

**One killed, 8 injured**  
**F.P. Report**  
CHARSADDA: One person was killed and eight others injured during a stampede for free flour in Charsadda on Thursday, the first day of the holy month of Ramadan. "Nine people were trampled and were taken to hospital where one person died," said Muhammad Arif, police chief for Charsadda in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where the incident happened.

# Govt ready for ‘dialogue’: Law Minister

**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar has said the coalition government is ready to hold a grand political dialogue if Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan shows a willingness to bring down political heat. "Imran Khan should send two people from his side while two people from the coalition government will sit together to discuss things," he said addressing a press conference on Thursday. The law minister lamented that during the four-year tenure of the PTI, they did not try to mend relations with the opposition. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader also said that Pakistan is facing serious economic and security challenges as well as political upheavals, which require unanimous views among all the stakeholders, especially the political parties. The democratic process, he added, is successfully continuing in the country and "we should refrain from paving way for any undemocratic third option". Commenting on the elections dilemma, the federal minister said that the simultaneous election for the national and four provincial assemblies is the only viable option to bring political and economic stability to the country. Supporting the ECP's decision, the law minister mentioned that Article 254 of the Constitution provides that when any act or thing is required by the Constitution to be done within a particular period and it is not done within that period, the doing of the act or thing shall not be invalid or otherwise ineffective by reason only that it was not done within that period. The minister further added that a digital census is underway in the country and its findings will also be compiled in the next few weeks. He said this will address the concerns of the smaller provinces and provide a basis for delimitations of constituencies across Pakistan. "We should not forget that the country is also facing security challenges on multiple fronts and holding elections requires the massive deployment of law enforcement agencies, which is not possible at this point in time," he said.

## Constitution, law can't follow 'will of a devil': Marriyum

**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb, while berating Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan, said that the constitution and law of the country cannot follow "the will of a devil". In a tweet, she said he (Imran) could not be allowed to violate the constitution or to dissolve the assemblies whenever he wanted, and attack the policemen as well. She said Imran could not be allowed to attack the Election Commission of Pakistan or attack the courts whenever he wanted. Elections could not be held as per his whims, and the court verdicts could not be given as per his wishes, she maintained. Meanwhile, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Thursday said that the decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan to postpone the Punjab Assembly elections was in the interest of Pakistan. "The Election Commission took the decision keeping in mind the economic, political and security situation", she said in a statement. The minister said that the ECP had saved the country from a big constitutional crisis and this decision would bring political stability in the country. Marriyum Aurangzeb maintained that under Article 218 of the Constitution, the ECP has to ensure transparent, impartial and fair elections. Article 224 required that at the time of elections, caretaker governments should be established at the federal and provincial level, she maintained. The minister stated that the Election Commission took this decision after consulting all of the stakeholders. There were reservations that because of one man's ego, elections were being forced on two provinces, she said. If elections in two provinces were held on April 30, it would have created a controversy for forever as the terms of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies would have ended six months before National Assembly and other two provincial assemblies. The process of the census is going on in the country and it was not possible to hold elections in two provinces before the census and in other provinces after the census. Castigating Imran Khan, she said the Constitution cannot act on the whims of one person who could violate it anytime, dissolve the assembly whenever he wants. She said Imran Khan instigated his followers to injure the law enforcement agencies personnel, attack the ECP and storm the court premises. She said one person could not dictate when the election should be held, and when the decisions should be made.

### Train service suspended after blast

**F.P. Report**

HYDERABAD: An explosion on the railway track near Kotri has suspended railway traffic here on Thursday, however, no loss of life was reported, official sources said. According to officials, an attempt was made by unknown saboteurs to blow up the railway line with explosives, which damaged the railway track. The sound of the bomb blast was heard far away. Railway officials including police and rangers personnel reached the spot soon after the incident. The trains have been stopped at Kotri and other stations due to damage of the railway track near Bolhari railway station.



KARACHI: Pakistan Navy presenting gun salutes on the occasion of Pakistan Day.

## Govt. constitutes JIT to probe cases against Imran, protestors for attacking courts

**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan on Thursday said the government has decided to set up a high-level joint investigation team (JIT) to investigate four cases filed against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan and his supporters for allegedly attacking courts and law enforcers, vandalism and stopping the court from functioning. In a press conference here, the minister said the JIT would be headed by Additional Inspector General of Police Special Branch Punjab Zulfikar Hameed and representatives of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Intelligence Bureau (IB), Military Intelligence (MI) and DIG Headquarters Islamabad Awais Ahmad. Rana Sanaullah said that action will be taken against the named accused in the cases of vandalism in the judicial complex as well as Islamabad High Court and attacks on security forces. He said that BPS-18 officers from ISI, IB and MI will be members of the JIT including DIG Headquarters Islamabad. He said that in 14 days, the JIT will investigate and present the challan in the court and bring the culprits into justice. The minister said there are other cases filed against Imran Khan including Tosha Khana and foreign funding and he should face the courts instead of attacking them. On February 28, he said that Imran Khan came with violent protestors who forcibly entered the complex by breaking the main gate and damaging the CCTV cameras. These protestors deliberately created an atmosphere of hooliganism and anarchy with an objective to stop the court from proceedings as per law. Following this incident, he said that a case was registered with Ramana police station which included various criminal sections including terrorism.

## Court rejects remand plea against Hassan Niazi

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: A session court in Islamabad has rejected the physical remand plea against Barrister Hassan Khan Niazi, the nephew of former prime minister Imran Khan for resisting the force at a police picket. As per details, the judicial magistrate Mureed Abbas has sent Barrister Hassan Khan Niazi on judicial remand to jail. The police had urged the court for the physical remand of Hassan Niazi for five days. Earlier, a session court in Islamabad sent Barrister Hassan Khan Niazi, on two-day judicial remand for resisting the force at a police picket. It is important to mention here that Barrister Hassan, the nephew of former prime minister Imran Khan, was arrested by Islamabad police from outside Judicial Complex, despite securing bail. Police officials had said that Hassan Khan Niazi was arrested for resisting the force at a police picket. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Ifthikhar Durrani claimed that SP Noshervan 'abducted' Hassan from outside the court despite being on bail.

**Indian court convicts Rahul Gandhi**  
NEW DELHI (Agencies): A court in western India found opposition leader Rahul Gandhi guilty of defamation on Thursday for a speech he made in 2019 in which he referred to thieves as having the surname Modi, and sentenced him two years in prison. Gandhi was present at the court in Surat, a city in Gujarat, which is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state. He was given bail and the sentence was suspended for thirty days. The criminal defamation case was filed against Gandhi by a leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), after a speech during the 2019 general election in which he referred to the surname Modi and asked how all thieves had the surname. "The court has found Rahul Gandhi's comment to be defamatory. The court found him guilty under IPC section 499 read with 500. He has been sentenced to two years in jail," Ketan Reshamwala, advocate for complainant Purnesh Modi, said. Gandhi said in court that he had made the comment to highlight corruption and not against any community. Gandhi is one of the main opposition leaders in the country who will go up against Modi when he seeks his third term as prime minister in 2024. Gandhi's once-dominant Congress controls less than 10 per cent of the elected seats in parliament's lower house and has lost badly to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in two successive general elections, most recently in 2019. Modi remains India's most popular politician by a substantial margin and is widely expected to win a third victory at the next general election in 2024.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi conferring the Pakistan Civil Award of Hilal-i-Imtiaz upon Muhammad Ramzan Chhipa in recognition of his services in the field of public service at the investiture ceremony on Pakistan Day, held at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Pakistan's future lies in adhering to Constitution

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has said that Pakistan came into being as a result of political and constitutional struggle and its future lies in adhering to the constitution in its letter and spirit. "I have no doubt that Pakistan is destined to achieve great heights. However, for this to become a reality, we have to forge unity in our ranks, equip ourselves with national purpose and vow to wage a struggle in line with the legacy of our forefathers," the prime minister said in a message on Pakistan Day being observed on Thursday. The prime minister said that the 23rd of March was an epoch-making day in their national history that reminded them of their past, invited them to ponder over the present state of affairs, and inspired them to build a prosperous future. As they celebrate Pakistan Day and paid tribute to the sacrifices of their founding fathers, they should not lose sight of the challenges staring them in the face, he observed. "The challenges are topped by a combination of economic instability and the inability to settle the rules of the game. An environment of political chaos explains why we have failed to develop our economy on a sustainable basis," PM Office. Media Wing in a press release quoted the prime minister as saying, "This day is also the day to renew our pledge," he stressed. The prime minister said that it took them back to 1940 when Muslims of the sub-continent approved a resolution for the establishment of a separate homeland they could call their own under the dynamic leadership of Quid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Allama Muhammad Iqbal's dream of freedom manifested itself in the form of a resolution representing Muslims' demands, and aspirations for a separate homeland, he added. The prime minister said the consequential seven years witnessed history in the making as the Quid-i-Azam led a relentless struggle to translate the dream of Iqbal into reality. The establishment of Pakistan was certainly a miracle of the 20th century. "The last seventy-five years of our journey have seen us fight many crises from wars to natural disasters. There have been many occasions when we overcame the odds and achieved many milestones," he added. "Let us use this day to introspect and hold ourselves to account. Only those nations that are capable of analyzing their past, learning from their mistakes, and making amends can achieve true glory," he added. As a member of the international community, the prime minister said Pakistan had played the role of a responsible nation in the resolution of problems facing humanity and the establishment of global peace.

## PTI to move SC against ECP decision

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry has said his party will challenge the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to postpone the date for general elections in Punjab from April 30 to October 8 in the Supreme Court (SC). Addressing a joint press conference on Thursday, Fawad, flanked by PTI Secretary General Asad Umar, announced that they are moving the top court against the ECP for "breaching the Constitution". "There is no other option but to hold elections on April 30," insisted the PTI stalwart. He added that the former ruling party's petition would seek the court's order for holding elections in the province as per the previous schedule. Turning his guns towards Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led coalition government, Fawad said that the joint sitting of parliament convened on Wednesday was aimed at an "attack on the Supreme Court". It is pertinent to mention here that the joint session was held yesterday instead of 10th of next month to "take important decisions" to enforce the state's authority. The session was convened in the midst of prolonged anti-government defiance by PTI Chairman Imran Khan. National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, while exercising his powers under Joint Sitting Rules 1973, had made a change in the schedule of the joint session of parliament. "Judges are being blackmailed and pressurised," Fawad claimed. Expressing his solidarity with the apex court and its judges, the PTI senior leader said that millions of people stand with the CJP and other judges of the apex court. "It is your duty to save the Constitution," Fawad appealed to the judges of the top court. Expressing his surprise, the former information minister said they were not part of the agenda of yesterday's sitting, adding that the "main target" of the parliament's session was the Supreme Court. Fawad further said that they are ready for talks on the elections.

## Nation celebrates Pakistan Day

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: As the nation celebrates Pakistan Day on Thursday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Dr Arif Alvi paid homage to the "relentless struggle" of the founding fathers of the country. Pakistan Day commemorates the passing of the Lahore Resolution on March 23, 1940, when the All-India Muslim League demanded a separate nation for the Muslims of the British Indian Empire. The day started off with a 31-gun salute in the federal capital and a 21-gun salute in the provincial capitals. A change of guards ceremony was also held at the mausoleums of Quid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Iqbal in Karachi and Lahore, respectively. Special prayers were offered in mosques after Fajr prayers for the progress and prosperity of the country. However, the Pakistan Day Military Parade of the Armed Forces at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, scheduled to be held today, has been postponed till Saturday (March 25) due to bad weather. Meanwhile, in his message to the nation, President Dr Arif Alvi recalled that the country established state institutions, made its defence impregnable, achieved nuclear deterrence, curbed terrorism, overcame the Covid-19 pandemic, and displayed the spirit of sacrifice and cooperation in the face of natural calamities. However, he said, we still have a long way to go to ensure the rule of law, strengthen democracy, reduce inequalities in our society, empower women, provide the rights of persons with disabilities, eradicate terrorism and extremism, ensure the political and economic stability of the country, and protect the human rights of our citizens. Today, we pay tribute to the founding fathers of our nation whose struggles and sacrifices led to the creation of Pakistan, he said.

The president said the persecution of minorities, especially the Muslims in India, the rising wave of violence against Muslims, the violation of human rights, and the brutalities being committed by the Indian security forces in the Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir proved that the Muslim leadership of that time made a prudent decision. **Pakistan Day military parade postponed:** The Pakistan Day military parade scheduled to be held today (Thursday) has been postponed due to weather conditions. The military parade is observed each year on March 23. The event is at the centre of celebrations to commemorate the 1940 Lahore Resolution that called for the establishment of an independent country for the Muslims of British-ruled India.

### Earthquake jolts Punjab

SARGODHA (PPI): A moderate earthquake hit several parts of Punjab on Thursday, causing panic among the people. No casualty was reported yet. A magnitude 4.4 earthquake jolted Sargodha, Chiniot, Hafizabad, Faisalabad, Nankana Sahib and its adjoining areas. The PMD said that the magnitude of the earthquake was recorded at 4.4 on the Richter scale and the epicentre was 30km away from Sargodha at a depth of 30km.



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## DG Sindh Rangers visits Quaid's mausoleum on Pakistan Day

KARACHI (APP): Director General Pakistan Rangers Sindh Major General Azhar Waqas on Thursday visited the mausoleum of the founder of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah to pay him homage on the occasion of Pakistan Day here.

The DG Rangers laid wreaths at Mazar-e-Quaid and prayed for the prosperity and development of Pakistan. He also marked his impressions in the visitor's book.

## Rangers arrest three involved in street crimes

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police, in a joint intelligence-based operation in Laasi Goth area of the city, arrested three accused involved in street crimes and recovered snatched mobile phones and wallets from their possession.

Arrested were identified as Zohaib, Imran and Shehroze. Accused Zohaib was the gang leader who also provided training for looting people outside banks, according to a news release on Thursday. The arrested accused confessed their involvement in a number of street crimes. Raids were being carried out to apprehend their other accomplices. The accused were handed over to the police for further legal proceedings.

## Commissioner reviews free flour distribution

LAHORE (APP): Commissioner Lahore Division Muhammad Ali Randhawa remained in the field to monitor provision of free flour and visited various flour points in the provincial capital on Thursday.

He reviewed the process of distribution of free flour in Johar Town, Shershah Colony, Mohlanwal, Township, Model Town and Thokar Niaz Baigh and issued orders on the spot to redress the grievances of people. The commissioner has suspended the Union Secretary Mohlanwal over negligence in duty responsibilities. He expressed satisfaction over the facilities being provided at the flour points and directed the deputy commissioners to improve the arrangements. He said that the purpose of distribution of free flour under the Ramadan package was to provide relief to the deserving people, adding that full attention should be paid for the convenience of people at flour points.

## SFA to conduct crackdown against adulteration

KARACHI (APP): Director General Sindh Food Authority (SFA) Agha Fakhar has warned those who adulterate food items and said that they should avoid adulteration of food items otherwise strict action would be taken against them according to the law. In a statement on Thursday, he said that the SFA has formed special teams to maintain the quality of food items in Ramazan and take action against adulterers. The teams would remain active throughout Ramazan. Agha Fakhar requested all the people doing business of food items to respect the holy month of Ramazan and provide the public with quality food products free from adulteration otherwise action would be taken against them according to Sindh Food Authority Act.

# Entire nation committed to defeat terrorists: CM Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Thursday said that the terrorists were enemies of Pakistan and its people, but the nation was committed to defeating them.

He said while talking to the media along with Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori during his visit to Mazar-e-Quaid for paying tribute to the father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah on the eve of Pakistan Day.

He said that the police and other law enforcement agencies under the guideline of the government were working day and night to eliminate terrorists and their facilitators. Replying to a question, Syed Murad Ali Shah said that his cabinet had approved a Rs. 15.6 billion Ramzan package for 7,810,482 low-income families under which Rs. 2,000 cash will be transferred to each family through Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) as a subsidy to buy 30kg atta at Rs65/kg.

"The leftover low-income people can verify their eligibility by entering their National Identity Card numbers on BISP number '8171' or they can visit the nearest BISP centre to register themselves," he added. The CM disclosed that an ordinance was being promulgated to control hoarding and profiteering. "Under the ordinance, the powers to control the prices, artificial price hike, and hoarding have been given to food department officers apart from the officers of Revenue department," he said.

Talking about Pakistan Day, Murad Ali Shah said that the Sindh Assembly had the honour to have passed a resolution in support of Pakistan in March 1943. Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah through his political wisdom and struggle created the country, he underlined.

"Now, it becomes our utmost responsibility to make this country strong enough so that our future generation can live a secure, safe, and sound life," Shah said.

The CM condemned Indian atrocities in Indian Illegal Occupied Kashmir and paid tribute to the people of Kashmir for their struggle against Indian occupation.

Murad congratulated Muslims living all over the world, particularly in Pakistan, and Sindh for the start of the holy month of Ramzan. "This month teaches us to sacrifice, help the needy, and financially support the poor," he said and stressed on following the teachings of Islam.

Earlier, the chief minister laid a floral wreath on the 'mazar' [tomb] of the father of the nation, offered fateha, and recorded his impression in the visitors' book opened on Pakistan Day.

## Pakistan Day celebrated in Waziristan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan day , marking the ratification of the Pakistan Resolution, was celebrated FC South with traditional zeal and fervour in Kotkai area of District South Waziristan . Pakistan day celebrations commenced with a huge display of fireworks in Kotkai at midnight 22/23 March.

Flag hoisting ceremony was organised at Government Boys High School Kotkai.

Prominent Mashraan and notables of Kotkai attended the activity.

The series of events included speech competition by students followed by awareness walk of 3.2 km. After the awareness walk , car and motorcycle rally was organised from Karama till kotkai city.

At the end cash prizes were distributed amongst individuals in best dressed with patriotic attire and best decorated shops in kotkai. Cash prizes were also given to the best speech participants.

## Minister reprimands admin over poor flour distribution

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Information Minister Punjab Amir Mir reprimanded the administration for poor arrangements at flour distribution points during his visit to the free flour distribution points established in Sheikhupura.

The minister reviewed facilities provided to people at the free flour center in the District Council Hall. He inquired about problems faced by people.

The minister directed Deputy Commissioner Sheikhupura Sarmad Taimur to set up immediate information desks for people in the centers and ordered

manual registration of citizens who did not have smart cards.

Amir Mir said that no citizen eligible for free flour should go back without taking flour. Appropriate arrangements should be made for seating at centers for the convenience of citizens, he directed. Meanwhile, the minister also paid a surprise visit to the utility stores in Sheikhupura and MC, Model Bazar Farooqabad centers and directed the district administration to improve facilities for the citizens. He also directed DC Sheikhupura to display banners for public awareness.

## Pakistan came into being after tireless struggle of Qaid: Faryal

KARACHI (NNI): Central President of Pakistan Peoples Party Women's Wing and Member of Sindh Assembly, Faryal Talpur has felicitated the entire nation on the Pakistan Day.

In her message, Faryal Talpur said that today reminds us that a peaceful political struggle waged with unwavering determination and unparalleled spirit of self-sacrifice never fails. She said that Pakistan is the result of the political wisdom and leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the tireless struggle of his comrades.

Faryal Talpur said that

the struggle and sacrifices of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, who had dedicated their lives for the protection and development of this country, are a beacon for us. She said that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and former President Asif Ali Zardari are also actively working for the prosperity and exaltation of Pakistan by following the path shown by the People's Leader Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

Faryal Talpur said that our forefathers had made immense sacrifices to get

this great country, now it is the duty of all of us to play our full role for the protection and development of Pakistan.

Faryal Talpur saluted the martyrs and the people of Occupied Kashmir and said that the fruits of their struggle and sacrifices spanning seven decades have ripened and the freedom of Kashmir is not far away.

She said that the hearts of 22 crore Pakistanis beat with their Kashmiri brothers. Faryal Talpur also paid homage to the officers and soldiers of the armed forces who have sacrificed their lives for the motherland.



KARACHI: Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon talking to the media along with provincial labor minister Saeed Ghani and Advisor Law Barrister Murtaza Wahab.

## Sindh Information Minister's message on Pakistan Day

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon in a message on Pakistan Day said that March 23 is an important day in the history of Pakistan.

The Muslims of the subcontinent decided to establish a separate homeland to free themselves from the shackles of slavery and oppression. He said that the Muslims of the subcontinent were able to get their demand for an independent country approved in a short period of just

seven years. The minister paid rich tribute to Quaid Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and all the leaders of the independence movement who united the Muslims of British India for the establishment of a free and independent Muslim state.

The Minister said that while celebrating this day, we need to follow the principles of unity, faith and discipline given by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He further said that the Pakistan People's Party had a great struggle to make it strong and keep it united by making 1973

constitution, nuclear program and guaranteeing autonomy to the provinces under 18th amendment. 'Our vision is to transform Pakistan into a true democratic welfare state,' he added. Mr. Memon said that our great nation had successfully overcome immense challenges of the past through unity and resilience. let us today renew our resolve to make Pakistan a progressive and prosperous state. He said that in the blessed month of Ramadan, May Allah grant us the strength to stay steadfast in every trial time.

## CM Punjab visits free flour centre, inspects facilities

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi conducted surprise visits to the 24/7 flour supply centres in Gujranwala during late hours, where he inspected the facilities and interacted with the visiting public.

The people appreciated the Ramadan package and reported that they received their flour bags in just two minutes without any difficulty, said a handout issued here on Thursday. Some people mentioned the non-verification of their CNICs when the CM asked about hiccups in collecting free flour. Some others admitted that their names were not included in Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) when Naqvi enquired about it. The CM asked them to get themselves registered with BISP and directed his staff to help register them with the BISP so that they may not face any difficulty in future. The sales staff complained about the slowness of their system. He also verified the quantity of flour bags in the truck by checking weight.

Later, the CM made an unannounced visit to DHQ hospital Gujranwala, where he inspected medical facilities at the trauma centre, checked ventilator beds in the ICU and announced the construction of a

new building for an emergency. He inquired the patients about the medical facilities and ordered improvements to the cleanliness arrangements in the hospital. The doctors should treat patients with compassion because a sweet word can cure half of a patient's illness, he said and added that the government was striving to improve the medical facilities.

The CM also went to the residence of the mother and daughter who were molested in the precinct of Arup police station in Gujranwala. He expressed his sympathy to them and announced financial assistance of one million for them. "The government stands with you and you will be helped in every possible way" he added. IG Police, RPO, commissioner, CPO and deputy commissioner Gujranwala were also present.

**CM felicitates nation on Pakistan Day:** Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi extended his sincere felicitations to the nation in commemoration of Pakistan Day.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the CM acknowledged the historic significance of the day when the resolution for Pakistan was passed in 1940, under the leadership of Quaid-

e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah at Minto Park in Lahore, amidst the resolute determination of thousands of people for freedom.

Pakistan Day serves as a solemn reminder of the unrelenting struggle and selfless sacrifices made by Muslims of the subcontinent towards attaining a separate homeland, he said and noted that the resolution for Pakistan united Muslims under a common objective and inspired them to give their blood, leave behind their homes and belongings, and light the torch of freedom.

The chief minister paid homage to the founding fathers of Pakistan, who made unparalleled sacrifices to establish a proud national identity. He emphasized that their sacrifices demand that the nation strives to achieve national goals through the teachings of Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal. The Pakistani nation has consistently displayed remarkable unity in the face of adversity and has emerged stronger from difficult situations, he added. Pakistan is our proud identity, he said.

The CM pledged to safeguard the nation's cultural heritage and national character. He concluded by urging the nation to renew its commitment to the country on this momentous day.

## Over 26,000 applications received for official Hajj scheme in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (NNI): As the official Hajj scheme continues to collect applications, sources report that over 26,000 applications were received in banks until March 22.

The scheme, which allows Pakistani citizens to undertake the Hajj pilgrim-

age to Mecca saw a surge in interest this year, with over 2,000 applicants seeking dollars from abroad under the sponsorship scheme.

In response to feedback from applicants, banks were instructed to provide additional convenience measures. Overseas Pakistanis

can now submit a medical fitness certificate issued from abroad to the bank. If they encounter difficulty, an affidavit on plain paper stating that they are healthy can also be submitted.

The sponsorship scheme allows non-blood relatives to sponsor the Hajj pil-

grimage for applicants, providing greater accessibility to the pilgrimage for many who would not have been able to participate otherwise. For the convenience of the Hajj applicants, the Easy Account limit was increased from 10 lakhs to 15 lakhs.

## 46000 Zakat beneficiaries to get Zakat Cards

KARACHI (APP): Advisor to Chief Minister Sindh on Zakat Fayyaz Ali Butt has said that Zakat Cards would be distributed across the province by Sindh Bank to 46000 Zakat beneficiaries by 10th of Ramazan. In order to maintain transparency in this regard, the process of verification of Zakat beneficiaries through biometric system has been completed, he said.

He said this while presiding over a meeting in his Sindh Secretariat office, said a statement on Thursday. Chairman Zakat Council Niaz Ali Jaisar, Secretary Religious Affairs and Zakat and Usher Manwar Ali Mahesar, Member Sindh Zakat Council Ashfaq Ali Asran, Sindh Bank Asad Ali Shah, Imran Samad also participated in the meeting. Fayaz Ali Butt further said that in the first phase, 46,000 zakat deserving people will be given zakat cards through Sindh Bank.

## Rain in Karachi turns weather pleasant

KARACHI (PPI): Rain in different areas of Karachi on Wednesday turned the weather pleasant. Different areas including Seaview, Shahr-e-Faisal, and Nursery have received light and heavy rainfall, according to the Meteorological Department.

On the other hand, Islamabad is likely to experience thundershower with gusty winds while hailstorm is also expected at some places.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, areas including Chitral, Swat, Dir, Malakand, Mansehra, Abbottabad and Balakot are likely to experience strong winds and thundershowers. Areas including Kohat, Kohistan, Peshawar, Nowshera, Haripur, Mardan, Kurram, Waziristan, DI Khan and Bannu are likely to experience gusty winds and thundershowers. Hailstorm is also

expected at some places. In Punjab, areas including Murree, Galyat, Pothohar region, Gujranwala, Mandi Bahauddin and Toba Tek Singh are likely to receive thundershowers with gusty winds. Other cities including Faisalabad, Jhang, Khushab, Bahawalnagar, Sheikhupura, Hafizabad, Lahore, Kasur, Gujrat, Narowal, Sialkot, Mianwali, Sargodha, Bhakkar, Layyah, Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur, Multan, Sahiwal, Okara and Khanawal are also likely to experience strong winds and thundershowers. Hailstorm is also expected at some places.

In Balochistan, cities including Quetta, Zhib, Barkhan, Sibi, Jafarabad, Nasirabad, Ziarat, Chaman, Pishin, Jiwni, Khashela, Dalbandin, Kalat, Khuzdar, Turbat, Awaran, Panjgur, Kech, Gwadar.



## Ji expresses concerns over fresh target killing spree

KARACHI (NNI): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi Ameer Engr Hafiz Naemur Rehman has expressed grave concerns here on Thursday over the recent spree of target killings in the megalopolis and demanded of the government to take serious action in this regard.

He was referring to the brutal cold blooded killings of Maulana Abdul Qayoum Sofi and Maulana Saleem Khatri. The JI Karachi chief demanded of the government and the law enforcement agencies to arrest the culprits and bring them to full justice.

He also demanded of the government and the LEAs to launch a comprehensive investigation and unearth all characters involved in the conspiracy to ruin and further spoil peace and harmony in the city.

PAKISTAN  
RESOLUTION DAY  
23RD OF MARCH



23 مارچ 2023

جانشین ملک ولی محمد خان

آج کل کے پاکستان میں مزدوروں کا جینا حال ہو گیا ہے۔ چھوٹے خانوں کے علاوہ ہر پاکستانی کمپنی کی زندگی گزارنے پر مجبور ہیں۔ دو وقت کی روٹی بچوں کو کھانا بخوار ہو چکا ہے۔ خصوصاً کارخانوں کے مزدور اور دیہاتی علاقہ دار میں ہوش یا مونگی کے خود کشوں اور فاقہ پر مجبور ہیں EOEI. چٹن ہو لور 8500 اور یتیم دیکھ 25000 پر سارا مہینہ گزار رہے ہیں۔ ہمارے بزرگوں نے اس ملک کو خدا داد پاکستان کو حاصل کرنے کے لیے بے پناہ قربانیاں دی ہیں۔ اشرافیہ نے غریب محروم کو بے روزگاری، بھوک و اطاس کے مارا کھینچ دیا۔ پھر بھی یہ غریب ہی اس ملک سے فدا و ادا و اطاس ہیں۔ آئی یہ بھوک کریں۔ کس ملک پاکستان کی ترقی میں ہر شخص اپنی اپنی استطاعت کے مطابق خدمت کرے رہینگے۔ پاکستان زہر دہا۔ مزدور پائے ہا ہا ہا۔

جنگل کی لڑائی جانی ملک ولی محمد خان، ختم مزدور پر نہیں پاکستان کو بیکوئی لیں



# Pakistan Day celebrated with national enthusiasm in KP province

PESHAWAR (APP): The 83rd 'Pakistan Day' was celebrated with national enthusiasm on Thursday in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where people vowed to work tirelessly for the progress, development and prosperity of motherland.

The day dawned with special prayers in mosques for the progress, solidarity and integrity of the country.

From Waziristan to Kohistan and Chitral to DI Khan, rallies, seminars, declamation contest and functions were held in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where speakers highlighted the importance of 'Pakistan Day.'

The main function of the day was held at Governor house where Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ghulam Ali on behalf of the President of Pakistan conferred presidential civil awards to 11 personalities for their meritorious services in their respective fields.

Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan, caretaker provincial ministers, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Gandapur, the administrative heads of various departments and relatives of the recipients of the presidential awards attended the ceremony.

Dr. Qibla Ayaz has been awarded with Satara Imitiaz for his great services in research in the field of Islamic studies, Ms Bushra Farukh for performing arts including drama and acting, Ms Gul Zari Wagmah for music and singing, Masoudjan for blind cricket sports, Abdulaziz Khan Tabasim for films directions.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali presenting Presidential Awards to 11 personalities of province.

## QWP extends date for applications

PESHAWAR (APP): Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) has extended the date for submission of applications from aspiring candidates for the provincial assembly elections till 10th April.

According to a press release issued here from the central secretariat of the party on Thursday, the interested candidates have been directed that now they can filed applications for the party ticket till April 23.

## Spotlight report on SDGs ranks moderate progress on some goals, stresses for concentrated efforts

PESHAWAR (APP): A spotlight report on achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Pakistan ranked moderate progress on some of the goals and has laid stress on concentrated efforts and concrete action to make accomplishment of all the 17 goals within its stipulated time of year 2030.

The spotlight report was launched here at a function jointly organized by Awaz Foundation Pakistan, Blueveins, Pakistan Development Alliance (PDA) and VSO Pakistan.

"Overall 10 out of 17 goals remain stagnant, four show moderate improvement, while two goals i.e 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and 13 (Climate Action) have been reported as achieved. While goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) in on track which is debatable due to increase in poverty and inequality," reads the Spotlight report 2022, an alternative and civil society led report on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Programme Lead Awas CDS Pakistan.

In her presentation on background sharing and presentation on CSOs engagements in VNR (Voluntary National Review) Processes, Marium informed that Pakistan Development Alliance is an alliance of 107 national level NGOs working together through developmental and right based approaches to address issues in governance and accountability across the country especially in the implementation of SDGs.

Pakistan's performance on all 17 goals has improved from 129th out of 163 countries in 2021 to 125 at the global scorecard in 2022.

However, strong and renewed political will, commitment and availability of resources are required to make the SDGs goals a reality for people of Pakistan, adds the report.

The report also made a realization in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, crumbling economy and uncertain political situation, the government in Pakistan in faced with grave challenges to fulfill its commitments for agenda 2030.

The report also made recommendations urging the government to put concerted efforts to fulfill its national and international commitments for improving social and economic lives of the people through intensive legislation, financing, monitoring and transparent accountable mechanism.

for achievement of SDGs through provision of facilities to people, but a lot of challenges exists specially lack of resources, less awareness among people and duplication of shortcomings due to lack of coordination and data sharing among departments.

NCHR, he continued, is working in coordination with a number of other departments and organizations for removing the deprivation of vulnerable communities.

In this connection, he continued, a Task Force has been constituted recently with the objective of formulating policy that covers deprivation of transgender community of the country in wake of any disaster like the recent catastrophic floods in the country.

He said the Domestic Violence Bill was pending for the last 22 years but has been passed recently and would be implemented in the whole country.

## Students, academia informed about land registration in merged areas



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The US Agency for International Development (USAID)-supported Land Registration in Merged Areas (LRMA) Activity completed its awareness drive on "Land Settlement and Registration in the Merged Areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)" that started

March 17 for over 200 students, researchers, and senior academics across various KP universities with its final session at the University of Peshawar.

"Empowering the youth through education and awareness is essential for building a better future. By investing in students, we are nurturing the future agents of change who can

lead the way in advocating for important causes such as land registration and record system," said Mr. Muhammad Shoaib, Chief of Party USAID's LRMA Activity. "The USAID-LRMA's mission is to work in collaboration with the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and provide the citizens of the Merged Areas with easy access to

precise and up-to-date information on their land holder rights, paving the way for a more prosperous and equitable society."

USAID's LRMA is a Four-year activity that is supporting the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to establish a land record system across KP's Merged Areas. A proper digital land registration and records system will improve land governance, strengthen property rights, boost economic growth, and promote peace and stability. The activity aligns with the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's recently approved "Tribal Decade Strategy" that will extend the socio-economic benefits of land registration to women and marginalized communities and safeguard their land tenure and property rights.

## Chappli Kabab, Pakora, Kajoor attract people ahead of first iftar of Ramadan

PESHAWAR (APP): Besides Kajoor (dates), the food stalls of Chappli Kabab, Jalebi and Pakora have attracted a large number of people ahead of the first Iftar of the holy month of Ramadan here on Thursday.

Great rush was being witnessed on food stalls especially Pakora and Chappli Kabab at all bazaars including Qissa Khwani in Peshawar.

Pakora is a spicy food item mostly prepared of onions, potatoes and chickens, which is being sold like a hot cake due to its delicious taste, cost-efficient varieties and energy perspectives.

ing Iftar parties in provincial capital where special shops were opened at historic Qissa Khwani, Ghanta Ghar, Firdus, Hastnagri and others areas started making a roaring business.

Different types of Pakora are being prepared such as potato pakora, palak pakora, onion pakora, Gobhi pakora, attracting people, senior citizens, children, women and youth as special iftar item.

The delicious dish is being prepared from different ingredients such as onion, eggs, potatoes, chicken and cauliflower after these things are dipped in a Pakora made flour.

Department on a food stall at Hashtnagri told APP on Thursday that Pakora is his most favorite food item during Iftar parties and without it his Iftar seems incomplete.

"Personally, I like chicken pakora because of its batter taste, and energy's perspective," he said, adding demands of onion and potato Pakora has also increased in local markets.

The markets are flooded with Pakora, Jalebi, Dahi Bhalay and Kachalo stalls and shops where hectic buying are being witnessed when Iftar's time becomes nearer. Like other edible items, he said prices of Pakora has also increased this year as one kiolegoram is being sold at Rs280-300

per kilogram against Rs260 last year that needed to be checked by the district administration. "A few Pakora and dates are enough for me as it is a complete food," Khan said.

This popular snake of the subcontinent origin takes very less time in preparation and is being served as special Iftar meal with any chutney or ketchup to people of all social class.

It is also popular among people of both rural and urban areas and being exchanged by relatives and families as Iftar's gifts.

"I am going to my daughter home to give her one kilogram Pakora as special Iftar's gift," said Qaisar Khan, a resident of

Wapda Town Nowshera.

"Exchange of food dishes among relatives increase love and warmth besides bringing people closer," he said. The shopkeepers said Pajora making was a profitable business as it does not require much investment.

The shopkeepers said its price has been increased due to hike in prices of related ingredients being used in preparation of this specie item.

In the wake of last night rains, people thronged to Chappli Kabab and Peshawari rice outlets by taking parcel of the delicious food items for first Iftari. Jalebi and Achar shops were making roaring sale.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali discussing people's problems with GM Sui Gas Taj Ali Khan.

## ICP: An education icon of KP saw Pakistan Movement

PESHAWAR (APP): Established in 1913 at the foothills of Koh e Sufaid, Islamia College Peshawar (ICP), which has held aloft the torch of educating the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the past 110 years, also saw the historic independence movement of Pakistan.

One travelling through the historic Jamrud Road can't remain unimpressed while passing under the shadows of its tall domes, lush-green lawns and majestic edifice of its beautiful architecture. It reminds visitors of the glorious role its students played during the Pakistan Movement led by father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

"The history of Pakistan Movement is incomplete without mentioning the role of the students of ICP," said Younas Khan, Chairman Pakistan Studies Department, ICP while talking to APP on Thursday.

He said the legendary Quaid visited ICP in 1936, 1945 and 1948 to acknowledge the outstanding role of its students during completion of his mission for

Pakistan.

On April 12, 1948, Quaid-e-Azam visited ICP as first Governor General of Pakistan where he presented glowing tributes to the services of its students towards making Pakistan in these words.

"I am indeed very happy to be present here today and to have the privilege of addressing students of this great Darul Uloom, who are the future builders of Pakistan. Remember your government is like your own garden. Your garden flourishes by the way you look after it and the efforts that you put towards its improvement. Similarly, your government can only flourish by your patriotic, honest and constructive efforts to improve it."

He wished to construct a university near ICP that was fulfilled by the government within a gap of one year by establishing University of Peshawar in 1949.

Quaid-e-Azam became an honorary member of Khyber Union, a debating society of the college in 1936. The Quaid's love for the college can be judged

from his will written on May 30, 1939 in Mumbai in which he declared ICP, the Muslim University Aligarh and Sindh Madrassatul Islam Karachi as among the inheritor of his property.

"The Quaid Trust has later paid Rs10,811,600 in different instalments to the college. The amount was spent on the establishment of Quaid-e-Azam College of Commerce, University of Peshawar, construction of Jinnah residential quarters for the college employees, Jinnah College for Women and the newly constructed Takbeer block and others projects," he said.

The college, which is a beautiful combination of the Aligarh and Deoband School of Thoughts, is a mere testimony to the greatness of its Founder, Nawab Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan besides glorious history of strength and commitment.

"The idea to establish a college clicks in the minds of Nawab Sahib and Sir George Roos-Keppel, the then Chief Commissioner NWFP (Now KP) in early 1909 when they met the

Pathan students during their visit to the Muslim University Aligarh," says ex-principal ICP, Prof G.D. Khilji in his memoirs.

The students requested them either to construct Frontier hostel in Aligarh or a college may be built for them in frontier province. As a token, the students raised some sixty-odd rupees and gave them to Roos Keppel to form a Frontier Hostel Fund or any other project.

Keppel later passed the money on to Nawab Sahib, who gave it to his personal servant Habibullah, who always accompanied him.

It was April 12, 1911 when philanthropists Ghulam Haider Khan, Habibullah Khan, Khushal Khan, Sethi Karim Bakhsh and Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum had gathered at the house of Abdul Karim Khan Indrabai in Peshawar in a social gathering. Habibullah, who was also there, reminded his master of the sixty-odd rupees and Nawab Sahib floated the idea to establish a college at Peshawar.

Karim Bakhsh Sethi offered to build a mosque

while Rahim Shah Kakakhel promised to construct a hostel known as Rahim Shah Ward. Abdul Karim donated Rs.10,000, Sethi Karim Bakhsh Rs.50,000 and the Nawab of Dir promised Rs.100,000.

Besides, the subscription of Afridi chiefs, an example was set by Bibi Gul, widow of Khairullah Khan of Prang, who offered her ornaments on June 6, 1911 towards the college fund.

Later, a 10-member ad-hoc college committee under the chairmanship of Col. Muhammad Aslam Khan was setup on May 29, 1911 to table proposals for establishment of the college. Leading Khans and Ulema were invited and seven resolutions including to call the proposed college as 'Darul-Ulum-i-Islamia Suba-i-Sarhad' were unanimously passed.

A committee was also constituted to select suitable site for the college. The proposal to set up the college at Wazir Bagh was rejected by Ross Keppel to spare the place of recreation.

The second option selection of Larama, about three

miles north of Peshawar could not materialize as people refused to donate the land.

Other proposals were Rajjar in Charsadda and Darmangai on Michani Road while Mian Rahim Shah Kakakhel offered to give land on bank of River Kabul but non of these were accepted.

Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum in consultation with Ross Keppel selected the existing place for the college.

The land chosen for the college was the property of Khalil tribe of Tehkal. A total of 916 kanals and seventeen marlas were bought at Rs.30 per kanal. To foil the negative propaganda against the establishment of the college, renowned religious scholar and freedom fighter, Haji Sahib of Turangzai was requested to lay the foundation stone of the college mosque and attached Collegiate School in 1911.

Sir Spenser Harcourt Butler, education member of the Viceroy's council on April 5, 1913 performed the opening ceremony of Islamia Collegiate School.

Later, the Islamia College was opened on October 1, 1913 with 26 students on roll.

Sahibzada Khurshid was the first admitted student who in 1949 became the Governor of then NWFP. Initially, the college had only 10 teaching staff. L. Tipping (1913-17) was its first Principal.

Henry Martin served on the principal post for period of 12 years, nine months and 15 days while Prof. Taj Muhammad Khattak served only for three-month and seven days. Arbab Sikandar Hayat had the distinction to serve the college as its Principal on three occasions.

The college remained closed on few times. First, it was closed for about three-weeks in 1919 due to the second Afghan War and students were shifted to Shahi Mehman Khana, Peshawar.

It was again closed for a few days in 1920 as a result of the Non-Cooperation Movement.

History of the college would be incomplete without mentioning inauguration of the Khyber Union in

1921. Besides many stalwarts, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt of USA, first Governor of then NWFP Sir Ralph Griffith, renowned writer of Turkiye Khalida Adeb Khanum, leader of All Indian Muslim League Sir Muhammad Shafi, Pundit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Governor then NWFP George Cunningham and Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar are among its honorary members.

According to the Board of Trustees (BoT), the college owns about 544.5 acres of cultivable land in Charsadda, 395 shops and flats in Khyber bazaar Peshawar and in Charsadda.

The college's clock tower, which now become the pride symbol of Peshawar, has for long figured on the back of Rs.1000 currency note.

ICP is a unique educational institution in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where students from KG to PhD level was getting quality education and contributing in the prosperity of Pakistan.





## In brief

### Land acquisition discussed F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Lower Dir, Iftikhar Ahmad chaired a meeting to discuss matters relating to settlement operation, recovery of arrears, land acquisition cases and evaluation tables. The meeting among others was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Additional Assistant Commissioner Revenue, tehsildars, revenue staff and officials of accounts department. Addressing the meeting, deputy commissioner directed to make dedicated efforts to achieve revenue targets. He also directed provision of list of patwaris and baildars so that a liaison should be developed with officials of irrigation department before launching water revenue collection campaign. He also directed officials to work with dedication and made efforts to achieve revenue targets.

### Free medical camp held F.P. Report

TANK: A free medical camp held at a remote area for the local of Wacha Khowara village Janjol Raghzai Tank with the coordination of security forces and health Department Tank. The Security forces and FC head-quarter South has not only restored peace also working for the welfare of humanity in far flung areas, the experts Doctors of Pakistan Army and Health Department tank including Medical specialists, Children specialist and lady health workers provided treatment to people at camp. More than 100-120 patients have provided free medicines after checkup. The elders and people of the area highly praised Pak Army, and FC South for conducting free medical camps. They termed it a very good initiative by security forces and FC Headquarter South and Health Department tank. Earlier, Security forces and FC South conducted free medical camps in other areas which are commendable efforts to serve humanity. On the occasion, the people of the area also prayed for the success of Pakistan Armed Forces.

### Dacoit killed in encounter

BAHAWALNAGAR (INP): A wanted dacoit was killed by in an alleged police encounter at Baba Farid Bridge here on Thursday, police said. According to details, police had set up a picket at Baba Farid Bridge for snap checking. As the police party asked three motorcycle riders to stop for checking, the suspected dacoits started firing on law enforcers. Dacoits' firing flattened tyres of police van. The police returned fire and the exchange of fire continued for a while. Meanwhile one of the dacoits was killed by firing of other accomplices. The other two dacoits managed to flee from the scene. The dead dacoit was identified as Majid Ali.

### Cloths distributed F.P. Report

MARDAN: Saiban Development Organization distributed cloths to women at Dar-ul-Aman Mardan for Eid while arranged art and painting competition among them, on Thursday. During cloths distribution ceremony Saiban organization project coordinator Nighat Seema, Dar-ul-Aman In-charge Tauheed, Assistant In-charge Saeda, Safena, Bushra, Saiban project Associate Rabia and social mobilizer Rakhshanda addressed the participants.

# Marginalized segments to get relief package

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Provincial Minister of Higher Education and Schools Education Punjab Mansoor Qadir has said that for the first time, the Government of Punjab is providing free flour to the poor and deserving people in Ramzan. Ramzan relief package of flour distribution is a historic public initiative to provide relief to the poor during the holy month of Ramzan. Regarding the distribution of flour in Hafizabad, the arrangements made by the district administration at the centers are satisfactory and people are getting flour according to their turn with great satisfaction. He expressed these views while reviewing the arrangements and interacting with the media on the occasion of visiting various flour points in Hafizabad.

Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Waraich, DPO Dr. Fahad Ahmad, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Imtiaz Ali Baig, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Malik Zulqarnain Abbas, Assistant Commissioner Munawar Hussain, Assistant Commissioner (HR & Coordination) Ashfaq Ahmed were also present on this occasion.

The provincial minister reviewed the points being built in the district council, sports gymnasium and government high school number 1. The provincial minister has said that for the first time in history, instead of subsidy, the Punjab Government has provided a Ramzan relief package with a huge amount of 64 billion rupees, under which 3 bags of 10 kg flour will be provided absolutely free of cost to deserving families during Ramzan. He said that the distribution of free flour will reduce the hardships of the needy and poor people to a great extent and they will get a lot of

relief in Ramzan.

The provincial minister also took feedback from the men and women who came to the points regarding the arrangements and the distribution of flour. The provincial minister also appreciated the excellent arrangements made by the Deputy Commissioner and the District Administration for the people coming to the flour points and directed all the staff to take care of the people coming to the flour points. They should be guided in every way and if there is any problem with someone's ID card or registration, they should be fully informed and guided.

On this occasion, the Deputy Commissioner while giving a briefing to the Provincial Minister said that free flour is being distributed to two lakh registered families in Hafizabad and there are more than 520,000 bags of 10 kg each family till 25th of Ramzan. He said that 15 points have been set up across the district for the distribution of free flour.

**Four killed in road mishap:** Four people were killed and two were seriously injured in a collision between a high-speed Shah Zor Dala and a dumper near Biranwala village in the suburbs of Hafizabad.

According to the details, Afzal son of Piran Ditta, Parvez son of Ghulam Hussain, Bilal son of Ditta and Amir son of Zahoor were going from Jhang to Rawalpindi in a vehicle when their vehicle reached near Biranwala on Motorway M2 it was hit by a dumper coming from the opposite direction. As a result of which Afzal, Parvez, Bilal and Aamir died before any medical aid could be made available to them, while two persons including the driver of the dumper were seriously injured who were immediately shifted to THQ Hospital.

## Admn & food sells subsidized flour in market

F.P. Report

WANA: The tribesmen claimed that subsidized flour is smuggling to Afghanistan and selling on open market on the stake of depriving marginalized segments of society, on Thursday.

This was disclosed by Almar Jan, Gulab Khan and

Rizwan Ullah while talking to media personnel. They claimed that district administration and food department official are involved in selling of subsidized flour in open market while smuggling to Afghanistan.

The tribesmen claimed that administration and food department is providing 40 bags to their each taut at

their doorsteps while the admin's facsimile are changing bags of government and sold them in black markets. They argued that many tribesmen have been deprived from subsidized flour because it is providing on BISP data which manipulated and tribesmen are already deprived from the facility.



CHITRAL: KP Caretaker Minister for Housing and Prisons Shafiullah visiting District Jail.

## AJK observes World Water Day

MIRPUR (APP): World water day was observed across Azad Jammu Kashmir on Wednesday with a renewed pledge to perform the individual and collective role to save water, besides encouraging sincere efforts at the national level for the establishment of more water reservoirs. World Water Day is observed across the globe every year on March 22.

Major ceremony to observe the day was hosted in Mirpur under the auspices of Jinnah Foundation with illustrious philanthropist and Chairman of the foundation Dr. Amin Chaudhry. Experts including the chair Dr. Amin Chaudhry, President Makazi Anjuman e Tajran Raja Khalid Mahmood Khan., President AJK Journalist Environment Forum Altaf Hamid Rao, Pioneer of Water Filtration Plants on Mirpur on self-help basis philanthropist Dr. Khalid Yousaf and others said that availability of hygienic drinking water has become the world problem in the present era. Emergency steps are required to be taken to ensure the supply of hygienic water the world over, they emphasized.

They showed grave concern over the impending worst water crises in the

country including AJK due to the reported gradual dryness of rivers following the blatant violation of international norms on the use of water and river treaties on the part of India. Speakers emphasized the need of focusing fullest attention to establish more water reservoirs in Pakistan with special focus to get the country rid of the grim water crises to meet the present and future water requirements for bringing about progress and prosperity of the country.

They strongly suggested for immediate enforcement of water policy in the country including AJK to ensure the importance and usage of water resources in view of the future needs of this greatest natural necessity of the human life and for other much required and permanent purposes. Speakers also suggested for launching an integrated awareness program at the national as well as regional level to apprise the masses of their due role for safety and protection of the water resources besides to discourage excessive use of water.

Speakers also warned of the future challenges with emphasis for the individual and collective national responsibility of the masses especially the concerned stake holders both

in the private and public sectors to ensure the safety of water through discouraging its misuse through individual and collective role.

### Flour mills, utility stores inspected F.P. Report

HANGU: Deputy Commissioner along District Food Controller visited flour mills and utility stores while inspected quality of edible items especially flour to be provided in Ramzan package.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Hangu Fazal Akbar claimed that arrangements have been concluded for distribution of free flour during Ramzan on the directions of federal and provincial governments while addressing media personnel at his office. He added that hoarding and price-hikers should be dealt with iron hands for provision of edible items on official's price list.

He said that free flour should be provided to registered families with Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and should be distributed in transparent manner.



KOHAT: Officials and residents holding a rally in connection with March 23rd.

### Lawyers stand for constitutional rights: TBA F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: The newly elected president Takhtbhai Bar Association (TBA) Qamar Zaman said that legal fraternity has stood with human rights and supremacy of constitution, on Thursday.

This he said while addressing different delegation while congratulating him as 31st president of TBA and claimed that will uphold voice at every forum for welfare of lawyer's community. He claimed that legal fraternity is custodian of constitution and democracy.

Mardan Bar president Noor Badshah, Iqbal Khan Advocate, Assistant Commissioner Gul Nawaz, PPP leader Asad Khan, Irfan Khan, ANP's Nasir Khan, JUI's Dost Muhammad Darvish, senior journalist Muslim Sabir and Javed Alam Khan congratulated the TBA cabinet comprising of Shah Hussain, Anwar Shamim, Manzoor Khan, Kashif Khan and Shah Masood Khan as secretary library.

### Completion of under-probe cases directed F.P. Report

MULTAN: CPO Multan Mansoor-ul-Haq Rana held a separate meeting with police officers of Sadar Division and City Division. SSP Operations Multan Mohammad Imran accompanied him. SP Saddar Uzair Ahmed and SP City Rana Muhammad Ashraf also attended the meeting. DSPs, SHOs, editors, readers and other officers of both divisions attended the meeting.

CPO Multan Mansoor-ul-Haq Rana reviewed the performance of both divisions in detail and reviewed the crime rate, police performance in solving serious cases, especially murder under investigation, arresting remaining accused of murder and category A. Special emphasis was placed on the arrest of the criminals. Apart from this, he gave instructions for vigorous operations against thieves and dacoit gangs.

CPO Mansoor Ul Haq Rana ordered strict action against the gangs of car and motorcycle thieves and asked them to improve their operations against these elements so that the people do not suffer from insecurity. Apart from this, CPO Multan directed that during Ramadan, mosques, imambargahs, markets, bazaars and other places should perform their duties responsibly and ensure the safety of citizens' lives and property.

### Woman poisoned to death

GUIJRANWAL (PPI): A woman was allegedly tortured and poisoned to death by her husband and father-in-law in Gujranwala, according to a report.

Victim Kiran Shehzadi recorded her video statement on her deathbed in which she said that she got married to Umair Afzal, the owner of famous Al Meraj Bakers in Gujranwala. Soon after their marriage, he and his father Haji Sheikh Afzal used to brutally torture her. "My husband was a psycho," she added.

## Residents flay high inflation in Ramazan

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: The increase in inflation in Ramadan has blown away the consciousness of those who are fasting. The poor and middle class cannot even think of buying meat and fruits.

It was added that the Gulf countries and non-Muslim countries also give Muslims cheaper food and drink in Ramadan, but unfortunately, the Ganga flows in reverse in Pakistan, and traders take unfair advantage of people's needs in Ramadan. Before Ramadan, fat meat was being sold at 600 rupees per kg in the markets of Timergara, Khal, Rabat Talash Maidan, Munda Talash Chakdara and Samar Bagh, but during Ramadan, butchers made an increase of their own.

It is selling at 700 rupees per kg, while beef are being sold at 800. A day before Ramadan, 250 rupees a dozen Pomegranate Rs 550 per kg Grapes 500 per kg Coffee dozen 500 kino 400 dozen Apples Rs 350 per kg Guava Rs 250 per kg while Watermelon is being sold for Rs 200 per kg Poor and middle class can only ask for the price of fruit but cannot afford to buy it District administration is also self-made. Inflation has failed to be controlled and the people are suffering from inflation but there is no relief.

**Bazaar inspected to ensure hygiene environment:** Additional Assistant Commissioner Revenue Tariq Khan inspected Timergara Bazar on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Dir, checked expiry, price list, cleanliness etc. in general store, chicken shop, fruit/vegetable shops.

Action will be taken according to law against several shops for violation. He warned the shopkeepers that strict legal action will be taken against them if anyone sells food items at a price higher than the official price during Ramadan. Besides, he visited Timergara Khor regarding drainage blockage. Directed the concerned contractor to open the drainage channel. The contractor assured to open soon.

**Free flour distribution kicks-off in Dir Lower:** The provision of free flour to deprived segments has been started at Dir lower district while the drive was inaugurated by District Food Controller Shahabuddin Khan formally.

According to details, DFC Shahabuddin Khan along with Assistant Commissioner Revenue Tariq Khan today inaugurated the supply of free flour in Timergara in the light of the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Dir Payan Iftikhar Ahmed. Directed the concerned dealers to provide free flour to the beneficiaries after verification in the given procedure and software.

Create separate counters for senior citizens and women and provide them with all facilities at the respective place. Recently, the government started providing free flour to the citizens under Benazir Income Support Program.

Meeting regarding damage in earthquake held: Live meeting regarding the earthquake damage last night under the chairmanship of Commissioner Malakand Division Shahid Ullah Khan. Due to the earthquake last night, 2 women were killed, 41 people were injured and two

houses collapsed due to the earthquake.

All Assistant/Additional Assistant Commissioners, Tehsildars and Revenue Staff are collecting further earthquake reports in their respective areas. In the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Dir Payan Mr. Iftikhar Ahmed, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Abdul Wali Khan, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Relief and Human Rights) Tariq Hussain, Representative PDMA Abdullah Khan, Focal Person D.D.M. U Farrukh Zia participated live in the meeting.

Farwell party for outgoing staff held: On completion of 40 years of service in the police department, a farewell ceremony was held in honor of DSP Investigation Lower Dir Saeed ur Rehman Khan. The farewell ceremony for DSP Investigation Lower Dir Saeed ur Rahman Khan was held at Investigation Block Police Line Timergara, the farewell ceremony was attended by police, DRC members and retired police personnel.

On this occasion, the participants retired. They presented flower garlands, bouquets and gifts to DSP Saeed ur Rehman Khan. DPO Lowdir Tariq Iqbal, DSP Headquarters Fakhr Alam Khan, SP CTD Amjad Khan, DSP Legal Rashid Khan, DSP Special Branch Shahi Bakht Khan addressed the farewell ceremony and said that DSP Saeed ur Rehman's value to the police department is eternal and great. It is a service which is unforgettable, the speakers said that the job of the police is a worship, so we should perform our duty honestly and dutifully.

## Supply of free flour under Ramazan package inspected

Saqib Mushtaq

LODHARAN: Deputy Commissioner Syed Mashhad Raza Kazmi made a surprise visit to Gogaran, a suburb of Lodhran, to review the supply of free flour to the citizens under the special Ramazan package, on Thursday.

Deputy Commissioner ordered the expansion of the flour supply point established at Government Associate College, Gogaran. He also directed to provide other facilities to the citizens. Assistant Commissioner Ashraf Saleh, DSP President Circle Mehr Ishaq Sial and other officers were also present on this occasion. Deputy Commissioner said that to avoid rush, the process of supplying flour should be completed at lightning speed in minimum time. He said that citizens coming to get free flour should also show discipline.

Deputy Commissioner also inspected Municipal Stadium Lodhran flour supply point to review the process of supply of free flour and gave on-the-spot orders for redressal of public grievances. He said that the purpose of distribution of free flour under Ramazan package is to provide relief to deserving people. He said that maximum care should be taken for the convenience of the people at the dough points. Deputy Commissioner Syed Mashhad Raza Kazmi also encouraged



the police officers and revenue officers present on the spot and appreciated their services.

Deputy Commissioner Syed Mashhad Raza Kazmi along with District Police Officer Hussam bin Iqbal made a surprise inspection of the trucking points established in connection with the supply of free flour to the citizens under the special Ramazan Mubarak package.

Deputy Commissioner visited the free flour points set up at Government Graduate College, Government Associate College, Lodhran Public School, Lodhran Marriage Hall, Municipal Stadium, Government Boys High School Gagan Hatta and Zamzam Marriage Hall Lodhran and distributed to the public. He reviewed the facilities. He inquired about the free flour scheme from the citizens and directed the government employees on the occasion to treat the visiting citizens with courtesy

and ensure that at least it is possible to supply flour in less time.

On this occasion, Deputy Commissioner Syed Mashhad Raza Kazmi said that the government of Punjab has started providing free flour to the beneficiaries and more than 3 lakh people of the district will benefit from this scheme. He said that with this unique scheme of its kind, the people are being given their right directly for the first time.

He directed the public to check their eligibility for free flour by sending a message to 8070 and after receiving the confirmation message, go to the specified points and get the free flour. He further said that the supply of free flour will continue till 25th of Ramadan. On this occasion, District Police Officer Hussam bin Iqbal also reviewed the security measures taken at the free flour points and directed the policemen on duty to discharge their duties responsibly.





# Taiwan says it has contingency plans for China moves

TAIPEI (Reuters): Taiwan's defence ministry has contingency plans for any moves by China during Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen's overseas visit, Deputy Defence Minister Po Horng-huei said ahead of Tsai going to the United States and Central America next week.

China, which claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, carried out large-scale war games around the island last August after a visit to Taipei by then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Tsai is visiting diplomatic allies Guatemala and Belize on a trip starting next week, but

she will be stopping off in New York and Los Angeles.

While in California she is expected to meet current House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, the most sensitive leg of the trip, though Taiwan's presidential office declined to confirm that would take place. Asked by reporters on the sidelines of a parliament session whether China was likely to stage more drills when Tsai is abroad, Po said the armed forces were prepared.

"When it comes to what the Chinese communists have done in the past, the defence ministry can have a grasp on it, and will consider the worse scenario," he

said. "During the president's overseas visit, the defence ministry has contingency plans for all moves" by China, Po added, declining to give details. The United States has said there is no reason for China to react to Tsai's trip, saying such transits are routine and have happened many times before.

China, which has condemned Tsai's planned US stop over, has continued its military activities around Taiwan since August, though on a much reduced scale. Taiwan rejects China's sovereignty claims, saying on Taiwan's people can decide their future.

## Sweden approves NATO entry

BRUSSELS (AFP): Sweden's parliament voted in favour of joining NATO despite delays by Hungary and Turkey to ratify its membership bid, which will likely lead to Sweden joining after neighbouring Finland. The vote, which paved the way for the country's NATO accession and provides the necessary legal framework, passed with 269 votes in favour and 37 against, with 43 MPs not attending in Sweden's 349 seat parliament.

"NATO membership is the best way to safeguard Sweden's security and to contribute in solidarity to the security of the entire Euro-Atlantic area," Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom told parliament during the debate that preceded the vote. Sweden and Finland dropped their decades-long policies of military non-alignment and applied to join the trans-Atlantic defence pact last May, in the wake of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

But Sweden has had several diplomatic spat with NATO member Turkey, which have delayed its membership bid and chances of joining at the same time as Finland. Turkey and Hungary are the only NATO countries yet to ratify the Nordic countries' bids -- which require unanimous ratifications by all 30 members.

Following months of delays, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced last week that he was asking parliament to vote on Finland's bid to join the NATO defence bloc. He said he was still not ready to move forward on Sweden. In another setback for Sweden, Hungary announced that it would vote on Finland's ratification on March 27, but Sweden's bid would be decided on "later".

Erdogan has accused Sweden of not honouring the terms of a separate deal they reached in June 2022, under which Turkey had agreed to approve the bids. Turkey has sought the extradition of dozens of Kurdish and other suspects it accuses of ties to outlawed militants and a failed 2016 coup attempt. Following Turkey's announcement, Billstrom said Sweden regretted the decision but he and Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson have said they are confident Sweden would still become a member before the next NATO summit in Vilnius in July.

As the NATO entry was debated, some MPs pointed out that the vote, given the present situation, would have no effect. "Although the bill states that 'the amendment is proposed to enter into force at a date determined by the government', this means the date determined by Erdogan and (Viktor) Orban," Hakan Sivenelning, MP for the Left Party, told parliament. Sweden's membership bid has enjoyed wide support in the country's parliament, with only the Left Party and the Green Party opposing the membership.

# Kurds remain biggest winners from US-led invasion of Iraq

IRBIL (AP): Complexes of McMansions, fast food restaurants, real estate offices and half-constructed high-rises line wide highways in Irbil, the seat of the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq.

Many members of the political and business elite live in a suburban gated community dubbed the American Village, where homes sell for as much as \$5 million, with lush gardens consuming more than a million liters of water a day in the summer. The visible opulence is a far cry from 20 years ago. Back then, Irbil was a backwater provincial capital without even an airport.

That rapidly changed after the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq that toppled Saddam Hussein. Analysts say that Iraqi Kurds — and particularly the Kurdish political class — were the biggest beneficiaries in a conflict that had few winners. That's despite the fact that for ordinary Kurds, the benefits of the new order have been tempered by corruption and power struggles between the two major Kurdish parties and between Irbil and Baghdad, the Iraqi capital.

In the wake of the invasion, much of Iraq fell into chaos, as occupying American forces fought an insurgency and as multiple political and sectarian communities vied to fill the power vacuum left in Baghdad. But the Kurds, seen as staunch allies of the Americans, strengthened their political position and courted foreign investments.

Irbil quickly grew into an oil-fueled boom town. Two years later, in 2005, the city opened a new commercial airport, constructed with Turkish funds, and followed a few years after that by an expanded international airport. Traditionally, the "Kurdish narrative is one of victimhood and one of grievances," said Bilal Wahab, a fellow at the Washington Institute think tank. But in Iraq since 2003, "that is not the Kurdish story. The story is one of power and empowerment."

With the Ottoman Empire's collapse after World War I, the Kurds were promised an independent homeland in the 1920 Treaty of Sevres. But the treaty was never ratified, and "Kurdistan" was carved up. Since then, there have been Kurdish rebellions in Iran, Iraq and Turkey, while in Syria, Kurds have clashed with Turkish-backed forces. In Iraq, the Kurdish region won de facto self-rule in 1991, when the United States imposed a no-fly zone over it in response to Saddam's brutal repression of Kurdish uprisings.



"We had built our own institutions, the parliament, the government," said Hoshiyar Zebari, a top official with the Kurdistan Democratic Party who served as foreign minister in Iraq's first post-Saddam government. "Also, we had our own civil war. But we overcame that," he said, referring to fighting between rival Kurdish factions in the mid-1990s. Speaking in an interview at his palatial home in Masif, a former resort town in the mountains above Irbil that is now home to much of the KDP leadership, Zabari added, "The regime change in Baghdad has brought a lot of benefits to this region."

Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid, from the rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, also gave a glowing assessment of the post-2003 developments. The Kurds, he said, had aimed for "a democratic Iraq, and at the same time some sort of ... self-determination for the Kurdish people." With the US overthrow of Saddam, he said, "We achieved that ... We became a strong group in Baghdad."

The post-invasion constitution codified the Kurdish region's semi-independent status, while an informal power-sharing arrangement now stipulates that Iraq's president is always a Kurd, the prime minister a Shiite and the parliament speaker a Sunni. But even in the Kurdish region, the legacy of the invasion is complicated. The two major Kurdish parties have jockeyed for power, while Irbil and Baghdad have been at odds over territory and the sharing of oil revenues.

Meanwhile, Arabs in the Kurdish region and minorities, including the Turkmen and Yazidis, feel sidelined in the new order, as do Kurds without ties to one of the two key parties that

serve as gatekeepers to opportunities in the Kurdish region. As the economic boom has stagnated in recent years, due to both domestic issues and global economic trends, an increasing number of Kurdish youths are leaving the country in search of better opportunities. According to the International Labor Organization, 19.2% of men and 38% of women aged 15-24 were unemployed and out of school in Irbil province in 2021.

Wahab said Irbil's post-2003 economic success has also been qualified by widespread waste and patronage in the public sector. "The corruption in the system is really undermining the potential," he said. In Kirkuk, an oil-rich city inhabited by a mixed population of Kurds, Turkmen and Sunni Arabs where Baghdad and Irbil have vied for control, Kahtan Vendavi, local head of the Iraqi Turkmen Front party, complained that the American forces' "support was very clear for the Kurdish parties" after the 2003 invasion.

Turkmen are the third largest ethnic group in Iraq, with an estimated 3 million people, but hold no high government positions and only a handful of parliamentary seats. In Kirkuk, the Americans "appointed a governor of Kurdish nationality to manage the province. Important departments and security agencies were handed over to Kurdish parties," Vendavi said.

Some Kurdish groups also lost out in the post-2003 order, which consolidated the power of the two major parties. Ali Bapir, head of the Kurdistan Justice Group, a Kurdish Islamist party, said the two ruling parties "treat people who do not belong to (them) as third- and fourth-class citizens."

# Colombia's biggest drug cartel rules with fear

COLOMBIA (AFP): In the cities and towns of north-west Colombia, the ubiquitous graffiti "AGC" signals the ominous presence of the powerful Gulf Clan drug cartel. Spray painted onto walls, it is meant to instill fear in residents, and keep them mum, as the Clan embarks on a fast-escalating confrontation with the government in an area critical for its bustling cocaine trade, illegal mining and other lucrative criminal ventures.

"To speak about the Clan is to put the noose around your neck," said a resident of Taraza, a town that has recently found itself at the cartel's mercy. Like many interviewed by AFP in the region, the resident would not divulge their name for fear of reprisal. Also known as the Autodefensas Gaitanistas of Colombia or AGC, the Gulf Clan is the biggest drug cartel in the world's largest cocaine producer.

It has a long history of violence in an area dubbed the "Bermuda triangle" by locals because of the many people who have gone missing there, only to be found dead in the river nearby. Authorities accuse it of fomenting violence and vandalism by illegal gold miners in the north-west region protesting a clampdown on their operations and the destruction of their dredging machinery. In so doing, the Clan breached the terms of a ceasefire not even three months in, according to the government.

The miners have set up roadblocks, attacked government buildings, a bank and civilians -- severely disrupting daily life and livelihoods. A dozen assailants on motorcycles set fire to two buses and four trucks on the National Route 25 -- a critical link between the Caribbean coast in Colombia's north and the second city of Medellin in the east. That

prompted President Gustavo Petro to announce the "reactivation" of military operations against the cartel. The military and police deployed 10,000 armed personnel to the region, and the N25 roadblocks have been cleared.

But a local journalist, also speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP that for all intents and purposes, "the road remains under the control of the Gulf Clan." The big trucks ferrying critical consumer products that usually bustle along the N25 now travel in convoys of dozens of vehicles. They are escorted by heavily-armed members of the security forces past the carcasses of the burnt vehicles still lying there.

"The situation is under control," declared a soldier as he jumped onto a Humvee to join one of the elaborate security convoys whizzing past under the seemingly placid gaze of villagers. Not everyone is convinced. "Diana," who runs a modest truck stop restaurant along the route, was a witness to attack. She was keen to show a video on her mobile phone of the two buses in flames, but refused to describe the events.

According to the local journalist, the miners' protest started by targeting the government, but "ended up holding the population hostage." Gumerindo Castillo Bolario, a leader of the Taraza miners' group, insisted there were no links with the Clan, and accused the government of "stigmatizing accusations." Economic activity in Taraza has partly resumed since the military deployment there, with shops open at least in the mornings, and some bars pumping music.

"People could no longer move around, go out and buy food," said driver "Faber." "Twenty days without work -- it was like the pandemic all over

again." Andres, who manages a motel and restaurant attached to a gas station, told AFP "they" had "allowed us to open" in recent days. "Here, we do what we're told," added a grocery store owner, citing orders and threats relayed by the Clan via WhatsApp. Despite a 2016 peace deal that saw the FARC guerrilla group disarm, fighting has continued as the Clan and other armed groups vie for control of illegal resources and trafficking routes.

Petro declared a unilateral ceasefire with armed groups on New Year's Eve in pursuit of his ambitious plan for "total peace" after decades of violence. The truce remains in place with groups other than the Clan. "We don't know what will happen," a Taraza hotelier told AFP. "It is total uncertainty."

## Tigray admn set up as part of peace plan

ADDIS ABABA (Reuters): Ethiopia's office of the Prime Minister said on Thursday an interim administration for the Horn of Africa country's northern region of Tigray has been established, a key step in implementation of a peace plan to end war there.

The interim administration was set up by the upper chamber of Ethiopia's parliament with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed appointing Getachew Reda, as a head of the interim administration, a statement posted on the Prime Minister's Facebook page said. Establishment of a temporary administration for Tigray was part of a peace pact signed in South African in November between Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the federal government to end the war in Tigray.

# 'New military bases with US to be 'scattered' around Philippines'

MANILA (Reuters): President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said that four new military bases under a defense agreement with the US would be located in various parts of the Philippines, including in a province facing the South China Sea. Last month, Marcos granted the US access to four sites, on top of five existing locations under the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), which comes amid China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea and towards Taiwan.

"There are four extra sites scattered around the Philippines - there are some in the north, there are some around Palawan, there are some further south," Marcos told reporters at the sidelines of the Philippine army's founding anniversary. The EDCA allows US access to Philippine bases for joint training, pre-positioning of equipment and building of facilities such as runways, fuel storage and military housing, but it is not a permanent presence.

The Philippines and the US would announce the locations of the bases soon, Marcos said, adding the sites would boost the country's ability to defend the "eastern side" of its largest island, Luzon. Luzon is the closest main Philippine island to self-ruled Taiwan that China claims as its own. China's foreign ministry reiterated its stance that the US side was increasing tensions by strengthening its military deployments in the region, adding countries should be "vigilant" and avoid being used by the US.

"We generally believe that defence cooperation between countries should be conducive to regional peace and stability, and should not be aimed at third parties or harm the interests of third parties," spokesperson Wang Wenbin told reporters at a regular news briefing. A former Philippine military chief has publicly said the US had asked for access to bases in Isabela, Zambales and Cagayan, all on the island of Luzon, facing north

towards Taiwan, and on Palawan in the southwest, near the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

Some leaders of local governments at the potential EDCA sites have opposed Marcos' decision, worried they would be dragged into a conflict if one arose between the US and China over Taiwan. But Marcos said his government has discussed with them the importance of the expanded US access and "why it will actually be good for their provinces". Washington has committed \$80 million worth of infrastructure investments at the five existing sites - the Antonio Bautista Air Base in Palawan, Basa Air Base in Palampanga, Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija, Benito Ebuena Air Base in Cebu and Lumbia Air Base in Mindanao.

Speaking before Philippine troops, Marcos told them to be vigilant as the external threat to security was becoming more "complex" and "unpredictable".

# War on gangs forges new El Salvador. But the price is steep

SOYAPANGO, El Salvador (AP): With semiautomatic weapons pressed to their chest, a pack of camouflage-clad police officers marches through rows of small brick homes winding up hills on the fringes of El Salvador's capital. They rap sharply on door after door, pushing into homes with dozing teenagers listening to music or toddlers eating breakfast and watching cartoons.

Stepping foot in La Campanera, once one of El Salvador's bloodiest neighborhoods, would have been unthinkable before the government suspended constitutional rights and started an all-out offensive on the gangs one year ago. Today, police march past skeletons of ransacked homes, abandoned by those fleeing the bloodshed that marked these streets for decades. Officers demand men strip off their shirts so they can examine their bodies for tattoos, and flip through deeds and energy bills, once unpaid under gang rule. Residents scrape together any evidence they can to prove they aren't members of Barrio 18, the gang that once dominated here.

Neighbors look on not with surprise, but resigned acceptance. "Now it's normal," Katherine Zaldivar said after her house was searched, her 4-year-old daughter peering up at the two officers as she sat on the floor finishing her cereal. "They're always here." El Salvador has undergone a radical transformation since President Nayib Bukele -- the self-described "world's coolest dictator" -- ordered a state of emergency in response to an alarming surge in gang violence. Bukele has imprisoned over 65,000 of the nation's 6.3 million people,

packing thousands inside a "mega-prison" that's set to be one of the world's largest. Bloodshed has faded away in places like La Campanera as the presence of the most fearsome gangs dwindles.

Police stops like the one at Zaldivar's home are the new norm. The national homicide rate, the highest in the world as recently as 2015, has dipped to numbers more comparable to Maine or New Hampshire, though some analysts question the integrity of the government data. Small freedoms mark the monumental shift for many Salvadorans. They enjoy traversing San Salvador by night, order pizza from delivery services newly entering former gang territories, and open businesses without gangs extorting them for money.

For others, the transformation comes at a steep price. Tens of thousands of children are torn from their parents, who have been taken to prisons with conditions fueling a flood of reported human rights abuses. Observers raise alarms about the slipping of a delicate democracy, a decay threatening to ripple across the region. For many, fear of the gangs has been replaced by fear of the very government claiming to protect them.

"The long term question, and what I fear, is: Is this going to become a police state?" said Michael Paarlberg, a political science professor at Virginia Commonwealth University researching El Salvador.

Bukele's government declined various requests by The Associated Press for interviews, written comment or access to the prisons. And despite the relative calm, the gangs still lurk. Yet for the family of 44-year-old Maritza

Pacheco, opening a corner shop outside their home four months ago was a small miracle. On the dusty streets of the Primero de Diciembre neighborhood, they lived in a state of constant panic. Members of the notorious Mara Salvatrucha gang, or MS-13, would war with nearby Barrio 18 rivals, sending gunfire ringing out over flimsy tin-sheet homes. The gangs were formed in Los Angeles in the 1970s and '80s by migrants fleeing war in Central America. After many members were deported, the groups took root in El Salvador and flourished. Before the crackdowns, the government said 118,000 gang members were on the streets nationwide. They long terrorized and extorted poor communities. To scrape by, Pacheco and her daughter secretly sold fruits and vegetables in a market in another neighborhood, avoiding gang payments simply referred to as "rent."

The family of 11 tried to isolate themselves, determined not to get sucked into the lawlessness around them. But the gangs began closing in on her teenage son. Early last year, Pacheco paid to have him and his sister smuggled to the U.S. "As he got older, those guys would go looking for him, and that scared me," Pacheco said. "Raising a child only to lose him to this? No way." Then, in May, two months after the state of emergency came into effect and police stormed the neighborhood, something unprecedented happened: Pacheco watched as the truck of a local soda provider, SalvaCola, rolled by their house.

Then came fruit vendors. Then banks, one of which gave them a loan

to start her own business. Today, Pacheco sells candies, sodas and pastries to neighborhood kids playing nearby. The family went from earning \$15 a day, just enough to subsist, to \$60, enough to save for the future. "Things have changed a lot," she said. "People come and stay sometimes until 12 or 1 in the morning. And it's so safe that we can stay open."

That change is painted across San Salvador. As the sun sets, families amble through the streets in a religious procession, instead of hiding away at the first hint of darkness. Cradling candles, they drift past packed pupuserias and bustling karate gyms. Police trucks on patrol roar past as dozens of elderly Salvadorans doing aerobics in a park; nearby, gangs were known to pile bodies in mass graves. Prisoners, under careful watch, slap brown paint over faded blue MS-13 graffiti on a brick wall. Such graffiti, once speckling the city, has all but disappeared in Bukele's efforts to erase any trace of the gangs. Less visible is the damage left by the crackdown. Bukele's administration has suppressed critics and journalists, wielding a robust information machine and a tightly controlled communications strategy. Nowhere is that more evident than inside prisons, likened to torture chambers by two government officials and a former prisoner who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they fear retribution by the government and gangs.

They describe cells so packed that inmates can't sit down, struggling to go to the bathroom. Prisoners rarely see the light of day, and cells reek of

unwashed inmates. Many of them cough, including women and elderly prisoners. One former inmate described watching others carried away in body bags. The government confirmed in November that at least 90 have died in custody, but since has been largely tight-lipped about death counts. Little is known officially about the facilities outside of highly produced videos Bukele plasters on social media layered over dramatic, action-movie music. One video released last week shows police packing their new "mega-prison" with 2,000 more tattooed young men. Bukele's government says it could fit up to 40,000 people.

"This will be their new house, where they will live for decades, mixed together, unable to do any more harm to the population," Bukele tweeted following the opening of the prison, referring to prisoners as "terrorists." Pressure to make detentions was so great that in December, extra Christmas vacation days were offered to those who could get the highest capture counts, said one of the officials who spoke to AP -- an officer who has worked for decades in gang-controlled zones. "We received specific orders that we in the streets had to arrest a certain number of people, whether they were gangsters or not," the officer said. "Many innocents were detained and their rights were violated."

"We've committed crimes." Nearly one in six people who have been imprisoned are innocent, estimates the country's police union tracking detentions. Human Rights Watch estimates that more than 1,000 children as young as 12 have been

detained. The organization accused Bukele's government of due process violations, targeting marginalized communities with "indiscriminate" raids, torturing detainees and over-packing prisons. Local rights group Cristosal documented 3,344 cases of human rights violations in the first 11 months of the state of emergency. Still, advocates say people are often too scared to report cases. But most civilians who spoke to AP view human rights concerns as collateral damage for a greater good. And the president's approval rating has soared to 91%, according to a March poll by LPG Data. So, too, has approval for the crackdown. "The president is doing what no one has been able to. You know there are a lot of innocent people caught in the middle," said Jorge Guzman, a pastor of a church in a former red zone. "But you accept what's happening as something that had to happen." Bukele has harnessed his approval to further consolidate power, according to the officials who spoke to AP, as well as watchdogs and analysts.

"It's a very attractive model," said Abraham Abrego, a leader of Cristosal. "It's a model that sells a kind of punitive populism to gain popularity and stay in power." The government has extended Bukele's state-of-exception measures a dozen times. In September, he announced he would run for reelection despite El Salvador's constitution banning presidents from consecutive terms. When asked what she thought of Bukele, Pacheco, the owner of the corner shop, responded: "I've never voted in my life. Now, I would vote for him."



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# Institutions’ piteous role in politics

THE Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday in an abhorrent move postponed the Punjab elections, originally scheduled for April 30, till October 8. According to the official press release of Electoral Watchdog, due to the no provision of Security troops from the Pakistan Army and Rangers, and no availability of essential funds from the Federal Government, the Commission was left with insufficient numbers of available Police personnel for the security of Election material, polling stations, the voters and the election candidates to carry forward the agenda of free, fair and transparent election in the province at the designated date and time. After in-depth discussions over the issues about the Punjab election, the commission was compelled to exercise its power under Article 218(3) read with Section 58 and Section 8(c) of the Elections Act, 2017, to withdraw the election program till October 8.

A highly deplorable and disgraceful decision of the Election Commission regarding the postponement of polls in the Country's largest province has shocked the whole nation that is already distasteful and annoyed by the current state of affairs and the unethical politics of its leaders. There were rumors and multiple explanations had been put forth by the ruling coalition government regarding the deferment of the upcoming election in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa not only on mere security and financial reasons but on political grounds that created a perception that the ruling alliance was not sincere in holding elections on the designated date in both provinces. Meanwhile, the ECP decision regarding Punjab polls has also cast doubts regarding the upcoming election in KP as the conditions and strategies replicate in the adjoining provinces.

Realistically, Pakistan fell prey to an untamed bullfight between its leaders and political groups that not only engulfed the whole society but also debilitated state institutions, undermined the constitution, and derailed the political process throughout our national history. The selfish political culture has led the country to this day that nation lacks highly essential funds for the conduct of the electoral process, but the government was planning to boost its politics through public money by distributing free-of-cost wheat flour and cheaper petroleum products ahead of general polls in respective provinces. Historically, Pakistan is embattled with terrorism since the beginning of the 21st century and multiple national, provincial, and local bodies elections had been conducted despite heightened terrorism threats in the past such as in 2008, and 2013. Economic volatility is a persistent issue and delaying the election for another six months seems to have some political and mala fide motives for the regulator's action.

After all, the Election Commission must not play a vanguard role for the incumbent government by suggesting a six months delay time for the election that is to be held constitutionally on an urgent basis with a specified time of 90 days. The Electoral Watchdog must shed off the role of an administrator/political broker by ordering the government and relevant institutions to provide essential funds and create a conducive environment for a peaceful and smooth holding of elections in respective regions as early as possible. Delaying an important constitutional activity on ill-motivates would serve to further political disagreement and social polarization in an already divided society. There is a dire need that all national institutions including multiple ministries, the ECP, civil administration, and Police, as well as the Judiciary, to play their constitutional role in the best interest of the country without any persuasion from the sitting adamant rulers and aggressive opposition. At the same time, there is an urgent need for a political dialogue among all political groups to deliberate on political issues attached to future elections in the center and provinces to reach a consensus on electoral laws, procedures, and other methodologies. So, the nation comes out of the current fiasco and moves toward political stability and economic revival without any delay.

# UN must resist Myanmar junta’s plan for Rohingya refugees

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

THE refugee crisis in Bangladesh, caused by the genocide in Myanmar, has been acute for many years. Hundreds of thousands of displaced people, most of them with nothing but themselves, are confined to 34 refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. They are poor, they are often hungry and malnourished, and crime and violent misery thrive among them. Most have been there for almost six years, since the 2017 expulsion of the Rohingya from their homes and villages in Rakhine State by the Myanmar military. Their problem is a long-standing one, complicated by the 2021 coup in Myanmar and the multifaceted civil war that has been fought there ever since.

Those in power in Myanmar now are the same military men who were the key architects of the Rohingya genocide. With no solution to their suffering at hand, the Rohingya must wait for more favorable political winds. But those are not what face them. Instead, things are becoming less favorable by the day. The government of Bangladesh is worried about the costs of the refugees and problems that surround the camps. They wish to be rid of the Rohingya as soon as possible.

Similarly, it seems, the UN is also losing patience with the refugee situation. At the same time as UN Special Envoy on Myanmar Noeleen Heyzer was last week giving a speech on the iniquities of the refugee crisis, in which she described the Rohingya as "persecuted and stateless, and (continuing) to suffer extreme hardship, living in difficult conditions and facing tremendous challenges," an envoy of the Myanmar junta was in Bangladesh touring the

design. After years of limbo, the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh might have hoped that their situation might improve and that they might one day be able to return to Myanmar, the country from which they

were expelled. But this is not happening. Instead, those UN officers assigned to administer the Rohingya refugee crisis seem to be willing to work with the

Coordinator in Myanmar Ramanathan Balakrishnan, which were leaked to the Myanmar Accountability Project, indicate that not only did the UN allow the

Refugees of the plans the junta has for repatriating a minority that it has committed years of genocide against.

The UN may be tired of the Rohingya situation, which has never seemed fur-

racial violence using military force, backed by the regime. While the junta remains in power, the Rohingya can never be safe in Myanmar, which is why many of them fled and have not returned. For the UN to cooperate with the Myanmar military on refugee relocation schemes at the very time it is fighting a ruinous civil conflict is tantamount to endorsing the future good behavior of those who have already committed genocide.

The situation is unsatisfactory for all concerned. Bangladesh has difficulty bearing the financial and social cost of hosting so many refugees. The UN programs are perpetually under strain. As I have discussed recently, the World Food Program is painfully aware of the halts in supply and the shortages, which cause the Rohingya to face hunger and hardship. But this does not mean that compromise must be made with the most violent actors in Myanmar - the very people who cannot be trusted to safeguard the Rohingya.

There is only one solution to the crisis that could prevent further atrocity and marginalization, and that is the pursuit of justice. In the International Court of Justice, a case against the Myanmar junta rumbles on. Slowly, it is gathering evidence and gathering pace. The supporters of this process know it will be slow going, and difficult, to hold the military to account. But this must be done. Only when the legal work is justly concluded can the Rohingya be sure that the world will truly acknowledge what has been done to them, and commit to preventing more genocidal acts from being committed. Without justice, there can be no peace, and with no peace, there can be no repatriation for the Rohingya.

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# When it comes to pensions, Britain’s women are still a long way from equality. Why?

Ros Altmann

IN 21st-century Britain, there is still a shocking gap between men's and women's pensions. While public discourse has been dominated by the gender pay gap, which has been almost eliminated for women under the age of 40, women remain the poor relations when it comes to financial security in later life. Official figures show most of the UK's poorest pensioners are single women. This will not be easily resolved and the gender pensions gap exists in many other countries too. However, the very low level of state pension provision in the UK means that those who have little or no private pension wealth are at a serious disadvantage in retirement.

The chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, is reportedly planning to announce changes in the annual tax-free allowance for pension contributions, increasing it from £40,000 to £60,000 in tomorrow's budget, as well as increasing the lifetime allowance (LTA) - the maximum amount workers can pay into their pension pot

tax-free - by more than £500,000. The chancellor is planning to improve childcare support for working mothers. That can help more women stay in work, but many will still only work part-time. In addition, the problems in adult social care will mean many older women leaving full-time work to care for older relatives.

First, we need to understand why this disparity exists. A principal reason for the gender pensions gap is simply that women have lower lifetime earnings. Over a typical working life, caring responsibilities usually mean women earn less than men. Since private pensions depend on earnings, this means women will have lower pensions. Research shows that after having a first child, men's earnings will generally keep rising, but women's do not. Women are also more likely to work part-time, or in jobs that have lower average pay than those men have. Recent ONS figures show the number of women leaving the workforce to look after family has risen by 3% in the past year. Even in later

life, after their child-caring years, women are more likely to work part-time or retire early to look after loved ones, leaving them at risk of less retirement income.

The inadequacies of our country's care provision - both for children and older adults - remain a serious obstacle to women's earnings and pension prospects. Many undertake unpaid caring for loved ones, but that leaves less time for paid work. With an ageing population, these problems will only worsen without serious reforms. The gender pensions gap is also ingrained in the revolutionary workplace pension auto-enrolment policy, leaving many women at risk of lower pensions than men. Only those earning more than £10,000 a year in any one job are eligible to be automatically enrolled. Those with multiple jobs, each paying below £10,000, are completely excluded, which is estimated to leave out more than 3 million women. Another problem for low-paid women is that some

employer schemes force those earning less than £12,570 a year to pay 25% extra for their pensions, which may mean more simply opt out altogether. Well over 1 million women are affected by this problem and although the Treasury has promised to remedy the injustice, this will not be done before 2025.

Divorce can also cause women to lose out in later life. The government introduced the excellent idea of divorced women sharing their former partner's pension. But the lack of financial awareness and the inadequacy of protections for divorcing women leaves many losing out significantly when their partner fails to properly disclose the correct value for their pension. If the wife cannot afford good legal assistance, or simply trusts that the value given by their husband is correct, they can be seriously short-changed. Not only are women losing out significantly in private pensions, but even more worryingly they lose out in state pen-

sions too. After decades of inequality in the national insurance system, even the new state pension, introduced in 2016, sees women losing out. This seems astonishing, as the new system is supposed to offer a flat-rate state pension without earnings-related elements. Nevertheless, women are still forecast to have about £10 a week lower pensions than men, based on the full state pension amount (albeit down from £30 a week). The gap is not forecast to close until the 2040s. This is partly because of the vestiges of the old system, but there are also elements of the qualification criteria that disadvantage women. For example, the child benefit means test requires women, even if they know they will receive nothing, to apply for the benefit or else they lose credit for their state pension. Women earning less than the national insurance lower earnings limit (LEL) receive no credit towards their state pension. They may have several jobs, each earning below the LEL, and still get no state pension credited.

These unreasonable, inflexible rules penalise thousands of women. Such anomalies have no place in a 21st-century system and the government should fix them urgently. What else can the government do to improve women's pension outcomes? Reducing the auto-enrolment thresholds to bring in those earning less than £10,000 a year would clearly help. Also, improving workplace financial education to help women understand pensions, and protecting women's pensions more robustly after divorce. Another revolutionary reform could consider ways of helping women and their partners to contribute to pensions during caring years and encouraging stay-at-home women to ask partners to make pension contributions for them. Although women lose out in both state and private pensions, there are ways of fixing some of the cracks that they are falling through. Encouraging women to take responsibility for their pensions by improving awareness will also help. Much to do; let's hope it will happen.

# Feminists need to oppose hijab bans as much as hijab mandates

Dalia Mogahed

A little piece of cloth is scaring big governments again. The latest instance is in India, where in early March the Supreme Court announced that it would set up a three-judge bench to hear a case challenging a hijab ban in educational institutions in the state of Karnataka. In October 2022, the top court had delivered a split verdict on the ban, which the Karnataka High Court had previously upheld.

As a result of the Indian hijab ban in educational institutions, thousands of girls have not been able to attend school for a year, and were denied even a temporary lifting of the ban for their practical exams this year. And thanks to the same restrictions on religious dress in France, thousands of French women must choose between practising their sincerely held spiritual beliefs or pursuing their love for the sport of

football.

The French Football Federation bans hijab-wearing women and girls from its competitions. The French senate in January of last year voted 160 to 143 to extend that ban to all sports competitions, though that move was ultimately defeated in the country's parliament. Meanwhile, France's hijab ban at state-run academic institutions remains in place. As always, these bans have been justified by supporters, in part, as acts aimed at the emancipation of women. Nothing says women's empowerment like policing women's dress.

Why is it that the hijab is so often the obsession of bigots the world over? What is it about this piece of cloth that brings about so much the passionate protest from detractors? And why are Western feminists so deafeningly silent when it comes to this type of state control of women's bodies? I asked myself these very

questions when I received hate mail following my appearance on the Daily Show with Trevor Noah in 2016. In response to a question about my head covering, I told Trevor it was an act of spiritual devotion but, reversing roles, posed my own question to him. Paraphrased, I inquired "Oppression is the taking away of one's power. So what are we really saying about women and the source of their power if they are oppressed when they privatise their sexual energy?"

Trevor slowly attempted a response, "We are saying they are only powerful when they are sexy in public?" he ventured timidly. "Did I get it right?" The audience roared and the clip went viral. While I received an overwhelmingly positive response to the appearance, every piece of hate mail was about this segment. Mostly women, claiming to be

"feminists" were incredulous that I dare attribute an empowering quality to the hijab, or point out the inherent misogyny of casting it as demeaning.

The great irony of course is that all these supposed "saviours" of Muslim women who want to liberate us from our religious dress because they claim it degrades and limits us, do just that by restricting or ridiculing our choices. Indian and French girls must choose between their education and practising their faith, and thousands of French athletes must make a similar agonising decision between their careers and their creed. How poetic it is that the very people who rightly decry the treatment of women under the Taliban, partially because the group bars women from education and athletics, support hijab bans that ultimately result in the same?

Some will point out that

the hijab is indeed sometimes forced and sometimes politicised by authoritarian systems that do restrict women's education and movement. So, they contend, it is a symbol of oppression that should be cancelled. This argument denies women their agency. According to representative survey research conducted by the Washington-based Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, roughly half of Muslim women in the United States wear hijabs. The most popular reason given for why those who wear it do so is "religious devotion", cited by roughly half. Next comes "so people know I'm Muslim" (21 percent), and "modesty" (12 percent). Just one percent of those who wear a hijab said it was in compliance with the wishes of a relative or husband. But let's take to its logical conclusion the argument that says anything that is sometimes coerced or politicised is inherently

oppressive and must be opposed.

Let's apply this idea to something else that is far more often forced on women than the hijab, and see where we end up: sex. One in four women are victims of sexual assault during their undergraduate education in the United States. And sexual violence is not only politicised, it is used as a weapon of war in conflicts from Bosnia to Ukraine. So because sex is often forced and even weaponised, should it be banned? Should the state restrict consenting adult women from choosing in the name of women's empowerment? Should well-meaning self-proclaimed "feminists" shame and demean other women for making it a part of their lives?

If the answer is no, then perhaps this Women's History Month, Western feminists should consider opposing hijab bans with as much ferocity as hijab mandates.



# ‘Don’t Iraqi women weep when their children die?’ asked Tony Benn

Diane Abbott

MOST of what happens in parliament is theatre - symbolic and significant, but one step away from reality. But the discussion and debate in the weeks and days leading up to the Iraq war was the most intense and emotional that I have witnessed in the Commons. It was literally about matters of life and death. It was obvious from the beginning that Tony Blair was determined to go to war, shoulder to shoulder with George W Bush. The prime minister's relationship with the US seemed to matter more to him than opinion in his own party, and it also seemed to matter more than whether the war was even legal or not.

The public rationale was that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and was harbouring those responsible for 9/11: al-Qaida and its leader, Osama bin Laden. In order to shore up support, Alastair Campbell, Blair's spin doctor, was involved with the production of a dossier on Iraq's weapons programme. Reading it at the time, I realised there was very little substance to it. The rationale began to fall apart even before the day of the big debate on going to war. The chief UN weapons inspector, Hans Blix, said that he and his teams had so far found no "smoking gun" in Iraq. On 15 February, the Stop the War Coalition mounted the biggest demonstration ever staged in London, with some sources estimating the numbers at more than a million. Jeremy Corbyn made one of his finest speeches to the demonstration, stating: "Thousands more deaths in Iraq will not make things right. It will set off a spiral of conflict, of hate, of misery, of desperation, that will fuel the wars, the conflict, the terrorism, the depression and the misery of future generations."

Local party members contacted their MPs asking them to vote against the war. Even some Tory MPs were declaring that they would vote against it. Blair must have been increasingly alarmed, frightened that he might lose the vote. In the days running up to it, the prime minister had individual

MPs brought to his offices to pressure them to vote his way. He did not invite me, or other determined anti-war MPs; he must have judged us to be a lost cause. When private meetings with him did not seem to

case for war. Parliament became a pressure cooker. Everyone knew that the vote was not actually about the merits of the war. Instead, it was becoming a vote on whether you supported Blair personally or

**Blair must have been increasingly alarmed, frightened that he might lose the vote. In the days running up to it, the prime minister had individual MPs brought to his offices to pressure them to vote his way. He did not invite me, or other determined anti-war MPs; he must have judged us to be a lost cause. When private meetings with him did not seem to be working, I was told that Blair enlisted his wife, Cherie Blair, and the former US president Bill Clinton to ring Labour MPs to apply more pressure. Blair was always a little disdainful of ordinary MPs and parliament, but he was so desperate that he took to physically coming to the House of Commons and touring the bars, tea rooms and other places where MPs gather informally. He was buttonholing MPs and trying to make the case for war. Parliament became a pressure cooker. Everyone knew that the vote was not actually about the merits of the war. Instead, it was becoming a vote on whether you supported Blair personally or not.**

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not. Everyone knew that voting against the war meant that your career was effectively over. For days before the big vote, the house was swept by rumours that various senior Labour MPs would resign rather than vote for war. In the end, only the leader of the house, Robin Cook, stood down the day before the final debate, but he was a former foreign secretary, which gave his resignation particular significance. He was a famous-

ly good orator, and the House of Commons was packed to listen to his measured but damning speech. It was heard in complete silence, something that is relatively unusual. At the end, Labour MPs all got up to applaud him, something I have never seen before or since. Many of the MPs who clapped for him went on to vote for the war the following day. Maybe applauding Robin eased their consciences a little. On the day of the final debate, the atmosphere in parliament was electric. Blair gave his speech in support of war, threatening resignation if MPs did not vote for war. Some of the cabinet ministers sitting next to him on the frontbench were squirming, perhaps in the knowledge that they were about to do something against their consciences. Blair left the chamber after his speech, but only to go to his office in Westminster, from where he continued ringing Labour MPs even while the debate was ongoing, trying to turn the screw one last time.

That day John McDonnell got to his feet and said that the proposed war was an act of international vigilantism. Tony Benn gave one of his last big speeches, in which he said that war was an easy thing to talk about, but he had worn a uniform in the second world war and knew the reality. Benn also tried to humanise the people Blair was proposing to bomb: "Don't Iraqi women weep when their children die?"

In the end, the grim threats and the excruciating pressure paid off, and Blair got his vote for war. One-hundred-and-thirty-nine of us rebelled - the biggest rebellion against the prime minister - but it was not enough. The next day, British troops went war alongside the Americans, but no WMDs were ever found. The war did indeed fuel the conflict and terrorism of future generations, just as some of us had foresaw. Although Blair had had some considerable political achievements, including being the only Labour leader to win three successive general elections, his reputation never recovered from the ill-fated and illegal Iraq war.

The Guardian



## Putin’s health may be disintegrating and it should terrify us all

Richard Kemp

**IMAGES of Putin gripping his chair and squirming next to President Xi in Moscow have again fuelled speculation about his health. He was filmed limping during a visit to Crimea a few days ago and during a February meeting with Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko his leg was shaking uncontrollably. Since Putin invaded Ukraine last year, rumours of his physical well-being have been rife, with a range of theories from cancer to Parkinson's.**

This may amount to little more than wishful thinking that the man whose actions have led directly to the deaths of tens of thousands may be falling apart, and CIA Director William Burns said last year: "As far as we can tell, he's entirely too healthy". But if we imagine, for a moment, that he is suffering from some serious affliction, then that would have big ramifications. For one, the immense stress that must press upon him could rapidly exacerbate his illness and directly affect his mental processes and judgement. Even if Burns is right, the demands of running a country in any circumstances are huge, and we've all seen the way many national leaders appear to age prematurely over their time in office.

The pressure cooker inside 70-year-old Putin's head must sometimes reach bursting point after leading Russia for a quarter of a century, presiding over a war which has been going catastrophically wrong for the last year. Such a crushing burden would be tough enough for the leader of a democracy, but as ruler of the Russian autocracy

Putin is well aware that his end could come in a violent death. Short of that, he will also know that he could face jail time following the arrest warrant for war crimes issued last week by the ICC. If he is deposed, it is possible a new regime in Moscow might hand him over as happened to Slobodan Milosevic in 2021.

All this will be playing on Putin's mind, although his troubles could have been eased by a lifeline from Xi during his visit, perhaps with promises of money, weapons and sanctions busting. That will have been his hope, but it might also have gone the other way depending on Xi's calculations of where his interests lie. China stands to gain from this war, whichever side prevails. Whatever the truth about Putin's state of mind, we should be prepared for him to behave with growing irrationality unless he is able to dramatically improve his fortunes on the battlefield. That is far from certain, with Kyiv reportedly gearing up for a major offensive next month.

Those around him know far better than we do about Putin's mental state and if they perceive a dangerous deterioration, or if he becomes physically or mentally incapable, it's possible they could seek to bring him down. That is a more likely scenario than the much-discussed possibility of a coup inspired by disaffection over the way he is running the war. Any attempt to depose Putin, especially if he resists as is likely, could lead to a violent power struggle, instability and chaos across the country and potentially even civil war with untold

consequences for Russia and the world. Another possible impact of a Putin breakdown may be even more apocalyptic. His sabre-rattling over nuclear weapons earlier in the conflict was an attempt to cow the West. But those who argue that he will never use battlefield or strategic nuclear weapons based on the logic that it could lead to retaliation that will do much greater damage to Russia than Ukraine or the West should remember we could be dealing with a man fighting for his life and increasingly devoid of logical thinking.

While the circumstances today are different, it's worth remembering that Hitler, who had become increasingly deranged as he contemplated the collapse of his Reich, ordered the destruction of all economic, industrial, transport, military and communication facilities in Germany. As Hitler's diabolical orders were refused, we must hope that those in Putin's nuclear chain of command would also refuse to press the button if they were told to do so. Hope, though, is not a strategy and as we seem to be witnessing a deterioration in Putin's condition, it becomes increasingly urgent that Western leaders prepare for the possible consequences. Much of the burden for that falls on US and British intelligence agencies, who will already have been doing what they can to covertly influence Putin's key nuclear players and preparing - as far as possible - to shape events in the wake of a collapse in the Kremlin, including early engagement with whatever regime emerges. That will involve a race with Beijing's Ministry of State Security.

The Telegraph

# How the battle for Bakhmut has exposed Russia’s fault lines

James Horncastle

**THE fight for the city of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine, which started in the summer of 2022, continues unabated. The battle has morphed from one of dubious immediate strategic benefit to Russia into one that has come to symbolize its war efforts. It also highlights the current deficiencies in Russia's Armed Forces. Symbolism is not new to warfare. The Battle of Stalingrad, although it had strategic calculations, was also important due to Hitler's fixation on its symbolic value.**

Furthermore, symbolic acts can have strategic impact beyond their immediate military concerns. The problem is when symbolism overtakes sensible strategy. Bakhmut, from a strictly military standpoint, does not significantly change the war. For Ukraine, however, Bakhmut's defense is aligned with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's arguments that he will accept nothing less than the full restoration of his country. Russia, despite superior military capabilities, has so far failed to take the city.

Urban warfare favors defenders because they possess an intimate knowledge of the terrain that aggressors don't. Furthermore, when an army relies on artillery and tactical bombing to the extent that the Russian army does, it risks creating new enemy defensive positions in the rubble of the others they've destroyed. This is a

lesson the Russian army has had to relearn multiple times, especially in Chechnya, and forgotten once more. To overcome these problems, an army must rely upon its infantry and its officers' initiative to carry the day. In the case of the Russian Armed Forces, with their centralized command system, plummeting morale, and abysmal equipment standards, this isn't possible.

Nevertheless, Bakhmut has become the focus of Russia's efforts. Russia's arguments for the war in Ukraine - including whether it actually considers the conflict a war at all - have shifted over time. A consistent thread, however, is that the invasion was aimed at protecting Ukraine's ethnic Russian-speaking population. Bakhmut is in what Russia considers the Donetsk People's Republic, an area of Ukraine with a significant ethnic Russian population.

For Russia to claim victory, it must control the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk at the minimum. These two regions together make up the Donbas, a region that is of cultural significance to Russian identity. Soviet propaganda from the 1920s, in fact, identified the region as the heart of Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin, as a result, cannot easily suffer setbacks in the region. Studies on how the war is affecting Putin's

popularity are admittedly problematic. What is known, however, is that Putin relies on the support of Russian nationalists to maintain his position, and taking the Donbas is crucial for that base. That's why Russia continues its efforts in Bakhmut and the surrounding region despite Ukraine alleging that between 10,000-20,000 Russian troops have already died there.

These casualties are magnified by the divisions within Russia's political establishment. Putin succeeded in establishing a system where overlapping responsibilities mean that he ultimately acts as the arbiter of power. While that system is effective in maintaining Putin's position in Russian politics, it has some severe disadvantages. This is most notably evident in the case of the Wagner Group, the country's main mercenary organization, which was created to allow Moscow to embark upon military action abroad while maintaining plausible deniability. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, however, the Wagner Group has become a de-facto branch of Russia's regular Armed Forces.

Wagner founder Yevgeny Prigozhin, recognizes that the organization's success will bring him personal power within Russia, and in order to achieve this goal, he has reduced a former

highly trained force to one that relies on human wave tactics and employs former prisoners. Human wave tactics involve an army sending large numbers of soldiers to overwhelm an opponent's defense, and by their nature cause the attacker to suffer significant casualties. The rapid increase in the Wagner Group's size, however, means that it needs considerably more resources than in the past. The Wagner Group's need for supplies brings it into direct competition with the Russian army. Prigozhin has publicly condemned Russian army officials, alleging that they are not adequately supplying his forces. The Russian Armed Forces understandably resent this argument given their own supply problems.

The result of this competition is two nominally allied armies rapidly trying to achieve success in a battle that requires patience and precision. One is liberally using explosives and the other soldiers' lives to achieve victory. The lack of efficacy of both tactics has furthered the mutual loathing between the parties. The Battle of Bakhmut, as a result, embodies Russia's ill-planned adventure in Ukraine. Even if Russian forces succeed in taking Bakhmut, the losses they have suffered and the divisions they have created within the Armed Forces will hang like a specter over their efforts for the remainder of the war.

The Moscow Times

# As Pacific islanders, we bear the brunt of the climate crisis

Ralph Regenvanu & Seve Paeniu

**THE cycle is repeating itself. A tropical cyclone of frightening strength strikes a Pacific island nation, and leaves a horrifying trail of destruction and lost lives and livelihoods in its wake. Earlier this month in Vanuatu it was two category 4 cyclones within 48 hours of each other. The people affected wake up having nowhere to go and lack the basic necessities to survive. International media publishes grim pictures of the damage to our infrastructure and people's homes, quickly followed by an outpouring of thoughts, prayers and praise for our courage and resilience. We then set out to rebuild our countries.**

The Pacific island countries are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and Vanuatu is the most vulnerable country in the world according to a recent study. Our countries emit minuscule amounts of greenhouse gases, but bear the brunt of extreme events primarily caused by the carbon emissions of major polluters, and the world's failure to break its addiction to fossil fuels.

The science is clear: fossil fuels are the main drivers of the climate crisis and need to be phased out rapidly, as the new

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report once again confirms. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has shown that ending the expansion of all fossil fuel production is an urgent first step towards limiting warming to 1.5C. The climate crisis is driven by the greed of an exploitative industry and its enablers. It is unacceptable that countries and companies are still planning to produce more than double the amount of fossil fuels that the world can withstand by 2030 if we are to limit warming to 1.5C, a limit Pacific countries fought hard to secure in the Paris agreement. As the UN secretary-general António Guterres has repeatedly declared, fossil fuels are a dead end. Governments must pursue a rapid and equitable phase-out of fossil fuels.

Countries cannot continue to justify new fossil fuel projects on the grounds of development, or the energy crisis. It is our reliance on fossil fuels that has left our energy infrastructure vulnerable to conflict and devastating climate impacts, left billions of people without energy access, and left investment in more flexible and resilient clean energy systems lag-

ging behind what is needed. Transitioning away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy is crucial to mitigating the impacts of climate change and ensuring a sustainable future for Pacific island countries and the world. This requires ambitious collective effort from governments, businesses and individuals around the globe to transition towards renewable energy systems that centre the needs of communities and avoid replicating the harms of fossil fuel systems, while supporting those most affected by the transition.

Transitioning to clean energy and battling climate change is also a human rights and justice issue. This is why our countries will soon be asking the UN general assembly to request an advisory opinion from the international court of justice on the obligations of states under international law to protect the environment and the climate. We urge all countries to support us in that endeavour. We acknowledge that Pacific countries are still reliant on fossil fuels for our daily lives and our economy. This is why we are planning our own just transition. Last week, Pacific ministers and international partners met in

cyclone-stricken Vanuatu to chart our collective way forward. We have affirmed a new commitment to work tirelessly to create a fossil fuel free Pacific, recognising that phasing out fossil fuels is not only in our best interest to avoid the worst of climate catastrophe - it is also an opportunity to promote economic development and innovation that we must seize. By investing in renewable energy sources, we can build resilient, sustainable economies that benefit our people and the planet; and momentum for this shift is already building.

Last year at Cop27 in Egypt, more than 80 countries supported the phasing out of all fossil fuels. We must drive this new ambition around the world. Pacific nations will continue to spearhead global efforts to achieve an unqualified, equitable end to the world's dependence on fossil fuels. We will raise our collective voices at Cop28 and through leading initiatives such as the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance and the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. We know what needs to be done to keep 1.5C alive, and are aware of the small and shrinking window which we have left to achieve it. We are doing our part and urge the rest of the world to do theirs.

## Story of Oscars 2023

Leila Latif

**A T least no one got slapped. After last year, the Oscars had a ludicrously low bar to clear, and it managed to do just that. It was clear that this was a ceremony, and an industry, that wanted to move on from the past. And yet ... the Academy Awards just can't quite escape the theme of trauma or lingering historical pains, whether in real life or on screen.**

Many of the winners, and the subjects, reflected upon what it was to live with trauma, and thrive in spite of it. Women Talking, All Quiet on the Western Front, The Whale and the big winner, Everything Everywhere All At Once: it seemed like everywhere you looked the Academy was garlanding films that probed past violence and sadness. The costumer Ruth E Carter spoke about how she was inspired by the late Chadwick Boseman and her own mother's passing. Brendan Fraser could barely catch his breath during his best actor speech, seemingly overwhelmed by being rewarded by an industry in which he had been sidelined for so long. Fraser

has made no secret of what he has overcome. This awards season, he boycotted the Golden Globes, saying: "My mother didn't raise a hypocrite." It was a reference to an alleged groping he experienced in 2003 at the hands of Philip Berk, former president of the organisation behind the Globes - understood to be one reason why Fraser "retreated" from Hollywood for so long. (Berk called Fraser's account "a total fabrication" in 2018, but has also apologised to the actor without admitting any wrongdoing.)

The narrative of industry redemption also graced the stories of Ke Huy Quan, who picked up best supporting actor, and Michelle Yeoh, who has spoken much about the struggle for recognition. Their film, Everything Everywhere All At Once, was positioned as a David in a sea of Goliaths, but it ended up charming the Academy. The unfulfilled potential of its characters was shared by much of its team, who had suffered a lack of opportunity and acknowledgment from the

Hollywood powers that be. The brilliant Sarah Polley, who has spoken of what she went through as a child actor during the production of The Adventures of Baron Munchausen, gained a well-deserved statuette for adapting Women Talking, based on a Miriam Toews novel on the real-life abuse of women in a Mennonite community. Then there was, of course, All Quiet on the Western Front, a visceral reflection on the traumas of the first world war, which won four Oscars, including best international film. While there were strong nominees in every category, and many came to the Oscars expecting Elvis, Top Gun: Maverick and The Banshees Of Inisherin to triumph, perhaps it's not surprising that, after a pandemic, a slap and a cultural reckoning around those who have been left out of mainstream narratives, the old razzle-dazzle of the likes of Baz Luhrmann went unrecognised. However we try to breeze past it, we're all in some state of recovery, and stories of redemption and rebirth have a particular appeal.

### Important Notice

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## Business community urges to explore new global markets to boost exports

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry's United Business Group Chairman Shahzad Ali Malik on Thursday stressed the urgent need for re-visiting and adopting new trade strategies to explore new global markets for boosting exports.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists and traders led by Momin Ali in Lahore, he said that one of the key issues that Pakistan faces was the lack of access to consumers in its key markets.

Although the European Union had provided duty-free access to several items under the GSP Plus scheme, Pakistan's exporters don't meet EU standards, he said and emphasised the need to bring production lines at par with international standards to domi-

nate in foreign markets for enhancing exports, said a press release issued here.

Malik termed the lack of diversification in exports as one of the biggest challenges that Pakistan faced. He said exporters from Pakistan were heavily concentrated in textiles and cereals, which dominate the top 10 products exported from the country.

He said although Bangladesh had a similar composition, it exports more value-added apparel and garments, while Pakistan's top 10 export products include lower value-added bed linen and towels.

He said, on the other hand, Vietnam had expanded its export basket to include more high-value-added and sophisticated products. It exported more than \$33.6 billion worth of cell phones in 2021, becoming its second-largest

exporter in the world. Whereas, it had reported zero exports in 2007. He said a major reason for the inability of Pakistan's exporters to participate in exporting activities was the lack of competitiveness, which is associated with low levels of productivity and high trade costs.

Shahzad Ali Malik said as the increase in trade deficit creates jitters amongst policymakers, they often resort to increasing trade restrictions and imposing inward-looking policies to reduce the trade deficit.

He said import restrictions and an increase in import tariffs on several commodities had resulted in a shortage of goods and a reduction in manufacturing activities in the country. He said imports into Pakistan had increased from \$43.6 billion in 2011 to \$73.1 bil-

lion in 2021. A similar trend was reported for Bangladesh, while Vietnam's imports increased from \$106 billion to \$330 billion in the same time period.

He said it was important to note that imports increase as economies grow and consumer demand expands. However, unlike Bangladesh and Vietnam, Pakistan had not increased its exports, leading to a burgeoning trade deficit.

He said Pakistan and the US must address the tariff issues as increased market access could help boost the capabilities of Pakistan's exporters. Finally, he said it was imperative to reduce the trade costs incurred by domestic producers. One of the biggest deterrents to participation in exporting activities was the presence of information asymmetries, Malik added.



HYDERABAD: People purchasing food items from vendor at Tower Market.

### Oil prices fall amid US banking crisis, low demand

ANKARA (APP): Oil prices fell on Thursday amid concerns surrounding the US banking sector and worry over lower oil demand.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$76.27 per barrel at 10.14, a 0.55% decrease from the closing price of \$76.69 a barrel in the previous trading session.

At the same time, American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$70.45 per barrel, a 0.63% fall after the previous session closed at \$70.9 a barrel.

The US Federal Reserve raised its benchmark interest rate Wednesday by another 25 basis points despite a banking crisis, which saw the sudden demise of four banks in a matter of weeks.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell said Wednesday that banking issues in the US could undermine the whole system if they remain unchecked.

"History has shown that isolated banking problems, if left unaddressed, can undermine confidence in healthy banks and threaten the ability of the banking system as a whole to play its vital role in supporting the savings and credit needs of households and businesses," he said.

"The failure of a small bank, like a community bank, can likewise trigger a run on other banks, and failure of that bank could lead to a systemic failure," Janet Yellen said before the Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee at the US Senate.

The increase in the commercial crude oil stocks of the US, the world's largest oil consumer, also put downward pressure on prices with the perception that the demand in the country is low.

US commercial crude oil inventories increased by 1.1 million barrels to 481.2 million barrels during the week ending March 17, according to data released by the US Energy Information Administration late Wednesday.

### Türkiye's unemployment rate down

ISTANBUL (APP): The unemployment rate was at 10.4% in Türkiye last year, down from 12% in 2021, official figures showed on Thursday.

The Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) said the number of unemployed people in the country — aged 15 years and over — dropped by 337,000 people to 3.58 million in 2022 versus the previous year.

The unemployment rate was at 8.9% for men and 13.4% for women in 2022.

The number of employed people was at 30.75 million last year, up by 1.95 million on a yearly basis.

The youth unemployment rate — 15-24 age group — was at 19.4%, down 3.2 percentage points over the same period.

"In 2022, 15.8% of total employment was employed in agriculture, 21.7% was employed in industry, 6.0% was employed in construction, and 56.5% was employed in services sector," it added.

## ICCI delegation donates Rs.4m for earthquake victims of Türkiye

ISLAMABAD (APP): President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari led a delegation to visit the Embassy of Türkiye and presented a cheque of Rs.4 million to Ambassador Dr Mehmet Pacaci as a token of support for the rehabilitation of earthquake victims of Türkiye.

Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Bakhtawari said that Pakistan and Türkiye had deep-rooted relations and the Pakistani nation stands in complete solidarity with the brotherly Turkish people in the wake of the unprecedented earthquake that struck it in February 2023, said a news release issued here on Thursday.

He said the entire Pakistani nation was saddened over the huge damage and loss of lives caused by the earthquake.

He said that the business community of Pakistan would continue to provide all possible support to the people of Türkiye in the post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction process.

Türkiye was one of the best friends of Pakistan, he said, adding it would never forget the support of

Türkiye during the earthquake of October 2005 and the devastating floods of 2010 and 2022 in Pakistan.

He assured that ICCI would continue to provide more financial support to the people of Türkiye in these difficult times. He also discussed the matters for further improving bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Türkiye.

Dr Mehmet Paçacı thanked the ICCI delegation for visiting the embassy to express solidarity with the people of Türkiye and provide financial support.

He also expressed gratitude to the leadership and the people of Pakistan for extending humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of the massive earthquake in his country.

He said that Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif was the first foreign leader who visited Türkiye after the devastating earthquake to express solidarity with the people of Türkiye, which showed Pakistan's love and affection for his country.

He said that Pakistan had already sent hundreds of tons of relief goods, includ-

ing winter tents, clothes, blankets, and food items, to quake-hit areas of Türkiye and was still sending relief goods on a daily basis for which the entire nation of Türkiye is thankful to Pakistan.

Senior Vice President ICCI Faad Waheed said that this natural calamity had brought both brotherly countries closer and added that bilateral relations between Türkiye and Pakistan would continue to strengthen day by day.

Vice President ICCI Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar said that the people of Pakistan consider Türkiye their second home and would always stand by them through thick and thin.

Zafar Bakhtawari, Rizwan Chheena, Raja Imtiaz Abbasi, Ch. Javed Iqbal, Muhammad Yahya, Rohail Anwar Butt, Zial ul Haq Abbasi, Shahid Abbasi, Amin ur Rehman, Khalid Mehmood and others also spoke at the occasion and expressed resolved that the Pakistani business community would continue to provide support to the Turkish people in their rehabilitation process.

## Govt urged to promote regional trade

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis Thursday said Pakistan needs to improve its overall relationship with neighbouring countries to boost volume of regional trade.

Speaking at a seminar on "Diversification of Markets" held under the aegis of Gold Ring Economic Forum, a strategic think tank, he said there are several second-tier export markets where we need to penetrate deeper that include Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Turkey etc.

He said Pakistan's exports go to about 200 countries. Pakistan tries to pursue a very inclusive geopolitical policy to retain all these markets.

And obviously, it makes sense if it takes special diplomatic care of the markets from where anything between 1% and 20% or more of its total export earnings originate.

Meher Kashif Younis said what's perturbing is that we have so far not exploited the true potential of exports within Asia — the region that is now serving as the growth engine of the world economy. He said in addition to China (with

our annual exports at \$2.781bn), only three Asian countries feature on the list of export destinations from where we earn half a billion dollars.

In FY22, export earnings from the UAE totalled \$1.843bn (5.9pc of the total), followed by Bangladesh at \$871m (2.8pc of the total) and Afghanistan at \$552m (1.8pc of the total).

He said our export earnings from the US, China and the UK account for more than a third of total exports of goods and services. And more than two third of the total comes from 11 nations.

## Toshiba says it will help \$15 billion takeover bid

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Troubled Japanese conglomerate Toshiba said Thursday it will "support" a \$15 billion takeover bid by a consortium led by investment fund Japan Industrial Partners.

The long-awaited move follows years of turmoil for the company, which once symbolised Japan's tech prowess but has more recently faced scandals, financial trouble and high-level resignations.

The engineering giant remained cautious in a statement issued after a board meeting, however saying it would ask a special committee to review the deal, before recommending how its shareholders proceed.

"At this point, the board... expresses our support for the tender offer if it is commenced," it said. "However, the board has also passed a resolution to not go as far as to recommend it at this point."

Toshiba, which produces everything from rice cookers to medical equip-

ment and nuclear plants, said it would likely take four months before the takeover bid gets underway.

The JIP-led consortium includes 17 Japanese businesses and six Japanese financial institutions which are investing in or issuing loans for the deal.

When approved under global competition laws, the acquisition -- worth nearly two trillion yen (\$15 billion) -- is expected to take the engineering giant private.

Nearly two years ago, a bombshell buyout offer from private equity fund CVC Capital Partners put a question mark over the future for Toshiba.

The ensuing saga has been closely watched in business circles for clues on what could become of other huge, diversified conglomerates in Japan and elsewhere.

After the CVC offer was dropped, plans were floated to split the company up and spin off its device segment -- meeting

stiff opposition from some investors.

Several shareholders argued that a spin-off would only add to Toshiba's woes by creating more managerial posts at smaller units, rather than improving the firm's governance.

But that plan was rejected last year at an extraordinary shareholder meeting, dealing a blow to management as deadlock reigned over the next steps for the company.

Toshiba can trace its history back to 1875, when its forerunner operated as a telegraph factory in Tokyo.

It grew into a vast conglomerate, but has been rocked by turbulence since 2015 when a profit-padding scandal erupted.

That led to huge losses, followed by a recovery that brought pressure from new activist shareholders.

Foreign investors have kept Toshiba afloat, but have also pushed for faster growth and a clearer long-term strategy.

## UAE's favourite store Danube now in IMARAT Builders Mall

E.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan's biggest and one-of-its-kind Builders Mall - IMARAT Builders Mall has signed up to bring Danube, a leading retailer of home improvement and interior design products, to its mall's vast offering.

IMARAT Group is bringing Danube all the way from Dubai to provide an exceptional range of furniture that is diverse and caters to all types of customers- from traditional to contemporary styles. With a wide variety of options available, customers can expect to find the perfect piece to fit their taste and budget.

Starting off as a single showroom in Ras Al Khaimah in 2008, Danube Home has grown into the region's favourite destination for home interior solutions because the company has successfully captured and blended the quintessential spirit of craftsmanship and design into its bewildering range of products. Today, Danube Home is offering more than 50,000



products across 16 product-specific categories. The company has 17 showrooms and more than 5 million square feet of logistics and warehousing space.

Danube Home is a leading home improvement and home furnishing retail brand with a strong, vibrant, ever-growing presence in the Middle East, Gulf Region, and the Indian Sub-continent. The renowned company is known for its unwavering commitment to the highest standards of customer service, unmatched quality, strikingly beautiful designs, and innovative retail services.

Known for its vast range of products including furniture, home décor, sanitary ware, tiles, and lighting, Danube will add to IMARAT Builders Mall's already impressive selection of products.

The two brands will work together to provide customers with a comprehensive selection of products and services, making it easier for them to create their dream homes.

"Excited to the core, we welcome Danube to our mall. In a single vicinity, IBM will offer our customers an even wider range of high-quality home

improvement products," said Shafiq Akbar, Chairman IMARAT Group.

"With Danube's expertise in interior design and home improvement, we are confident that our customers will find the products they need to make their dream homes a reality," said Farhan Javed, Group Director Graana.com and IMARAT Hospitality.

IMARAT Builders Mall is the largest home improvement and construction supplies brand in the region, and Danube has a reputation for offering high-quality products and excellent customer service.

## Asian markets rise as dollar falls on Fed rate hopes

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets mostly rose on Thursday and the dollar retreated, brushing off a Wall Street retreat on hopes the Federal Reserve's latest interest rate hike would be one of its last.

The gains came even as bank chief Jerome Powell dealt a blow to hopes it could cut borrowing costs later in the year to soothe banking sector fears.

Recent turmoil caused by the collapse of two US lenders and the takeover of Credit Suisse had fanned speculation central banks would pause their inflation-fighting monetary tightening campaign.

But on Wednesday, officials announced a ninth straight increase in the cost of borrowing as they put their emphasis on containing prices, though the 25-basis-point rise was half of what was expected at the start of the month.

Powell also told journal-

ists that "rate cuts are not in our base case" and warned that there needed to be more supervision and regulation of banks to prevent another crisis.

Speculation had been swirling that officials would announce a cut as the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank has been blamed on the impact of more than a year of rate hikes.

Analysts said the Fed had to walk a thin line as announcing a pause could have fuelled worries there was more to the banking sector's woes than met the eye.

Powell added that the crisis in the banking sector was likely to bring "tighter credit conditions for households and businesses".

His comments came as Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told lawmakers that authorities were not looking at a blanket increase in deposit insurance for banks.

"Balancing the Fed's

desire to keep its pressure on inflation, and the reality of tightening credit conditions and bank lending appetite, we think the Fed could still deliver one more 25 basis point hike in May," said Tai Hui, of JP Morgan Asset Management.

"The Fed's policy outlook is not only going to be 'data dependent' on inflation and jobs, but increasingly concerned about the potential stress in the banking sector and repercussions on the broader economy."

After a weak start, Asian markets were mixed, with support coming from a weaker dollar as traders bet that the Fed is coming towards the end of its tightening cycle.

Powell "emphasised that recent turmoil will likely tighten credit conditions and limit Fed hikes; hence the US dollar is weakening hard", said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes.

Hong Kong led gains,

adding more than one percent thanks to a rally in tech firms, while Shanghai, Seoul, Taipei, Mumbai, Bangkok and Wellington were also up. However, Tokyo, Sydney, Singapore and Manila slipped.

John Bromhead, of Australia & New Zealand Banking Group, was upbeat about the outlook.

"I suspect now the major risk event is out of the way, risk-tone can improve through the day," he said.

Oil prices fell back after a recent rise as traders fret over the effect on demand from more rate hikes and a possible slowdown in economic activity.

"Clearly, macro (data) will remain the key driver for price direction in the short term," said ING Groep NV's Warren Patterson.

"Comments from Yellen related to a blanket deposit insurance appear to have put some renewed pressure on risk assets, including oil."

## Swiss central bank hikes rate despite banking turmoil

ZURICH (AFP/APP): The Swiss central bank announced a hefty interest-rate hike to tackle inflation despite turmoil in the banking sector on Thursday, declaring that authorities halted the crisis at Credit Suisse.

The Swiss National Bank said interest rates would rise by 50 basis points to 1.5 percent after a turbulent week, which saw the stricken Credit Suisse bank taken over by its bigger domestic rival UBS.

The central bank, the Swiss government and the country's FINMA financial regulators orchestrated the shotgun wedding in emergency talks on Sunday.

"The Swiss National Bank is tightening its monetary policy further and is raising the SNB policy rate by 0.5 percentage points to 1.5 percent," the central bank said in a statement.

"In doing so, it is countering the renewed increase in inflationary pressure. It cannot be ruled out that additional rises in the SNB policy rate will be necessary to ensure price stability over the medium term."

The rate change will apply from Friday, it said.

"The past week has been marked by the events surrounding Credit Suisse. The measures announced at the weekend by the federal

government, FINMA and the SNB have put a halt to the crisis," the SNB said.

The central bank in Zurich said inflation had risen again since the beginning of the year and stood at 3.4 percent in February.

"It is therefore still clearly above the range the SNB equates with price stability," it said. The bank said the latest rise in inflation was principally due to higher prices for electricity, tourism services and food. "The new forecast puts average annual inflation at 2.6 percent for 2023," it said.

The central bank also said Swiss GDP stagnated in the fourth quarter of

2022. It said the services sector lost momentum, and value-added in manufacturing declined slightly again.

"For 2022 as a whole, GDP grew by 2.1 percent. The labour market remained robust, and overall production capacity has been well utilised," it said.

"Despite the slight upturn in economic activity in recent months, growth is likely to remain modest for the rest of the year." "The subdued demand from abroad and the loss of purchasing power due to inflation are having a dampening effect. Overall, GDP is likely to increase by around one percent this year."





## In brief

## Karate Championship

PESHAWAR (APP): Over 100 players from various clubs participated in the Peshawar Inter-Club Karate Championship held in connection with Pakistan Day in Hayatabad Sports Complex here on Thursday. President of Sports Writers Association Asim Shiraz distributed prizes among the players along with the coordinator and admin officer of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Karate Association, Hayatabad Sports Complex Shah Faisal. Female coach Nazia Zaki, Technical Officials Fazl Hussain, Muhammad Kashif, Nasir Mehmood, Jamal Khan, Adnan, Abdullah, Farhan, Umar Afridi, Asif, Aamir Khan, Ikhtsham and other important personalities were also present. In the final of the team event, the Peshawar Yellow team won the trophy by defeating Peshawar Blue by 3-0. In the first match, Salman was defeated by three points against one. In the second match, Peshawar Yellow Madiha defeated Peshawar Blue Maryam by 6-1. Whereas in the third match, Faizan defeated Sudis by 6-2, giving his team a 3-0 victory. Coordinator for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Karate Association Shah Faisal said that it was very important to organise competitions at the club level for the promotion of karate in the province, which will bring out new talent at the grassroots level.

## Mesut Ozil retires

ISTANBU (INP): World Cup winner Mesut Ozil announced his retirement from football after an illustrious international career with Germany and club spells with Real Madrid and Arsenal. The 34-year-old helped Germany to glory in Brazil in 2014 but bitterly quit the international scene after the Germans crashed out of the 2018 tournament in Russia. "After thoughtful consideration, I'm announcing my immediate retirement from professional football," the attacking midfielder said. "I've had the privilege to be an international footballer for almost 17 years now and I feel incredibly thankful for the opportunity. "But in recent weeks and months, having also suffered some injuries, it's become more and more clear that it's time to leave the big stage of football." Ozil began his senior career with Schalke 04 in Germany, before moving to Werder Bremen. He was born in the German city of Gelsenkirchen — though of Turkish descent — played on some of football's biggest stages but also became embroiled in international politics and accusations of racism.

## Multan Sultans manager banned

LAHORE (APP): Multan Sultans team manager Haider Azhar has been handed a one-match suspension for a level 3 breach of the HBL PSL Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel. Haider was found to have violated article 2.13, which relates to personal abuse of a player, player support personnel, umpire or match referee during an HBL PSL match, said a spokesman of the Pakistan Cricket Board here on Thursday. The incident occurred after the end of the HBL PSL 8 final when Haider confronted the two on-field umpires and abused Alex Wharf. Haider contested the sanction imposed by match referee Roshan Mahanama, but it was upheld after a hearing took place in the PCB Board Room.

# Babar Azam conferred with Sitara-i-Imtiaz for services to cricket

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Men's Cricket team captain and prolific batter Babar Azam has been conferred with President's Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Star of Excellence) for his outstanding achievements and services in the game of cricket.

Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman conferred the civil award on Babar Azam during the investiture ceremony for Pakistan Civil Awards on Pakistan Day at the Governor's House here on Thursday. Babar Azam's parents were also present during the ceremony.

With the conferment of the third highest civil award of the country after 'Nishan-e-Haider' and 'Hilal-i-Pakistan', the all-format captain Babar Azam became the youngest cricketer to receive the honor at the age of 28.

The other recipients of the award from Pakistan



cricket include javed Miandad, Inzimam ul Haq,

Saeed Ajmal, Mohammad Yousaf, Shahid Khan Afridi, Younis Khan, Misba ul Haq and Sarfraz Ahmed.

In a tweet, Babar Azam termed the occasion an immense honor to receive Sitara-i-Imtiaz in the presence of his parents.

Other sportsmen including Nooh Dastgir Butt (Weightlifting), Arshad Nadeem (Javelin Throw) and Ahsan Ramzan (Snooker) were bestowed 'Pride of Performance' awards while national Kabaddi player Shafique Ahmed Chishti was conferred with 'Tamgha-i-Imtiaz' (Medal of Excellence) during the ceremony held to commemorate Pakistan Day 2023.

Earlier, President Pakistan Kabaddi Federation Chuadhry Shafey Hussain was conferred with Sitara-i-Imtiaz for his services to the sport of Kabaddi.

# Jansher Khan awarded with Nishan-e-Imtiaz

PESHAWAR (APP): In spite of the passing of 25 years of Jansher Khan, his record has not been broken till date in the squash field around the World, President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi awarded Jansher Khan with Nishan-e-Imtiaz on Thursday.

With this award, legendary Jansher Khan is the first Pakistani player to win four major national honours including Presidential Pride of Performance in (1986), Sitara-e-Imtiaz in (1994), Hilal-e-Imtiaz in (1998)

and Nishan-e-Imtiaz (2023). Another squash legend Jahangir Khan, a strong Jansher Khan rival, has the honor of three honors - in which the government of Pakistan awarded him President Pride of Performance, Hilal-e-Imtiaz and Nishan-e-Imtiaz.

When contacted talking to APP on phone, Jansher Khan thanked Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif, Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam

Ali for being nominated for the Nishan-e-Imtiaz Award for his services to the country and the nation.

He said PML (N) has always played a special role and taken personal interest in sports and especially squash. Jansher Khan further said that when he was the world champion and whenever he came to win a tournament, even in the 90s. Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Mian Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif used to encourage me in every way by organizing special events in Lahore.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi conferring the Pakistan Civil Award of Nishan-i-Imtiaz upon Jansher Khan Khan.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi conferring the Pakistan Civil Award of Nishan-i-Imtiaz upon Jahangir Khan.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi conferring the Pakistan Civil Award of Tamgha-i-Imtiaz upon Ms. Bisma Maroo.

# 2023 Asia Cup likely in Pakistan and one other overseas venue for India games

LAHORE (ESPNCricinfo): The 2023 Asia Cup is likely to be played in Pakistan with another overseas venue to host India games. ESPNCricinfo has learnt that both BCCI and PCB, after an initial standoff, are moving swiftly towards brokering a resolution which could have both teams playing their tournament matches against each other outside Pakistan. The overseas venue is not confirmed but the UAE, Oman, Sri Lanka and even England are potential contenders to host five matches including at least two India-Pakistan contests.

India and Pakistan have been grouped together along with a qualifier in the six-nation Asia Cup, scheduled to be held in the first half of September this year and in a 50-over format. Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan are part of the other group. A total of 13 matches will be played across 13 days including the final. As per the format for the 2022 Asia Cup, the top two teams from each group advance to the Super 4s and the top two teams then contest the final. The possibility of India and Pakistan playing three times remains.

As it stands, a small working

group has been formed with the brief of creating a schedule and travel plan agreeable to all participating countries as well as the broadcaster before a final call is taken. The weather is likely to play a key role in determining the second venue outside of Pakistan, though there will be keenness among the Asian venues to host high-profile India-Pakistan games. Temperatures in early September in the UAE usually hover around the 40-degree centigrade mark, though that has not prevented cricket from being played there: the 2021 IPL was played there late September, but Pakistan have played international matches in early September. In Muscat, Oman's capital, temperatures remain lower and it did host the first round of the 2021 T20 World Cup. The option for England remains an ambitious one, though the prospect of big crowds in a city like London is likely to be an attractive one.

The option of staging part of the Asia Cup outside Pakistan was agreed in principle as the most favourable by all members of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) when they met last weekend in Dubai, on

the sidelines of the ICC's quarterly board meetings. Having failed to reach a resolution mid-March in Bahrain at the ACC meet, members converged for two further rounds of informal discussions in Dubai. The PCB, which has the hosting rights for the 2023 edition of Asia Cup, was represented by its chair Najam Sethi while the BCCI team comprised its secretary Jay Shah and Arun Dhimal, the IPL governing council chairman.

Last October, the PCB was caught off guard by Shah who said that the 2023 Asia Cup would be held in a "neutral" venue. The PCB, then under Ramiz Raja - Sethi's predecessor - immediately responded that Pakistan would pull out of the tournament altogether if it was taken out of the country. Sethi reiterated that stance both in the Bahrain and Dubai rounds of discussions. Shah said he had made the statement in his capacity as the ACC president. During the Bahrain meeting, the BCCI pointed out that as hosts it had successfully conducted the 2018 edition of Asia Cup at a neutral venue - in the UAE - after it became clear Pakistan could not travel to India due to the strained political ties between the two neighbouring countries.

# Andreescu beats Raducanu to advance in Miami

MIAMI GARDENS (AFP/APP): Canada's Bianca Andreescu won a first-round battle of former US Open champions, defeating Britain's Emma Raducanu 6-3, 3-6, 6-2 on Wednesday to advance to the second round of the Miami Open.

The pair, both born near Toronto and both of whom won the US Open as teenagers, battled for 2.5 hours on stadium court in an entertaining opening to the WTA and ATP combined tournament's main draw.

Andreescu, ranked 31st in the world, struck the ball with confidence and freedom as she dominated the first set, but Raducanu regrouped and fought back in the second.

The 2021 US Open winner went 5-3 up in the set after an epic game which secured with her seventh break point and went on to force a third set.

But Andreescu's power proved to be too much for the tiring Raducanu, who had shown promising signs of an

upturn in form by reaching the last 16 at Indian Wells.

"I thought it was a very good match from both sides. I think Emma played really well. I think the key for me was just sticking with it, fighting as much as I could," said Andreescu, who struck seven aces.

"I kept telling myself it's not over until it's over and I also stayed positive. I tried not to drain my energy too much with focusing on emotions and all that stuff." The Canadian has a tough test in the next round, where she will face seventh seed Maria Sakkari of Greece.

For the 20-year-old Raducanu, though, there was yet another injury concern with her reporting pain with her wrist.

"It's something I've been managing for some time. I just need to review after this tournament really and figure out what my next steps are," she said, adding that she may get a fresh pair of

eyes to look at the problem.

"We have been managing it, keeping on top of it, so I'm able to play in the short term, but the current solutions aren't very viable long term," she said.

Italian Camila Giorgi needed three hours and 32 minutes to defeat Estonian Kaia Kanepi 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (7/4), tying for the longest WTA main-draw match of the season.

Madison Brengle moved into the second round after Amanda Anisimova retired in the second set of their all-American encounter. Anisimova trailed 7-6 (7/5), 5-2 when she retired.

Canadian qualifier Katherine Sebov claimed her first career main-draw victory at a WTA 1000 event by beating 17-year-old Czech Linda Fruhvirtova 6-2, 4-6, 6-4.

Sebov earns a chance to take on world number three Jessica Pegula in the second round.

# Litton, Tamim make light work of small chase after Mahmud's maiden five-for

SYLHET (Agencies): Openers Litton Das and Tamim Iqbal made light work of a 102-run target as Bangladesh beat Ireland by ten wickets in the third ODI in Sylhet and completed a 2-0 series win. The visitors were bowled out for 101 in 28.1 overs after the Bangladesh fast bowlers took all ten wickets in an innings for the first time in the format.

The short chase was enlivened by Tamim and Litton, who put on an exhibition of strokeplay, finishing the game in just 13.1 overs, Bangladesh's second-shortest chase in ODIs. After Bangladesh beat Ireland by a record margin of runs in the first ODI, this was also their first ten-wicket win in ODIs. A small crowd turned up at the picturesque Sylhet venue on the eve of the holy month of Ramadan starting, and went home shortly after sunset. Ireland's 101 broke a sequence of five successive 300-plus totals by the side batting first on this ground.

Hasan Mahmud's maiden five-wicket haul, Taskin Ahmed's three-wicket burst and Ebadot Hossain's two-for summed up the absolute dominance by the Bangladesh fast bowlers. The spinners were needed for only four overs in all with Shakib

Al Hasan not getting a chance to bowl for only the third time in his ODI career. It was a day out for the quicks on the hard and bouncy Sylhet surface, a rarity among grounds in Bangladesh. The conditions prompted the team management to pick six bowlers including the three seamers.

Mahmud removed openers Stephen Doherty and Paul Stirling in a disciplined opening burst. Doherty was caught behind for 8 after scratching around for 20 balls before Stirling, dropped on 5, got to 7 before Mahmud trapped him lbw in the ninth over. The skiddy fast bowler soon picked up his third when he trapped Harry Tector lbw later in the same over. Taskin got captain Andy Balbirnie caught at first slip for just 6 as Ireland collapsed to 26 for 4 before the first powerplay was up.

Then came their only partnership of note. Lorcan Tucker and Curtis Campher added 42 runs for the fifth wicket, which effectively helped Ireland reach the three-figure mark. Campher top-scored with 36, while Tucker made 28, the only two double-figure scores in the innings.

But it was soon over. Ebadot's in-dipper had Tucker lbw. Next ball,

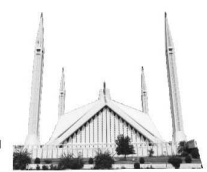
Ebadot clean-bowled George Dockrell for a golden duck as Ireland slipped to 68 for 6.

Taskin then took a brace in his seventh over, first getting Andy McBride to top-edge a quick bouncer before Adair inside-edged his second ball onto the stumps.

Campher was the ninth wicket that fell, top-edging Mahmud towards fine leg. Taskin took a comfortable catch, celebrating the younger teammate's first four-wicket haul. It soon became five when Mahmud trapped Graham Hume lbw for 3.

Tamim started the chase with a slashed four over point, before pasting the Ireland fast bowlers for boundaries through cover and square-leg. Most of Litton's boundaries came through the covers, including a back-foot punch that looked scrumptious from every angle. Left-arm spinner Matthew Humphreys then went for two expensive overs, before the Bangladesh opening pair calmed down briefly. Tamim lofted Humphreys for a straight six in his third over, before Litton drove Campher through the covers. Then he struck two fours off Humphreys to reach his ninth ODI fifty, before Tamim hit the winning runs.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 67,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 67,900 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 62,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1423.46 feet and was 25.46 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 19,900 cusecs while outflow was 25,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1094.85 feet, 44.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 19,600 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 27,400, 38,300, 24,900 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,900 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 3,700 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Eight illegal arm holders arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested eight illegal arm holders and recovered arms, and ammunition from their possession during a crackdown here on Thursday, informed a police spokesman. Taxila police recovered 01 pistol of 30 bore from Naseem Gul and 01 pistol of 30 bore was recovered from officer Ali. Similarly, Mandra police recovered 02 pistol of 30 bore from Taslim. While, Saddar Barooni Police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Bilal. Following the operation, Rawat Police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Hamza and 01 Pistol 30 bore from Tayyab. Kalarsyedyan Police recovered 01 Pistol 30 bore from Tayeb Mahmood and 01 Pistol 30 bore from Waqqas Tariq. The Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. SSP Operations Captain (Rtd) Aamir Khan Niazi appreciated the performance of police team said that crack-down against those possessing illegal weapons will be continued.

### PAC organizes exhibition

RAWALPINDI (NNI): A photo exhibition titled 'Roshni Ka Safar' was organized at the Punjab Arts Council to mark Pakistan Day. The exhibition was inaugurated by Naheed Manzoor and Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmed. Rare photographs of Pakistan Movement related events, activities, Pakistan Movement workers and sacrifices were kept in the exhibition. The arrival of refugees to Pakistan after independence in 1947 and the atrocities on the way have also been revealed in the exhibition. On the occasion of the inaugural of the photo exhibition, the chief guest Naheed Manzoor said that freedom is the greatest blessing in the world. Pakistan is the realization of the dreams of the Muslims of the subcontinent. "After seeing the photo exhibition, one gets lost that Pakistan was made after so many sacrifices and difficulties. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah made a dream come true by working day and night. Our young generation is very hardworking and worthy. Young generation has to protect Pakistan on ideological basis. The objective of the photo exhibition is to bring to light those who sacrificed for Pakistan in front of the new generations," she added.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi conferring the Pakistan Civil Award of Nishan-i-Imtiaz upon Sartaj Aziz in recognition of his services in the field of Public Service at the Investiture Ceremony on Pakistan Day.

## Kashmir an integral part of Pakistan; says Mushaal Mullick

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson of Peace and Culture Organization, Mushaal Hussein Mullick has said that the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and Pakistan are an integral part and can never be separated from each other. Mushaal, the wife of incarcerated Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, in her statement in connection with March 23 'Pakistan Day' said that 'Kashmir is the Jugular Vein of Pakistan' and people of Pakistan stand with the Kashmiris in their struggle for the right of self-determination, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

Mushaal said that the Kashmir issue is an unfin-

ished agenda of the partition of Indian subcontinent and Two-Nation Theory is still valid for the solution of the Kashmir dispute.

She said that durable peace and stability in South Asia are contingent upon resolving all outstanding issues between India and Pakistan, particularly the Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

She also pointed out ongoing human rights violations due to which the supremacist Indian forces made life hell for Kashmiri people, as they crossed all limits of barbarism and inhuman acts.

Mushaal added that ironically the human rights organisations and world powers adopted a

callous approach toward the brewing human crisis in the IIOJK and did not take any action against Hindutva regime.

The Chairperson stated that inhuman forces neither spared Kashmiri leaders nor women and children, as they subjected to their brutalities all and sundry with their planned nefarious plan to spread fear in the valley to silence the dissenting voices but no such policy of barbarity worked rather it further fanned the fire.

Chairperson of Peace and Culture Organization, Mushaal Hussein Mullick urged the UN and OIC to play their proactive role to resolve the Kashmir dispute as per the aspirations of the people of the valley.

### Sherry Rehman eulogises Begum Nusrat Bhutto

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday paid tribute to Begum Nusrat Bhutto on her 94th birthday and called her 'Mother of Democracy'. In a flurry of tweets, the federal minister said Begum Nusrat Bhutto was a prominent figure in Pakistani politics and a leading advocate of democracy and human rights.

Senator Rehman said that Begum Bhutto also played an active political role in the movement against dictatorship and remained committed throughout her life. Begum Nusrat Bhutto had to bear the hardships of imprisonment during Zia's dictatorship. She faced many challenges in her life, including her husband's imprisonment, execution, and the murder of her sons, the minister said.

Despite all these tragedies, she said Begum Nusrat Bhutto remained a strong and brave person, adding, "Begum Nusrat Bhutto's character and legacy inspires many people in Pakistan and around the world". "On her 94th birthday, we salute her service to the country, people, constitution, democracy, and human rights and honor her sacrifices," Sherry Rehman said.

### DMA releases report on earthquake damages

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Thursday issued a report of damages caused by the earthquake in Pakistan. According to NDMA, an earthquake of 6.8 magnitude hit Pakistan on Tuesday and its center was the Hindu Kush mountain range of Afghanistan.

According to the report, the recent earthquake caused heavy losses in KP, where 11 people were killed and 79 injured in the earthquake. Overall 172 houses were damaged including 169 in KP and two in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, while 22 houses were completely destroyed in the earthquake, the report said.

As many as 19 livestock also died in the earthquake including 17 in KP and two in AJK. It should be noted that last night's severe earthquake caused cracks in buildings in Islamabad and Rawalpindi? DC Rawalpindi has also formed a committee to review the structure of the six affected buildings.

### ICP crackdown against tinted glasses vehicles intensifies

Islamabad capital police crackdown against vehicles having black paper and tinted glasses has been intensified.

Special squads are constituted to take action against such vehicles, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Nasir Akbar Khan, the Islamabad capital police constituted special squads to take action against vehicles having tinted glasses and black papers in the capital city.

Following these directions, the Islamabad capital police aim to enforce a zero tolerance policy as it is a moral responsibility to spread awareness regarding road safety while enforcing laws.

Islamabad capital police officials are well trained through seminars and have been instructed to treat citizens in a professional manner.

Citizens are requested to ensure the smooth flow of traffic on roads, the role of the citizens is also very important in implementation of traffic rules.

Obeying traffic rules can save your and the lives of others as well, never violate traffic laws and be a responsible citizen.

## President, PM call for taking care of needy during Ramazan

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Felicitating the nation on beginning of Ramazan-ul-Mubarak, President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have urged people to take care of the needy during the holy month.

The President in a statement said Ramazan-ul-Mubarak brings the message of sympathy, brotherhood and cooperation among the Ummah.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in his message said this holy month teaches us self-examination, disciplined life and sacrifices. The Prime Minister urged people to especially pray for betterment of the Muslim Ummah and Pakistan.

The holy month is a harbinger of transformation for the Muslims at the individual and collective levels and provides a good opportunity to streamline their lives, the president said in a message on the advent of Ramazan ul Mubarak, 1444 Hijrah. The Pakistani leaders observed that objective of fasting was to strengthen the virtue of piety

as it help promoted qualities of endurance and determination.

By adhering to Islamic proclamations and obedience, it provided an opportunity to a Muslim to lead a life full of discipline by following Allah Almighty's commands.

They said today, Pakistan was passing through difficult economic situation which made it imperative for all of them to take care of the feeble, dependent and needy segments of society.

These segments passed through severe economic situation throughout the year with trials and tribulations, he said, and urged the people to fully support them all the year and especially during the holy month of Ramazan.

With this virtuous act, they could reap the benefits and blessings of Ramazan ul Mubarak, he opined.

Both the leaders also prayed for the progress and prosperity of the country and wished that the holy month might enable them to get its blessings.

## NA Speaker emphasizes importance of unity, dialogue for resolving conflicts

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Thursday highlighted the importance of the Pakistan Resolution and emphasised the need for unity, collective thinking, and dialogue to address the crises faced by Pakistan right now.

In his Pakistan Day message, he stressed the need to forget bilateral differences and work towards the development of the country. National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf empha-

sized the importance of adopting the guiding principles of Faith, Unity, and Discipline of Quaid-e-Azam to overcome the crises currently faced by Pakistan, and to repeat the spirit of March 23, 1940.

Speaker Ashraf highlighted the importance of political stability for economic stability and called for collective thinking and dialogue to resolve conflicts.

Condemning the Indian government's atrocities against minorities, he also expressed solidarity with

the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and recognised the sacrifices made by Pakistan's armed forces and law enforcement agencies.

Deputy Speaker of National Assembly Zahid Akram Durrani, in his separate message, also emphasised the significance of the Pakistan Resolution and the sacrifices rendered by Pakistan's armed forces and law enforcement agencies for the country's survival.

## NADRA presents next generation Pak ID Mobile App

ISLAMABAD (NNI): National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA) brings its ID services to the mobile screens of Pakistani citizens by making its next generation Pak ID Mobile App operational with beta release.

Citizens can now process applications of their identity card and documents using this app. After completing the entire application process through this app from the comfort of their home, they can get their ID documents delivered at their doorstep. With the Pak ID mobile app, citizens can now apply for their identity documents including CNIC, Family Registration Certificate without visiting NADRA

offices, avoiding long queues and waiting times.

Highlighting the most significant features of the new mobile app, Chairman NADRA Tariq Malik said the latest version of Pak ID Mobile has a built-in document recognition system and contactless biometric verification which allow users to enjoy a wholesome experience through a complete range of ID issuance services including uploading and submitting of documents, capturing photograph and fingerprints, and adding digital signatures using smartphones.

This innovative approach is a significant step towards achieving the goal of Digital Pakistan by improving service delivery, added

Mr. Malik. The Mobile App promises to bring maximum convenience to all citizens living within the country and beyond geographical boundaries. It may also add another feather in NADRA's cap that has already brought home the honor of being the first nation in the world that has implemented multi-biometric capturing and submitting documents online.

Mr. Malik said, "The app has been built using Contactless Technology which truly digitalizes the experience of getting ID documents just using a smartphone. NADRA truly welcomes citizens' valuable feedback that can be conveyed to NADRA through the In-app survey."

## IESCO installs 8,702 net metering connections with 106.43 MW capacity

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has installed 8,702 net metering connections having a total generation capacity of 106.43 megawatts (MW) in various circles of the company from January 2016 to February 2023. Manager Public Relations Asim Nazir Raja told APP here that the company had received 9,177 applications of net metering with 114.29 MW capacity during the said period. The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) issued licences to 9,122 net metering connections with an accumulative capacity of 113.68

MW so far, he added.

He said that the import and export of billing units had been started from 7781 net metering connections with a total capacity of 95.35 MW. The total exports and imports from these connections stood at 133,529,246 units and 167,307,686 units respectively, he said. Asim said that the company had paid an amount of Rs 2,327,559 to the connections' holders up to June 2022. To a question, he said that the company had authorised to grant licences up to 25 kilowatts (kW) capacity while over 25 kW capacity, NENPRA issued licenses for net metering connections.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar addressing a press conference.



1m girls barred from classes

KABUL (Khaama Press): UNAMA said that with the beginning of the new school year in Afghanistan, more than one million girls would be barred from attending classes. "As the new Afghan school year starts this week, more than a million Afghan girls will be barred from attending classes," said in a tweet. The statement again called on the de facto government to immediately change its policies concerning girls' education in Afghanistan.

Needy families received aid

JAWZJAN (Agencies): Cash aid was distributed to 957 indigent families in the Qarqin district of Jawzjan province of Afghanistan on Thursday. Each family will receive 144 dollars for at least six months, said the Provincial Head of Natutal Disaster Management of Jawzjan province of Afghanistan, Hafiz Mawlawi Sirajuddin Saraji. These aids have been provided by an international aid organization, Hafiz Mawlawi Sirajuddin Saraji said.

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

## UNAMA representative meets Afghan officials — Discusses grils' education



KABUL (Khaama Press): Markus Potzel, UNAMA Deputy Special Representative (Political) for Afghanistan met with the Acting Deputy Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir and discussed girls' education.

During the meeting, UNAMA's Deputy Special Representative, Markus Potzel reiterated lifting

bans restricting girls' and women's right to education, among other topics.

"The UN and the international community urges Taliban authorities to reopen school and university doors for Afghan women and girls," Potzel said.

Abdul Kabir said that the Islamic Emirate is not against girls' education, and the ban on women and girls' education is tempo-

rary, which will be resolved in the coming future.

For his part, Kabir thanked UNAMA for its continued cooperation with the people of Afghanistan during these difficult times. UN and other international aid agencies have been actively engaged in delivering humanitarian aid to needy families throughout the country.

Moreover, a UN panel of

experts during the week said, "the ongoing unlawful denial of girls and young women's right to education in Afghanistan marks a global nadir in education, impacting an entire gender, a generation, and the future of the country."

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, while launching the 2022 Human Rights Report on Monday, said the Taliban leadership "relentlessly discriminates and represses" Afghan women. He noted the authorities have so far issued 80 decrees that restrict women's freedom of movement and the right to education and work.

The issue of women's right to education has become an ongoing challenge for the de facto authorities of Afghanistan, being under pressure from the international community and partners for its immediate removal. Despite the overwhelming pressure, there is no tangible progress in this regard.

## Deputy PM meets ex-military Generals

KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Prime Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, met with several ex-government military generals.

Deputy PM Kabir said that the Islamic Emirate was willing to use the country's generals' experiences

The meeting, was attended by the deputy chief of staff, the commanders of the army and police corps, and the national security officials of the ex-administration.

During the meeting, General Afzal Aman and General Shur Gul Pashtun spoke on behalf of others and expressed their appreciation for the general amnesty.

They said that 70% of the soldiers of the ex-administration remain in Afghanistan and live with calm and confident hearts.

They called Afghanistan their home and the Islamic system as one of their ambitions and assured that they are ready for any cooperation with the Islamic Emirate.

For his part, Kabir said that all Mujahidin are carrying out their responsibilities according to the amnesty order, and assured that no problems will arise for ex-administration soldiers.

All Afghan ex-administration employees, have a peaceful and secure life in Afghanistan, he added.

In the end, some cash aid was granted to the former soldiers by Deputy Prime Minister.

## UK advises against all travel to Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): In an announcement, the Foreign Ministry of the United Kingdom has advised British citizens against all travel to Afghanistan as the country's security situation remains extremely volatile.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office in an announcement advised British nationals against traveling to Afghanistan, amid the volatile security situation.

"There is an ongoing and high threat of terrorist attacks throughout Afghanistan, including around the airport. There is a heightened threat of terrorist attacks in or around religious sites and during religious festivals, such as the month of Ramadan. Travel throughout Afghanistan is extremely dangerous, and border crossings may not be open," the announcement said.

Currently, the UK has no diplomatic mission in Afghanistan to provide consular assistance for British citizens. The UK along with other NATO member states closed their Embassies and Diplomatic Missions in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of the international forces in August 2021.

## Uzbek team meets Bradar, discusses Afghan situation

KABUL (Khaama Press): Uzbek delegation met with Acting Deputy Prime Minister, Mullah Abdul Ghani Bradar and discussed the economic and political situation of Afghanistan.

The delegation was headed by Uzbekistan's National Security Council Adviser and Uzbek special envoy for Afghanistan Abdul Aziz Kamlov in Kabul.

The two sides discussed a range of topics including the economy, politics, transit, railway, and electricity projects in Afghanistan, according to statement reports this news agency.

"Afghanistan is trying to maintain good relations with all countries, the neighbors in particular. Strengthening economic ties with Uzbekistan is one of the key priorities of the ruling regime," Deputy PM

Baradar said.

Baradar further added that Afghanistan could be turned into a bridge between South and Central Asian countries, facilitating trade and economic development in the region and beyond. Therefore, expanding trade relations between the countries is of paramount importance at this very moment in time, he said.

The available opportunities should be utilized to boost economic development and bilateral trade relations so that the two countries could become effective economic partners in the region, Baradar added.

For his part, Uzbek diplomat Abdul Aziz Kamlov said his country has continuously supported Afghanistan in international

forums and meetings and has strived to protect Afghanistan's interests in any condition.

"Uzbekistan is ready to cooperate with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to benefit from the Qosh Tepa Canal, and other economic opportunities in the country," Kamlov said.

Uzbekistan maintains close ties with the Taliban-run Administration and has continuously dispatched humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan since the return of the Taliban to power. Besides, keeping the country's Embassy functional in Kabul, Uzbek authorities have frequently met with the Taliban authorities and discussed ways to boost economic development and overcome security challenges.

## Army protect lives, honor and property of people



KABUL (Agencies): Acting National Defense Minister, Mawlawi Muhammad Yaqoob Mujahid, attended the graduation ceremony of the first round of special forces.

485 soldiers from the first term of the special forces command of the Ministry of National Defense graduated after 3 months of religious, military, and professional training in a series of magnificent ceremonies.

Addressing the graduation ceremony of soldiers, Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, said that these special forces are protecting people's wealth, and honor, adding that our army disturbs the security of people in the country.

He underlined saying that our security forces are ready to make sacrifices to protect the lives, wealth,

and honor of their people and will not allow anyone to take away their happiness of the people.

During the ceremony, Mawlawi Mukhtar Ahmad Omari, the Deputy Commander of the Special Forces assured that they will make sharp endeavors to build a strong force to protect the national sovereignty and Islamic system of the country.

## Observation of Hijab in Balkh increased

BALKH (TOLONews): Officials of the department of Vice and Virtue in Balkh province said that they have been able to increase the numbers of worshipers in the mosque and the number of women who are observing Hijab in public.

However, the residents reacted and said they have been observing Hijab in the past as it is part of their Islamic obligations. On Wednesday, the officials from department of Vice and Virtue in Balkh briefed the media about their annual activities.

A spokesman for the department, Nasrullah Hotak, said that 80 percent

of women have now been interested in wearing hijab in the province.

"The females compare to before, are now wearing hijab based on Sharia laws," he said.

But the women and girls in Balkh said they have been observing Hijab already as it is obligatory in Islam.

"It is not one or two days that we are wearing Hijab but we were observing Hijab from the past years. Our mothers wore Hijab and told us to wear Hjab. We are now telling our children to wear Hijab," said Bibi Atifa, a resident of Mazar-e-Sharif.

"I don't think there will

be very many changes because Hijab is an order of God and we were observing it before," said Halima Rahmani, a resident of Mazar-e-Sharif.

The residents of Mazar-e-Sharif also called on the employees of the department of Vice and Virtue to treat the people with good conduct.

"Our request from the Vice and Virtue department is to not use severe treatment with the people," said Angar, a resident of Mazar-e-Sharif.

The officials said that they have addressed 100 complaint filed by residents in Balkh.

## World reacts to restrictions on girls' education at school year start

KABUL (TOLONews): The continued ban of girls from education in Afghanistan in the new solar year has sparked a number of reactions throughout the world.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned that preventing girls from learning will also have far-reaching consequences for the country's economy and health system.

The US and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights called women and girls' lack of access to education discriminatory and added that this will have a negative effect on the relations of the Islamic Emirate with the world.

"In a statement, the UN Children's Fund Executive Director Catherine Russell stressed that girls and adolescents including those with disabilities have the right to an education. She warned that preventing

girls from learning will also have far-reaching consequences for the country's economy and health system," Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, told a press briefing.

Marta Hurtado, spokesperson for the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), said "the denial of a secondary school education, and then of access to university, is manifestly discriminatory, profoundly distressing for girls and women."

According to Hurtado, the decision to deny girls and women their right to an education exposes them to violence, poverty and exploitation.

"The de facto authorities have pledged that all women and girls will be allowed to go to school. Our Office urges that they honour this promise, without delay," Hurtado added.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also said that the current government of Afghanistan will not stop violating human rights and depriving girls of access to education, it is not possible to normalize relations with them.

"I think it's safe to say from conversations with countries around the world that to the extent the Taliban is looking for more normal relations with countries around the world, that will not happen so long as they continue to advance these repressive edicts against women and girls," Blinken said.

With the start of the new academic year, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan once again asked the current government to review all discriminatory policies against women and girls.

"As the new Afghan school year starts this week

more than a million Afghan girls will be barred from attending classes. UNAMA reiterates its call to de facto authorities to reverse all discriminatory policies against women and girls. They not only impede the aspirations of half of the population but are causing great damage to Afghanistan," UNAMA tweeted.

"We hope that orders and regulations will be followed in society, and that discrimination against boys and girls will end," said Soraya Paikan, a women's rights activist. Meanwhile, the UN Women in Afghanistan said in a tweet: "As a new school year begins, Afghan girls are denied their basic right to education for the second year in a row. An act shattering the dreams and hopes of millions of girls and condemning Afghanistan to further poverty and loss."

## Afghan woman activist released



KABUL (Khaama Press): Waheeda Mahrami, an Afghan women activist who was detained by the Taliban officials in the week, was released on Thursday, Afghanistan International reported.

Taliban had detained Waheeda Mahrami, a women activist on Monday, March

20 in Kabul, according to a source close to her. On March 8, the International Women's Day Mahrami described the restrictions on Afghan women as "gender apartheid", which eventually led to her detention.

It is reported that Mahrami had left her home on March 20 to attend an event

celebrating the ancient New Year festival, but never returned home since then.

The Taliban authorities have not yet commented about the woman activist's arbitrary detention and her release so far.

Mahrami used to regularly participate in women's protests in Kabul, demanding the restoration of Afghan women's rights and freedom. With the resumption of universities and educational institutions for male students, Mahrami was one of the few female students who participated in a symbolic protest and led a book behind the closed gate of Kabul University.

The United Nations and the international community has described the ban on Afghan women's education

as gender apartheid, which would adversely affect half of the country's total population.

Meanwhile, the de facto authorities of Afghanistan are allegedly accused of arbitrary detentions, harassment, and mistreatment of rights activists, women activists, and journalists since the group's return to power.

## IE seeking to hire professionals

KABUL (TOLONews): The deputy head of the Administrative Office of the President for policy monitoring, Saifuddin Tayib, said that the Islamic Emirate is seeking to incentivize the technical and professional sectors through the appointment of professional experts.

He made the remarks in an event at the Ministry of Urban Development and Land.

"We are trying to reduce the vacancies in (supportive) sectors and increase the openings for professional and technical figures. We are telling the administration --as many posts as you need, refer it here," Tayib said.

The Administrative Reforms and Civil Service Commission (ARCSC) said that it has implemented an electronic system for the appointment of government employees in a bid to ensure transparency.

"Those who are selected... will be selected for talent," said Abdul Hanan Arif, head of the Administrative Reforms and Civil Service Commission.

This comes as the applicants called for ensuring transparency in the appointment process.

## Earthquake destroyed 665 houses: OCHA

KABUL (Khaama Press): United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stated that the earthquake damaged and destroyed around 665 houses across Badakhshan, Bamyán, Panjshir, Parwan, Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Samangan, and Takhar Provinces.

The organization added that the earthquake in Badakhshan killed five people. In contrast, it injured 58 others and "Partners have deployed assessment & response teams to provide immediate relief to affected families, OCHA said in a tweet on Wednesday.

While according to the Ministry of Public Health of Afghanistan, more than four people were killed and

about 80 others injured in the country's Badakhshan, Takhar and Laghman provinces.

Simultaneously, the State Ministry for Natural Disaster Management of the Taliban authorities reported that 63 houses had been destroyed and some cattle damaged were lost due to the powerful earthquake.

According to the official report, the damaged and destroyed houses were located in the Jurm district of Badakhshan province and were lost due to the collapse of the roofs of the houses.

On Tuesday, a powerful earthquake of 6.8 magnitudes shook Afghanistan and the neighbouring countries. The earthquake's epi-

centre was 40 Km to the south-Southeast of Jurm district in Afghanistan's Hindukush Mountain in Badakhshan province, bordering Pakistan and Tajikistan, said US Geological Survey.

The north and northeast regions of the country are prone to disasters such as avalanches, landslides, earthquakes and floods.

Recently, the northeast provinces of the country, particularly Badakhshan and Takhar, has frequently witnessed earthquake.

Last year, a devastating earthquake shook Paktika, Khost, in southeast Afghanistan. As a result, more than 1,052 people were killed and thousands injured, according to the Taliban authorities.



# US denies Chinese claim it drove away American destroyer

BANGKOK (AP): The United States denied Chinese claims Thursday that its military had driven away an American guided-missile destroyer from operating around disputed islands in the South China Sea as tensions rise in the region between the two powers.

The US Navy's 7th Fleet said that a statement from China's Southern Theatre Command that it had forced the USS Milius away from waters around the Paracel Islands — called Xisha by China — was "false." "USS Milius is conducting routine operations in the South China Sea and was not expelled," said Lt. j.g. Luka Bakic in response to a query from The Associated Press.

"The United States will continue to fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows," Bakic added. Bakic would not comment on whether the ship had been operating in immediate proximity of the Paracel Islands, which are in the South China Sea a few hundred kilometers (miles) off the coast of Vietnam and the Chinese province of Hainan, or whether there had been any

sort of a confrontation. China occupies the Paracel Islands, but they are also claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam.

Col. Tian Junli, a spokesperson for China's Southern Theatre Command, said earlier that the Chinese navy had followed and monitored the USS Milius after it "illegally entered China's Xisha territorial waters without approval from the Chinese government, undermining peace and stability in the South China Sea." He said that the Chinese navy and air force then forced away "the US warship in accordance with the law."

"The theatre troops will maintain a state of high alert at all times and take all necessary measures to resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security as well as peace and stability in the South China Sea," he said. The incident comes amid growing tensions between China and the United States in the region, as Washington pushes back at Beijing's growingly assertive posture in the South China Sea and elsewhere.

China claims ownership

over virtually the entire strategic waterway, through which around \$5 trillion in global trade transits each year and which holds highly valuable fish stocks and undersea mineral resources. The Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and Taiwan also have competing claims. The US itself has no claims to the waters, but has deployed Navy and Air Force assets to patrol the waterway for decades and says freedom of navigation and overflight is in the American national interest.

China has frequently responded angrily, accusing the US of meddling in Asian affairs and demanding it leave the region where it has had a naval presence for more than a century. Following the incident with the USS Milius, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told reporters in Beijing that "the US should immediately stop such violations and provocations." "China will continue to take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard national sovereignty and security and maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea," he said.

## Court issues warrant of 10 cops in murder case

**Humayun Khan**

PESHAWAR: Additional District and Session Judge (AD&SJ) Alamgir Shah issued Non-bailable Arrest Warrant of 10 policemen including two Station House Officers (SHOs) for disobeying court's order in murder case, on Thursday.

During hearing honorable court was informed that SHOs namely Imtiaz and Ijaz Nabi along with police personnel Mumtaz, Umar Rehman, Sher Rehman, Noor Muhammad, Riaz, Zahid and Amjad did not appear before trial court.

According to prosecution the policemen are witness in murder case while didn't appeared before court. AD&SJ Alamgir Shah has issued non-bailable arrest warrant of ten policemen and ordered to produced before court as witness while adjourned further hearing till 20th May.

Meanwhile, Accountability Court Peshawar issued non-bailable arrest warrant of two witnesses in Muzarabah scam Reference while adjourned further hearing till 30th April. During hearing of Muzarabah scam, Accountability Court Peshawar was informed that witnesses didn't appeared before court.

However, Accountability Court Peshawar Judge has issued non-bailable warrant of Managers of Allied Bank Limited (ABL) Hayatabad Branch and Manager NIB Saddar Branch for didn't complying court's orders.

## Pak Navy Ship with relief goods reaches Turkiya

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Second Pakistan Navy Ship PNS MOAWIN deployed on international Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) mission reached Mersin, Turkiye. The ship brought second shipment of relief goods comprising winterized tents and blankets for the earthquake affectees.

The ship was warmly welcomed by Turkish Naval officials and Pakistan diplomatic staff. To mark solidarity with our Turkish brotherhood, a simple and graceful ceremony was organized onboard PNS MOAWIN to commemorate Pakistan Day. The ceremony was attended by Turkish Government and Military officials including Governor of Mersin and Chief of Staff of Turkish Naval Forces along with Ambassador of Pakistan to Turkiye. At the ceremony PN Mission Commander expressed condolences on behalf of Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi and people of Pakistan for the tragic loss of lives and property and reaffirmed PN resolve to stand with brotherly countries at the time of need. Turkish government officials highly appreciated the support provided by the Government of Pakistan.

At home, Pakistan Navy celebrated Pakistan Day with traditional zeal & passion. The day dawned with Gun Salutes and prayers were offered for solidarity and longevity of the beloved homeland. Flag hoisting ceremonies and illuminations were organized onboard Pakistan Navy Ships and Establishments as per ceremonial norms. Beside, at the coastal areas Pakistan Zindabad rally by students of Bahria College Ormara and Exhibition of armaments & equipment was held by Armed Forces at Gwadar in which local populace actively participated.

Pakistan Day marks the determination and special eminence of Muslims of the sub-continent and recollects their determination & prominence that fight all odds with unity in changing the course of history. Consistently, in accordance with the directions of Government of Pakistan, Pakistan Navy demonstrates its unwavering commitment in providing continuous support for the people of Syria and Turkey through strengthened, coordinated and unified national efforts.



KARACHI: Governor of Sindh Kamran Tessori and Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah talking to media persons after laying wreath at Mazar-i-Quaid-e-Azam.

# President Alvi confers civil awards on Pakistan Day

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday conferred Pakistan's civil awards on 135 citizens as well as foreign nationals on Pakistan Day, in recognition of their excellence and gallantry in their respective fields.

The awards were conferred at an investiture ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr here, also attended by the cabinet members, diplomats and family members of the recipients of the awards. The president distributed the civil awards in 10 categories including Nishan-i-Imtiaz, Tamgha-i-Imtiaz, Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Hilal-i-Quaid-Azam, Sitara-i-Shujaat, Sitara-i-Imtiaz, Presidential Award for Pride of Performance, Tamgha-i-Shujaata and Tamgha-i-Khidmat.

The president conferred Nishan-i-Imtiaz on Sartaj Aziz, Mir Hasil Bazinjo and late Justice (Retd) Rana Bhagwandas for their public service; Ahmed Ali Chagla (art), late Sufi Gulam Tabassum (poetry), Muhammad Qavi Khan (drama, film) and Jahangir Khan and Jansher Khan (sports). The Hilal-i-Pakistan award was given to Ambassador (ret) Robin Lynn Raphael for her services to Pakistan.

The president conferred the Hilal-i-Imtiaz award on Khawaja Abdul Hayee (education), Engineer Professor Ahmed Farooq Bazai (academic), Dr Talat Naseer Pasha (science), Hakeem Rizwan Hafeez (health), Dr Raja Ali Raza (engineering), Raees Ahmed (arts), late Amjad Islam Amjad (arts), late Arif Nizami, Mujibur Rehman Shami and Altaf Hassan Qureshi (journalism); Bilquees Bano Edhi (social services), Muhammad Ramzan Chipha, Sardar Ahmed Nawaz Sukhera, late Maroof Afzal, Senator Talha Mahmood, Capt (ret) Sher Alam Mehsud, Justice (ret) Fazal Karim, Sultan Ali Alana and Hilalur Rehman (public service); Dr Gohar Ejaz (philanthropy) and Khawaja Masood Akhtar (sports exports). The president conferred the Hilal-i-Quaid-i-Azam award on Dr James M. Shera for his services to Pakistan.

The Sitara-i-Shujaat award was given to Malik Muhammad Hassan, late Malik Gangra, Malik Shumali

Khan, late Fiza Tariq Malik, Raja Mustafa Ali, Muhammad Afzal Sheikh and Sajid Kiani (Gallantry) and Mansoor Ahmed Khan (services to Pakistan). The president awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz to Muhammad Afzal Javed and Zafarullah Khan (services to Pakistan), Dr Saeed Akhtar (medicine), late Humayun Khan (agriculture), Dr Sharif Malik (medicine), Mahfoozur Rehman (education), Fakhar-e-Alam (hosting), late Saghar Siddiqui (poetry), late Shama Khalid (art); late Ziauddin, Javed Chaudhry and Nadeem Malik (journalism); Dr Anees Ahmed and Maulana Hanif Jalandhari (religious scholar), and Waqar Ahmed Malik (public service).

Among others who were also conferred the Sitara-i-Imtiaz award included Syed Murataz Mahmood (public service), Imdadullah Bosal (public service) and Mirza Ishtiaq Baig (social service); Lt Gen Noman Zakaria, Major General Muhammad Idris Dastgir, Brigadier Salman Rashid Hussain, Muhammad Iqbal Khan, Asim Ali Khan, Samina Chagali, Dr Amir Malik, Tahir Rai and Riazuddin Sheikh (public service); Behroz Sabzwari and Tariq Mahmood (art). The president awarded Presidential Award for Pride of Performance to Dr Ayesha Siddiqua (medicine), Anjum Shaheen (acting); Taskeen Zafar, Syed Shamoon Hashmi and late Prof. Jahazeb Niaz Khan (art); Shahida and Irfan Mehsud (sports); and Tika Khan and Hafiz Tahir Khalil (journalism).

In recognition of their gallantry, the Tamgha-i-Shujaat award was conferred on Amir Nawaz Shaheed, Muhammad Kamran Shaheed, Sher Ahmed, Tanveer Hussain Tonio, Amjad Ahmed Sheikh, Mazhar Nawaz Sheikh, Bashir Ahmed Barohi, Zeeshan Ahmed, Naved Ahmed, Ziaur Rehman, Javedullah Shaheed, Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, Sohail Zafar Chattha, Sadiq Shah, Raja Muhammad Majid, Bilal Raja, Mubashir Saleem, Minhas Ahmed Khan, Ijaz Hafeez, Aqel Ahmed Siddiqui and Waseem Ahmed Khan. President Alvi conferred Tamgha-i-Imtiaz on Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori, Achad Bhuglal (services to Pakistan), Jehan Ara (IT), Uzma Batool (medicine), Dr Rizwan Uppal (health), Dr Tanvir Khaliq (medi-

cine), Dr Syed Abbas Raza (medicine), Prof. Dr Khalid Mehmood (medicine), Der Zahoarul Haq (higher education) Dr Samreen Hussain (education), Rustam Ali Lone (art), Arif Khan (art), Nigar Nazar (art), Dr Ikramullah (Qiraat) and Bisma Maroof (sports).

The recognition of their public service, the president conferred Tamgha-i-Imtiaz on Cristina VON Sperling Afridi, Saima Saleem, SP Sumera Azam, Shehzad Afzal Khan, Major Muhammad Ali Tehseen, Major Atif Naveed, Saleh Azeem, Insaf Shah, Amin, Khawaja Adnan Zaeher, Ahmed Farooq, Imran Rasool, Nadeem Akhtar Sherazi, Tahir Akbar Awan, Syed Ali Hasnain Hussain and Dr Asif Bashir. Whereas Dr Shahid Masood got the said award for his services in (medicine), Khansa Maria (literature) and Amin Haswani (philanthropy) and Amir Ilyas Rana (journalism). The president awarded Tamgha-i-Khidmat to Chaudhry Perviz Iqbal Lusar for his services to Pakistan.

## IMF not interested in releasing money: Miftah Ismail

KARACHI (INP): Blaming Finance Minister Ishaq Dar for sabotaging the deal, PML-N leader Miftah Ismail claimed that International Monetary Fund (IMF) was not interested in releasing money to Pakistan as the Washington-based lender had no trust in Islamabad government.

Speaking during a session titled 'Pakistan in the Midst of Crisis' organised by a private university in Karachi, former finance minister said when he was heading the Ministry of Finance he spoke to the IMF officials and assured them that Paki-istan would not make false statements or violate the agreement; however, when Ishaq Dar was sworn in 'he sabotaged the agreement'. He recalled that Pakistan had three times made sovereign commitments and then backtracked on them. "Now the IMF is not interested in giving money to Pakistan," he said, emphasising that the Fund doesn't trust the government in Islamabad.

# Sharjeel counts Sindh govt achievements

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that Pakistan People's Party had performed well in health, public transport, communication and infrastructure improvement sectors. He said that Sindh government had completed under passes, fly overs, public transport projects and state of art hospitals where people from all over Pakistan are getting free of cost health care facilities. He added that performance of Sindh government is an appropriate reply to the critics of the Pakistan People's Party.

He said this while talking to the media on the occasion of the opening ceremony of Johar Chowranghi flyover along with provincial labor minister Saeed Ghani and Advisor Law Barrister Murtaza Wahab.

The minister said that Pakistan People's Party has always been a target of criticism, but the Sindh government of Pakistan People's Party has done excellent work in every sector, which no other political party has done till date. He said that Imran Khan was given a fake mandate in 2018.

He said that PTI people had never visited their con-

stituencies in last five years and people of these constituencies were searching for their area selected representatives by posting banners of wanted in their constituencies. He said that PTI chief Imran Khan himself had won from gulistan e Johar constituency of Karachi but he did not bother to spend a single night in the city.

He said that center of politics of these people is either revolve around the fingers of the empire or the external powers who wanted to see Pakistan as fail state. He added that true face of these people is obvious to the entire nation now. Their politics is neither for this nation, nor for the betterment of country. He added that Imran Khan is getting exposed day by day. Imran Khan is bringing new stories and narratives everyday with an attempt to fool the people. But it is fact that people of Karachi had rejected PTI in local bodies and PTI faced the worst defeat. He said that

PTI will face the same fate in upcoming general elections as well. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that people should open their eyes and see that Imran Khan is currently engaged in heinous conspiracies against the country. Lobbyists from all over the

world and those people from all over the world who have never been in favor of Pakistan and have been involved in deep conspiracies against Pakistan in the past have now openly come forward in support of Imran Khan. 'The cat is out of the bag now and I have said this before that Imran Khan's fight is neither with PML (N), nor with the Pakistan People's Party nor with the head of any institution. Pakistan is real target of PTI chief.

Imran Khan is fighting against this country,' the minister said. The provincial minister added that the people of Pakistan now have to challenge this person who is fighting against Pakistan. Responding to a question, he said that Pakistan People's Party has taken more seats than Jamaat-e-Islami. He said that luckily Jamaat-e-Islami took the seats because of MQM's boycott. It was actually mandate of MQM Pakistan. He said that Jamaat-e-Islami had not only contested the local bodies election from Karachi, it also participated from Hyderabad. But people of Hyderabad did not vote for the Jamaat-e-Islami. He added that Jamat-i-Islami got oxygen due to absence of MQM Pakistan in local bodies elections.

# Sherry picks apart PTI's deal with another US lobbying firm

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday slammed the purported 'U-turn' made by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insanaaf (PTI) by signing a six-month agreement with a private US consulting firm, Praia Consultant, for using their services to promote party's image and restoring its lost credibility.

In a flurry of tweets, the minister held the signing of the agreement exposing the PTI's "double standards and hypocrisy". The federal minister said that many countries appoint lobbyists, and so do political parties, but this case was particularly bizarre because it came from a party that attempted to pose itself as a [political] martyr of the "US meddling".

"If that was the case, why are they now locked in a desperate attempt to buy the influence of the US decision-makers after the failure of the 'Cipher Conspiracy' narrative and earlier lobbying efforts? PTI's double standards and U-turns have been exposed many times," she said. "Now, they are constantly taking the services of lobbying companies for their publicity in the US. His[Imran Khan] concocted narrative has been exposed numerous times that show he was planning to 'play' with Pakistan's interests for his own per-

sonal politics," she alleged. The minister continued, "Despite previously blaming the US for their ouster from politics, the PTI hired an American lobbying firm Fontone Arlook LLC in October of last year, only to quickly backtrack on their criticism of the US within a month. It's now apparent that hiring of lobbyists is not with Pakistan's interests and integrity in mind, but rather as a means to influence the country's domestic politics for their own gain. This brazen use of self-interest above national interest is a clear indication of PTI's willingness to compromise Pakistan's interests for the sake of their own political agenda." According to the agreement, it allows the consulting firm to arrange meetings between the PTI leaders and US decision-makers, and to provide guidance on the content of these meetings.

The minister highlighted that normally political parties engage in lobbying for improving relations between the two countries, but it's the opposite case here. "What makes PTI different from others is the sheer hypocrisy of their actions. They[PTI] have actively campaigned against foreign influence in the past, while engaging in it themselves. Imran Khan must answer for his false narrative of an American conspiracy against him, which he peddled for months before

suddenly retracting. His actions have impacted Pakistan's foreign policy and image, and it is time for him to take responsibility for the damage caused, for which we are still paying. This Cyphergate scandal compromised Pakistan's foreign relations with its key partners, which showed that Imran Khan is willing to sacrifice anything for personal gain and power."

## NDMA releases report on quake damages

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued a report of damages caused by the earthquake in Pakistan. According to NDMA, an earthquake of 6.8 magnitude hit Pakistan on Tuesday and its center was the Hindu Kush mountain range of Afghanistan.

According to the report, the recent earthquake caused heavy losses in KP, where 11 people were killed and 79 injured in the earthquake. Overall 172 houses were damaged including 169 in KP and two in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, while 22 houses were completely destroyed in the earthquake, the report said. As many as 19 livestock also died in the earthquake including 17 in KP and two in AJK.