weak then it will also make the country weaker. He expressed hopes to bring politics to normalcy. Condemning the arrest of Imran Khan's focal person, Fawad Chaudhry said that Hassaan Niazi was taken into custody along with his lawyer. He criticised that lawyers are illegally being taken into custody which is a condemnable act. He demanded the authorities immediately release Hassaan Niazi and other PTI workers.

Fawad Chaudhry said that they are deliberating on taking legal action against the operations and crackdowns which are tantamount to contempt of court. He added that they will lodge a robbery case against Mohsin Naqvi and Inspector General (IG) Punjab.

## Gandapur booked in firing case; four guards arrested

BHAKKAR (PPI): Bhakkar police Monday registered a case on terrorism charges against PTI leader and former minister Ali Amin Gandapur for creating rumour and resorting to fire at a police post.

According to police, a drunk Gandapur and his guards were signaled to stop at the post on Sunday night but they resorted to firing and fled away. Police launched a chase and detained four guards of Gandapur and also impounded their vehicle.

After registering the case under ATA7 and other sections, the Bhakkar police have decided to contact Dera Ismail Khan police for the arrest of the accused. Earlier, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Amin Gandapur and his gunmen fired shots at policemen after the former went berserk over being stopped for checking at Dajal check-

post in Bhakkar district. According to the Bhakkar district police officer (DPO), the policemen narrowly escaped the shots fired at them indiscriminately. Ali Amin Gandapur fled the scene after firing shots at the policemen. He was on his way to Dera Ismail Khan when the incident took place near Bandri. "At the checkpoint on the border of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab, all the vehicles have to be checked before entry," the DPO said. Bhakkar police said that the DPO had also reached the spot on being informed of the incident. "The incident is being reviewed," they added. The police also said that there were six to seven vehicles in Gandapur's convoy that also resisted Dera Ismail Khan police's attempt to stop it.

"It is feared that there were illegal goods in the

vehicles. The incident had occurred on Darya Khan bridge. The vehicles in the convoy sped away after the police went after them," they stated. Meanwhile, Bhakkar police Monday evening reached Dera Ismail Khan to arrest Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Amin Gandapur.

The former federal minister Gandapur is trying to get a pre-arrest bail from the court before any raid by the police at his hidden location in DI Khan. According to the sources, the Bhakkar police have decided to arrest PTI Chairman Imran Khan's bold aide Ali Amin Gandapur in any case. And, for this purpose, personnel were called from all the police stations across the district while protective equipments are also being provided to the personnel in the police line, the sources said.

## Narcotics cases: PHC makes video obligatory

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has made mandatory provision of video for the police, Anti-Narcotics Force, Narcotics Control, Customs and Excise and Narcotics Eradication Teams for narcotics recovery from the accused in legal proceedings.

The directive issued by Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan in a narcotics recovery case will be implemented from April 15th next. Justice Ibrahim Khan in his verdict directed the law enforcers to adopt this new method for error-free proceedings from April 15th 2023. The reason behind filming a video of the narcotics recovery will help save the innocent people from induction in narcotics cases.

The decision said if officials did not have a mobile camera for making a video than the investigation team will be responsible for providing a camera for filming the video of recovery. The decision also bound the lower courts to adopt the new method of video evidence in cases related to narcotics recovery.

**PHC rejects policemen's bail in murder:** Justice Muhammad Ijaz Khan of Peshawar High Court (PHC) has rejected bails of two policemen alleged murderers involved in killing of Jahan Zeb College's student in the premises of Banr police station, on Monday.

According to prosecution, policemen namely Safer Ullah and Nawab abducted Ubaid Khan from Banr chowk and then tor-

tured within police station while latterly killed him.

The prosecution argued that both policemen Safer Ullah and Ubaid were identified in the premises of local Magistrate while several other police personnel are behind the bars in the same offense.

It is worthy to mention that police department conducted inquiry in this regard following public protests on larger scale while Safer Ullah and Ubaid were taken into custody along with other policemen involved in the murder. The petitioners had approached PHC following rejection of bail petitions by honorable trial court. Peshawar High Court (PHC)'s single bench of Justice Muhammad Ijaz Khan rejected bail petitions after conclusion of arguments.