

PM condoles loss of lives

DOHA (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed grief and sorrow over the traffic accident near Dara Zinda in Dera Ismail Khan. The prime minister condoled with the bereaved families and prayed Allah Almighty to elevate the ranks of the deceased in paradise. He also prayed for the early recovery of the injured. Meanwhile, the PM directed the provision of all possible medical assistance to the injured.

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# PM, Qatari Amir discuss mutually beneficial cooperation, economic opportunities

DOHA (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on Sunday discussed a wide array of mutually beneficial issues and exchanged views to further strengthen the excellent cooperation between the two countries in diverse fields including in the economic and investment sectors.

During a meeting, the prime minister appreciated Qatar's consistent support to the development projects in Pakistan and highlighted the vast opportunities of cooperation between the two countries.

The Amir of Qatar lauded the contributions of Pakistani manpower in his country's development and especially referred to the excellent performance of Pakistani security authorities during the FIFA Football World Cup 2022 successfully hosted by Qatar, PM Office

Media Wing said in a press release.

During the meeting, both leaders also discussed further cementing of bilateral cooperation, investment, trade and sending of further Pakistani skilled workers to Qatar. The Qatari Amir welcomed the prime minister and reiterated his keen interest in strengthening the economic cooperation between Qatar and Pakistan. He also reiterated his resolve to continue Qatar's complete cooperation and support in the development and progress agenda of Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the Amir of Qatar accepted an invitation from the prime minister to visit Pakistan. Earlier, the prime minister arrived in Qatar on a two-day official visit where he would participate in the 5th United Nations conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The conference, being held from 5-9

March 2023, will consider steps for accelerating sustainable development in the Least Developed Countries, helping them make progress on the road to prosperity.

PM, CEO Qatar Investment Authority discuss investment opportunities: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Qatar Investment Authority Mansoor Ebrahim Al-Mahmoud called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Sunday to exchange views on progress made on various investment proposals in multiple sectors of Pakistan's economy.

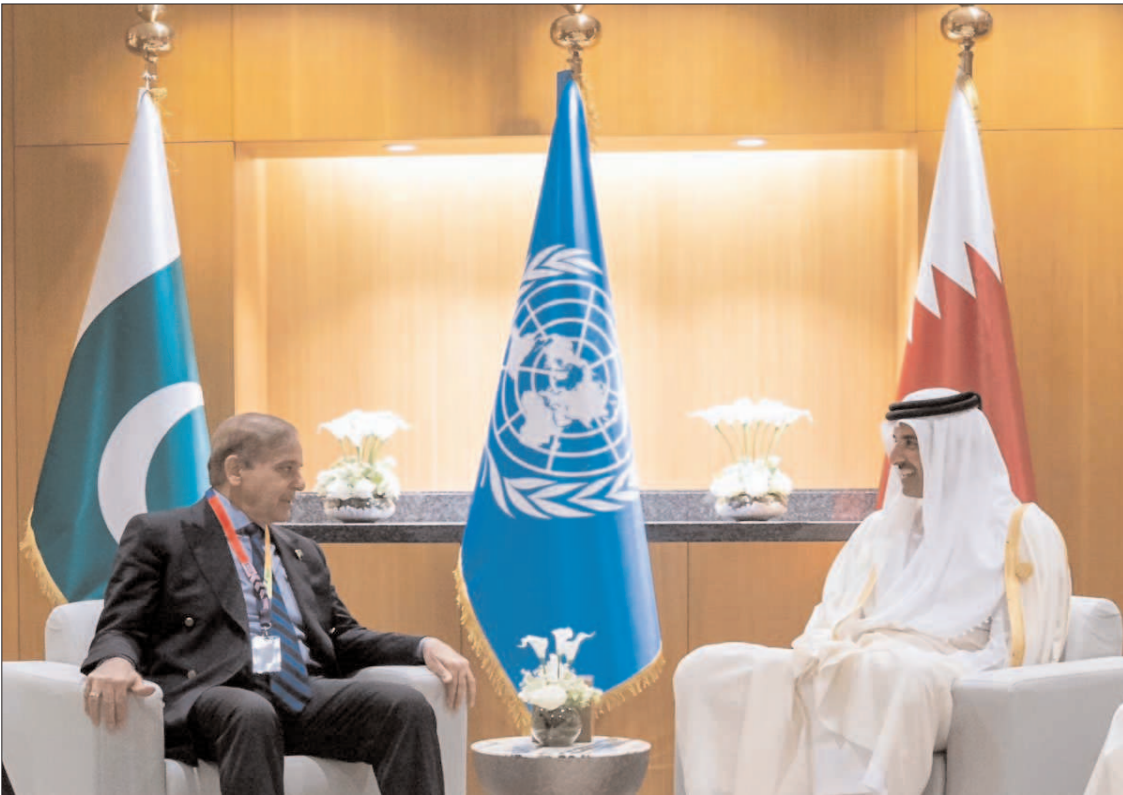
During the meeting, Al-Mahmoud and Prime Minister Sharif highlighted investment opportunities in the energy and infrastructure sectors of Pakistan.

It may be recalled that a detailed discussion had been initiated between the two sides during the Prime Minister's visit to Qatar in

August 2022.

The Qatar Investment Authority has expressed a keen interest in investing in LNG power plants, airports, and solar power parks in Pakistan.

Al-Mahmoud also concurred with the prime minister regarding the importance of bilateral trade and investment between Qatar and Pakistan while expressing his desire to strengthen their bilateral economic ties. Prime Minister Sharif thanked Al-Mahmoud for his interest in enhancing cooperation with Pakistan in the economic sphere and invited Qatari investors to take advantage of the investment-friendly policies of the Pakistani government. Both countries remain optimistic about working closely to translate existing understandings to strengthen their economic ties and further diversify them in the future in line with Qatar's Vision 2030.



DOHA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Meets the Amir of the State of Qatar H.H. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Althani on the sidelines of 5th United Nations Least Developed Countries (LDCs) Conference.

## Bilawal hints at PPP quitting ministries if promises to flood victims not fulfilled

KARACHI (NNI): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Sunday hinted at his party quitting ministries if the federal government did not fulfill its promises made to the flood affectees.

Addressing a ceremony organized to distribute compensation money among the flood affected farmers in Karachi, the PPP chairman demanded the promises made to the flood-affected people be fulfilled.

He said the biggest problem people are facing is inflation and unemployment, adding they will also discuss the flood victims in the National Assembly.

Talking about the census, he said Sindh was the only province that expressed reservations about the census. No kind of shortcut will be accepted. "We want a clean and transparent census. PPP will not accept such a census. If the federal government does not consider the PPP's objections, Sindh

will not support the federation," he declared.

Bilawal said they can support a census, but not the methodology adopted for it. He further said in the current circumstances, every class was suffering. Pakistan's economy suffered a huge blow due to floods, he added.

He claimed the federal government was treating farmers like a "step-mother", asking if the agricultural sector was not invested into, how will Pakistan survive. The needs of the nation can be met if small farmers and cultivators are supported. He alleged that the agricultural sector was not supported after the PPP government ended, and its condition is worsening since that day.

The foreign minister announced that farmers will be assisted through the Benazir Income Support Program, which will be started today (Sunday).

He lamented that financial assistance has not been received from the federal

government as promised, while the Sindh government has allocated Rs8.39 billion to help farmers.

Bilawal further said the federal government has promised Rs4.7 billion for the flood victims.

He said Pakistan was faced with historical economic turmoil, while the scourge of terrorism has returned to the country.

He blamed "politicians like Khan sahib" for introducing division and hatred in politics. He took a swipe at the former premier that a "political rat" was hiding under his bed in Zaman Park. "Everyone's attention should be towards national problems instead of that 'rat'," Bilawal remarked.

He lamented that the media was also not focusing on flood victims anymore. The economic problems of the common man were not being taken into consideration. He suggested everyone's attention should be towards the historical crisis facing the country.

## Zardari says will never hold talks with Imran Khan

KARACHI (NNI): Former President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari has said that he does consider Imran Khan as a politician.

In an exclusive interview with the channel, he said they will not talk to Khan under any circumstances. "If there is an election, we will definitely take part in it," he vowed. Asif Zardari said the main reason behind the increasing popularity of Imran Khan is the rampant poverty in the country.

PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari said that Ch Parvez Elahi has staked his political future on someone's phone.

To a question, he replied that National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and business cannot go together.

To another question, he said that the return of Mian Nawaz Sharif is his own problem.

The former president said that the removal of Miftah Ismail was PML-N's decision.

He also clarified that there was no discussion about the election in the meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## LHC CJ house staff returns plea to PTI lawyer

LAHORE (NNI): The Lahore High Court Chief Justice house staff returned on Sunday the application over Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's protective bail back to his lawyer.

The deposed premier's lawyer had submitted the plea for his [Imran's] protective bail. In this regard, the deployed officer had told the lawyer to submit the plea in the LHC, adding that the plea would not be acceptable here.

Subsequently, the PTI lawyer took back the plea. Meanwhile, the LHC registrar's office and administration could not be reached. The PTI lawyer had kept the plea outside the main door of the LHC.

Earlier today, PTI Chairman Imran Khan's legal team moved the LHC to seek a protective bail for the former premier.

In this regard, the legal team headed by Advocate Azhar Siddique filed the petition in the LHC. The legal team had prepared the petition for the protection bail after consultations. The PTI had closed the paths surrounding Zaman Park to save the deposed premier from getting arrest.

## Imran says will never give up on his struggle

### --Blames General Bajwa for thrusting thieves upon country

LAHORE (NNI): Making it clear that neither he had compromised on his principles in the past, nor would do so in the future, former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said on Sunday that he was being implicated in 'ridiculous' cases.

Addressing the party workers at his Zaman Park residence in Lahore while police vans were parked outside his home to take him into custody, the PTI chairman said how ironic it was that while he was being implicated in false cases, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other leaders of the coalition government were given a 'clean chit in corruption references. He said while others, who had looted the Toshakhana, had been allowed to go scot-free, he was being summoned in the same case despite the fact that he had done nothing wrong. "I want public hearing of the Toshakhana reference," he demanded. Similarly, he went on to say, he was not present at the time of protest outside the ECP building, but he was still implicated in the case.

Khan's appearance came amid a swarm of PTI workers gathered at Zaman Park after the Islamabad police arrived at Imran Khan's Lahore residence to make his arrest for the Toshakhana case.

Imran made it clear that if somebody was under the impression that he would give up on his struggle, he was grossly mistaken.

The PTI chief regretted that Nawaz Sharif, a proclaimed offender,

had been dictating his terms from London. "How tragic it is that former army chief General (r) Qamar Javed Bajwa thrust these thieves upon us," he wondered.

He said he knew fully well what the government planned to do to him after arresting him.

He further said that last time when he went to Islamabad to appear in court, there was no security. "Even the interior ministry has admitted there are threats to my life," former prime minister said.

Imran Khan has also demanded on the public hearing of the case against him. Imran saluted the PTI leaders and workers for standing by him and also participating in 'Jail Bharo' movement enthusiastically.

"I am so ecstatic that I am witnessing a crowd transforming into a nation," the PTI chief said while referring to a large number of party leaders and workers resisting police plan to arrest him.

Taking a dig at the political opponents, Mr Khan said, "The people of the country are getting poorer, while the rulers are getting rich." He also schooled Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah. Lashing out at Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior vice president Maryam Nawaz, Mr Khan said the latter was exposed in the Panama Papers.

Reiterating the case of PTI leader Shahbaz Gill, Mr Khan bashed the political opponents.

Bashing the political opponents over the ECL, Mr Khan said, "I will

not be afraid if my name is placed on the ECL." He claimed that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was "about to be convicted by National Accountability Bureau and Federal Investigation Agency for Rs16 billion of corruption, but Gen (r) Bajwa rescued him. "PM Shehbaz was rescued by former chief of army staff General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa who kept getting [the] NAB cases trial postponed. Earlier in a tweet, PTI Chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan has said Pakistan had "become a banana republic".

"What future can a country have when crooks are thrust as rulers upon it? SS [Shehbaz Sharif] was about to be convicted by NAB (National Accountability Bureau) for Rs8 bn money laundering and by FIA (Federal Investigation Agency) for another Rs16 bn corruption when he was rescued by Gen Bajwa who kept getting NAB cases trial postponed," he said in a tweet in connection with the issuance of arrest warrants and presence of Islamabad police at Zaman Park. The PTI chief went on to say that while Shehbaz was under trial, he was made the prime minister.

"He has since proceeded to select heads of those institutions investigating his cases — first FIA and now NAB — simply to get his name permanently cleared in Rs16 bn corruption and Rs8 bn money laundering cases against him. "This is how a country becomes a banana republic," the PTI stalwart added.

## Maryam asks Nawaz to lend some of his courage to Imran

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief organiser Maryam Nawaz on Sunday asked her father and former premier Nawaz Sharif to lend some of his courage to Imran Khan.

In a statement on Twitter, Maryam Nawaz while mocking the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan stated that despite being innocent Nawaz Sharif would fly back to Pakistan from London, holding on to his daughter's support, and would cooperate for his arrest, unlike a thief who would

use the daughters of others as a shield.

"Nawaz Sharif had surrendered to police while he was holding her hand. And for that, he had to travel all the way from London," she recalled, and added here the case was exactly the opposite.

Reacting to PTI workers' reaction to the Islamabad Police's attempt to arrest Imran Khan, Maryam Nawaz has suggested Imran to be brave and surrender to police.

Maryam further criticised the former prime minister saying that,

## Imran's arrest no issue if he's convicted by courts: Rana

FAISALABAD (APP): Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan said on Sunday the arrest of Imran Khan was not a big issue for the government, but it wanted the courts to convict him under the law.

Talking to the media after inaugurating tent pegging championship at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF), he said if the court ordered for Imran's arrest, he would instantly comply with the orders without any fear of law and order situation or resistance from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers.

The interior minister clarified that in present instance, the police had gone to Zaman Park to comply with the court orders, and the government had nothing to do with it. He said that multiple cases had been registered against Imran Khan. In Toshakhana case, he was nominated, but indictment was yet to take place, he added.

The minister said that he [Imran] was maligning others, adding that under his nose, his crony Farah Gogi kept looting the country and shifting her wealth abroad. Rana Sanaullah said that holding of election was a responsibility of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was fully ready to participate in the democratic process. The minister appreciated the UAF administration especially Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqar Ahmad Khan for organising healthy extracurricular activities.

## SC approached to allow Imran to join proceedings through video-link

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has appealed to the Chief Justice of Pakistan that PTI Chairman Imran Ahmed Khan be allowed to appear before the various courts to join the proceedings through a video link.

In a petition duly signed by PTI secretary general Asad Umar and senior vice president Shah Mahmood Qureshi, it is pleaded to the court that numerous bogus cases were registered against the undersigned and

senior members of the PTI to settle political scores.

"In the wake of the failure to effectively prosecute Imran Ahmed Khan, an assassination attempt on his life was made at Wazirabad. He survived luckily, the petition added.

It has come to the notice through reliable sources, Imran Khan will be targeted again during his exposure and appearance in court proceedings so that he may be eliminated from the political scene.

Pakistan has witnessed political targeting and elimination of notable politicians through the course of history, beginning with the assassination of the late Liaquat Ali Khan, Mir Murtaza Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto. There is every apprehension that a similar attack as had taken place in Wazirabad will be repeated if adequate security arrangements ensuring the safety of Imran Ahmed Khan are not ensured.

## Marriyum derides Imran Khan as "jackal"

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday called Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan a "jackal" for hiding behind his workers to prevent his arrest in corruption cases.

The minister, in a tweet, said ironically, Imran Khan got bail in almost every case, whether it was related to "abusing a female judge or launching an attack on the court and police or concealing information about his[alleged] daughter from the court".

Marriyum in a satire asked Imran whether this time he would go to the court by a "truck".

"A proven jackal calls himself a leader," she quipped.

Marriyum slams Imran for 'escaping' from Zaman Park's residence in arrest anticipation: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Sunday said that Imran Khan who allegedly stole the Toshakhana gifts and was "responsible" for economic destruction and inflation in the country had "escaped from Zaman Park residence fearing imminent arrest".

In a tweet, she said that the PTI chief had allegedly "dodged his daughter", and now the latter escaped from Zaman Park residence by "dodging children, party workers and women" [gathered outside at his Zaman Park residence]. Sharing a picture of Nawaz Sharif, she said that genuine leaders bravely face arrest even in sham cases, but "jackal criminals like Imran flee away[fearing arrest]".





# Bilawal launches Reimbursement of wheat seed program at CM House

KARACHI (PPI): Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party & Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari inaugurated Seed Subsidy Programme: Reimbursement for wheat Seed' by pressing a key of the computer and transferred Rs8.39 billion to Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) which started disbursing an amount of Rs5000 per acre to the small growers holding agricultural land up to 12 acres.

The programme was organized by the agriculture department in collaboration with BISP here at the Banquet Hall and was attended by Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, MPA Ms Faryal Talpur, former chief minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah, Sindh PPP President Nisar Khuhro, Federal Minister Shazia Mari and Advisor to the CM Manzoor Wassan, provincial ministers, MPAs, MNAs,

Earlier, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto, through a presentation was told that the Floods of 2022 destroyed 3.6 million Acres of Kharif crops out of 4.4 million Acres. The Farmers suffered a loss to the tune of Rs. 421 billion.

The Chief Minister said that the disruption of the crop cycle threatened our food security, livelihoods, and economy. He added that the Sindh government, on the directives of the party leadership planned to support the farmers in the form of enhancing the support price of wheat and Agriculture inputs to revive the agriculture sector.

Mr. Shah said that Rs 13.5 billion

were required to finance the seed subsidy program. "The Sindh government contributed Rs8.39 billion and the federal government had committed Rs 4.7 billion," he said and added due to funding deadlock with the federal government and lack of authentic data on farmers, the initial program of providing free seed was revisited when the sowing season had commenced. The CM said that the implementation strategy was changed from the provision of free seed to reimbursement of the cost of seed at Rs 5,000 per acre.

Murad Ali Shah said that backing out of the federal government from providing their share constrained his government to limit the subsidy to the farmers holding the land up to 12.5 Acres in the first phase and 25 acres in the second phase.

Mr. Shah said that he was keen to reimburse the amount in lieu of seed to all the farmers, but the federal government did not fulfill its commitment, therefore his government has limited the reimbursement to the small growers holding 12 acres in the first phase.

CM had said that after disbursement of Rs 4.227 billion an amount of Rs 4.17 billion would remain in balance with BISP which would be disbursed in phase II among the farmers holding land up to 25 Acres and the left-out farmers of the first category of 12 acres. CM Advisor on Agriculture Manzoor Wassan talking about the challenges to implementing the sub-

sidy program said that there was no authentic data on farmers. He added that a massive number of people across the length and breadth of the province reached out for data collection.

He said that the development of a Mobile App and training of concerned staff on data collection and verification of the App was a big challenge also. Meanwhile, the verification of land documents by farmers was another issue but all the problems and challenges were met and developed a data bank of the growers holding up to 12 acres and 25 acres.

Secretary Agriculture Aijaz Mahesar briefing the chairman said that the world bank helped them to develop a mobile App.

Process: It was pointed out that committees were formed at the Tapa level for the verification of land records. Federal Minister Shazia Marri said that BISP has set up 110 Centers at the Taluka level in partnership with Habib Bank Limited to disburse the cash through mobile accounts, after biometric verification on site. Ms. Shazia Marri said that the provincial government has transferred Rs 8.39 billion to BISP out of which Rs 4.227 billion would be disbursed in the next 10 days.

It may be noted that the CM had said that the remaining Rs 4.17 billion balance with BISP would be disbursed in phase II wherein farmers holding land up to 25 Acres and the left-out farmers of the first category will be covered.



LAHORE: First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi in a group photo at Soliton Welfare Foundation.

## ‘Govt not weak and it was pursuing directives of court pertaining to Imran Khan’

KARACHI (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Interior and Legal Affairs with the status of Federal Minister Attaullah Tarar on Sunday said that the government was not weak and it was pursuing directives of the court pertaining to the PTI chief Imran Khan.

While addressing a press conference at Karachi Press Club (KPC), he said that there were reports that Imran Niazi locked himself in a room due to fear of arrest on the arrival of police to implement directives of the court.

He said that Imran telephoned Shibli Faraz and asked him to say that he was not at home.

He said that a fake letter would be submitted to the court by Shibli Faraz.

The Special Assistant said that Imran Niazi was a small hearted person and he could not live even a single night in the lockup.

He said that Imran Khan was escaping from the Toshakhana case and he always tried to hide behind the woman and children as

he did today.

He said that Imran Khan would have to go to court on 7th date.' Tarar said that PTI chief was used to take U-turn.

He said that a powerful man was thrashing law in the country. He said that they had to go to courts for bail in fake cases but Imran Khan was being provided relief. The Special Assistant said that he had not seen any politician of the country of getting such relief from courts.

He claimed that Toshakhana gifts of billion rupees were sold by Bushra Bibi and Imran Niazi at high rates in international markets after purchasing the same in a small amount. It was a case of steal.

He further said that these gifts were the property of Pakistani people.

Tarar said that courts were calling him (Imran Khan) for indictment in the Toshakhana case but Imran Khan was escaping from going to courts. He said that Imran and his wife submitted only 20

percent of the gifts in treasury. He alleged, 'His father Ikram Niazi was a government engineer and he was removed in a case of corruption in the era of Bhutto Sahib.'

The Special Assistant alleged that the practice of stealing was continue from one generation to another generation. He said that police had visited Imran Niazi's home on the orders of the court to implement its decision.

'Court is calling you Imran Niazi Sahib,' he said claiming that he had an illegitimate girl child and he did Nikkah with a lady, who was in 'Iddat'.

He said that Imran Khan was reluctant to own his daughter and preaching the lessons of Islam to the people.

He alleged that Imran was a drug addict and misused his powers as Prime Minister in the past. Farha Gogi collected billions of rupees on transfers and postings, he alleged.

He said that Imran was responsible for economic crisis in the country.

## Thai Food Festival Kicks off

KARACHI (NNI): Ms. Siriporn Tantipanyathep, along with Mr. Arif Suleman, President Pak - Thai Business Forum, inaugurated the Thai food festival at the "Chop Chop Wok" restaurant in DHA. It was attended by diplomats from UAE, Malaysia, directors of the "Chop Chop Wok" Salman Naqi, Arsalan Ali, Rashid Siddiqui, Thai Airways, and many more.

Arif Suleman said that on this occasion that Thai Chefs are specially flown to Karachi for his festival. He said that Thai Chef Ms. Prompron Sodsai, has 48 years of experience and Mr. Leem Mat Ahin, has 23 years of experience the Thai authentic food and they will present quality Thai Food and the test throughout the festival.

## 3,189 vehicles impounded

KARACHI (PPI): A total of 44,029 vehicles have been checked till the end of 17th day of the campaign to collect tax from the owners of tax defaulting vehicles, a Info Dept statement said on Sunday. Due to various reasons, 3,189 vehicles were impounded while documents of 3,733 were seized. During the road checking campaign, till the 17th day, about Rs52,279,681 tax has been collected. 13,059 vehicles in Karachi, 14,207 in Hyderabad, 4,829 in Sukkur, 5,716 in Mirpurkhas, 3,986 in Larkana, and 2,232 in Shaheed Benazirabad were checked. Provincial Minister for Excise Taxation and Narcotics Control Department Mukesh Kumar Chawla in his statement has requested the tax defaulters to deposit their due taxes on time.

## Punjab govt to provide security to Aurat March

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information and Culture Amir Mir has said that police will provide full security to the participants of Aurat March in Lahore on March 8 to avoid any untoward incident.

The organizers of the Aurat March demanded the protection of participants of the march, to which the provincial minister assured the organizers that the government would not put any obstacle in the Aurat March.

Amir Mir said the organizing commit-

tee of Aurat March had expressed concerns over Deputy Commissioner Lahore for not issuing NOC for the march and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan had also demanded the caretaker government to ensure the peaceful conduct of

Aurat March and steps should be taken to uphold the right of assembly and full security should be provided to the marchers. The Punjab government had issued orders to provide foolproof security to ensure the peaceful conduct of Aurat March, Minister added.

## Promote external trade in non-dollar currencies: Altaf

KARACHI (NNI): Pasban Democratic Party PDP Chairman Altaf Shakoor here Sunday said that to fight the ongoing economic crisis and lessen pressure on Pakistani rupee it is necessary to opt for external trade in non-dollar currencies whenever possible.

He said it is a fact that the US dollar is dominant in global trade but it is also possible that bilateral trade with Russia, China, Iran, Gulf states and many countries could be done in non-dollar currencies. He said Pakistan could hugely appreciate the value of Pakistani rupee if the trade with China is done Chinese Yuan. He said similar practice could be adopted in trade with central Asian republics, Russia, Iran, Gulf states and other countries where possible. He said we should not put all our eggs in dollar basket but also promote bilateral trade in other currencies also.

Altaf Shakoor said that dollar-trade dominance and killer debt trap have destroyed our economy and made us a slave of global capitalist system led by the USA. He said the international lending institutions are only interested in sucking the blood of the poor countries like Pakistan. They have nothing to do for our welfare or progress or wellbeing of our poor masses. They have their own axe to grind. Quoting the UN Security General Antonio Guterres at LDCs moot at Doha he said the rich countries are exploiting the poor nations cruelly. He said that the wealthy nations should provide \$500 billion a year to help others "trapped in

vicious cycles" that block efforts to boost economies and vital services.

He said the UNSG is right when he says that the poorest nations are being left behind in the "digital revolution", and our global financial system is designed by wealthy countries, largely to their benefit.

Deprived of liquidity, many poor countries are locked out of capital markets by predatory interest rates.

Altaf Shakoor said that no one would come for our rescue and we ourselves have to salvage our failing economy. He said the government is loud in announcements but too weak in implementation. He gave the example of failure of the government to implement its early market closure announcement. He said luxury goods are still being imported while they should be totally banned.

He said with opening border trade markets with Iran we could save billions through barter trade. He said free use of Chinese Yuan in international trade would also lessen pressure on the PKR a lot. He said we should take every effort to bypass the US dollar in our international trade wherever we can.

He asked to speed up polarization program to cut oil imports and save precious foreign exchange. He asked the PDM government to implement its policies strictly to save our economy and the whole nation would support it. He said when it is matter of saving economy no other consideration should be taken in mind.

## ‘Collective efforts needed to help underprivileged segment of society’

LAHORE (APP): Samina Alvi, wife of President Dr Arif Alvi said on Sunday that it was a collective responsibility to carry out welfare-oriented work for underprivileged segment of the society.

Addressing the annual event of Soliton Group here, she said that there was a need to change the approach of just depending on the government.

She said that no doubt, a lot of work on voluntarily basis was ongoing in the country to support deserving people.

Samina Alvi said that there was a need to do work for women empowerment, adding that focus should be on imparting skill education.

She further emphasized on promoting the concept of inclusion for differently abled persons as this would yield positive results in the society. Efforts were also being made to create maximum awareness on breast cancer and its early diagnosis.

The First Lady said, "There is a recovery rate of 98 to 99 percent if breast cancer is diagnosed at early

stage." She appreciated the Soliton Group for its initiatives aimed at well-being of deserving people.

Soliton Group Chairman Mansoor Khan briefed about the working of group. He said it was very important to stop brain drain from the country, adding that all energies should be utilized to boost country's export.

Soliton CEO Fauzia Khan also spoke on the occasion.

Later, a shield was presented to the first lady by Soliton Chairman.

Samina Alvi also interacted with beneficiaries of Soliton foundation.

## PSF announces research grant in fields of Nanotechnology and Artificial Intelligence

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) has announced a research grant to support scientists and researchers in developing and commercialization of products in the fields of Nanotechnology, Material and Artificial Intelligence under the Competitive Research Programme.

Scientists, engineers, technologists, innovators, academia and entrepreneurs from Research and Development (R&D) institutions, HEC-recognized universities and industries who have already completed the first stage of research and development work and need financial support for the utilization of their research outcomes to develop new products, prototypes, pilot-scale production and commercialization can apply for the grant, an official of PSF informed.

Besides, the "lone" innovators/start-ups or Small and Medium Enterprises have launched a new product, technology, technique or process and want to bring value addition or improvement alone or in partnership with scientists, technologists

and academic R&D institutes and HEC-recognized universities are also encouraged to apply.

The grants are available for a period of up to two years in the streams including individual researchers/lone innovators/start-ups (up to 10 million budget), consortium research groups (multidisciplinary research groups up to 20 million budget), and Triple Helix model (collaborative research projects between academia, R&D organizations, and industry up to 20 million budget).

This funding opportunity aims to promote the utilization of R&D outcomes in economic development through export push and import substitution while saving foreign exchange in Pakistan.

Scientists, engineers, technologists, innovators, academia, lone innovators and entrepreneurs from R&D institutes, HEC-recognized universities and industry, start-ups or SMEs. The Principal Investigator should be from HEC recognized University or a public sector R&D organization/ private industry/start-up/SME that can be taken on board

for pilot scale or commercial trials, production and marketing activities.

About the nature of the projects, the official informed that the duration for the execution or completion of the project will be a maximum of up to 2 years with a maximum funding limit of up to Rs. 20.00 Million (Rs. 10 Million for Individual Researchers), the official said.

The Competitive Research Grants will be provided for the Creation of new knowledge through patents, technology transfer and publications, development of new processes, products, prototypes or applications through indigenous skills, and value addition in the existing products/prototypes/ processes according to the needs of the economy and Pilot Plant Studies. The concept proposals must be submitted online and can be accessed via the PSF website. The foundation only accepts Concept Paper submissions through the RGMS online web portal (<https://psf.gov.pk/rgms/>) The applicants can get details about the submission of the concept proposals through <https://psf.gov.pk/CRP.aspx>.



KARACHI: A girl visiting a stall established in 6th Sindh Literature Festival (SLF) at Arts Council of Pakistan.

## Indonesian Ambassador encourages Pakistani students to avail scholarships

ISLAMABAD (INP): Indonesian Ambassador to Pakistan Adam M. Tugio on Sunday has said that there are enormous scholarship opportunities for Pakistani students in Indonesia because many universities offer full scholarships to Pakistani students. He made these remarks while visiting

a two-day International Education Summit 2023, on 4-5 March 2023 to promote the education system in Indonesia and provide access to information on scholarships being offered by universities in Indonesia.

Ambassador Tugio said that the expo is also a good opportunity for the Embassy since it can introduce some best universities in Indonesia. The event is organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce Industry (RCCI) with the objective to inspire Pakistani students with great educational prospects in Pakistan.

Ambassador Tugio commended the initiative of RCCI in organising the first-ever educational expo and underscored the important role of the university. He encouraged business community to play proactive role by connecting innovations from university labs to the markets.



# Security supervisor killed in UoP

## Committee constituted to probe killing

PESHAWAR (APP): The Security Supervisor Saqlain Bangash was allegedly killed by a security guard at University of Peshawar (UoP), police said on Sunday.

DSP Campus Fazal Rabi Khan told media that Saqlain Bangash was checking security arrangements at the International hostel that security guard Masood was opening the hostel gate for him and mistakenly opened fire allegedly.

Supervisor Saqlain got critical injuries and succumbed to injuries at hospital. The police took the pistol into custody and started search to arrest the alleged killer, security guard Masood.

**UoP constitutes committee to probe killing of Supervisor**

The University of Peshawar (UoP) grieved and condemned the tragic killing of Saqlain Bangash, Security Supervisor and constituted a committee to probe the matter transparently and logically.

Saqlain Bangash was an ex-employee of the University of Peshawar who after his retirement a couple of years back, rendered services to various private security companies, said a press release issued by the media office of the University on Sunday.

Currently, he was working as a Security Supervisor with the Sigma Security Company and was deputed at the University of Peshawar.

The nature of the exact incident is yet to be known, however, as per the initial report Saqlain Bangash was on a security round of the hostels, at noon when he received a bullet injury from a pistol shot by the Sigma Security Company guard deputed at one of the hostels.

He was immediately rushed to the Khyber Teaching Hospital where he later succumbed to his injury.

Although the Police Department has initiated a criminal investigation into the matter, the University has also constituted a fact-finding committee to probe the matter transparently and logically.

The University values the services rendered by Saqlain Bangash and the University's faculty, officers, students, and staff are much grieved by his sad and unfortunate demise and condole with the bereaved family members.

The University is fully committed to probing the matter transparently till the end and will leave no stone unturned in ensuring justice in the matter.



PESHAWAR: Activists of Tehreek Hoqok-e-Tahafoz Chitral holds placards during a protest in favour of their rights. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

# Muqam addresses party workers, office bearers

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Engineer Amir Muqam has said that he values the sentiments of the workers and, as a worker himself, has conveyed the concerns of the workers to the central leadership of the party.

President Shehbaz Sharif and Quaid Nawaz Sharif. He said that being a part of the coalition government, all the political parties have to move

together. The adviser said that the current issues including inflation are the seeds sown by Imran Khan and the incumbent government has inherited them.

Addressing the party workers, office bearers and party officials of Upper Dir and Lower Dir in Chakdra, the adviser said that he has always stood with the workers in the hour of difficulty and will continue to do so in the future, which is the goal

of his politics and life. Officials from Lower and Upper openly expressed their views and made suggestions for the improvement of the party organization and the problems of the region.

Malik Jahanzeb Khan, Nisar Wardak Khan, Farooq Iqbal Yusuf, Malik Nauman, Asghar Taqweem, Javed Tajik, Malik Muzaffar and other prominent figures also spoke on the occasion.

# Haji Manzoor attends Tablighi Ijtimah

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Labour, Excise and Taxation Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi along with the elders of his Afridi tribe participated in the Tablighi Ijtimah and the last day congregational prayer on Sunday. He also called in local and foreign Tablighi delegations and Ulama speakers on this occasion.

On this occasion, he was told that a total of 8000 foreign Tablighis from 101

countries also attended this Ijtimah of Tablighi elite.

Meanwhile Haji Manzoor Afridi took part in the boarding, lodging and food arrangements for the participants of Tablighi Ijtimah at the Raiwind Hujra established by his elders there.

It may be recalled that in this Hujra adjacent to the Raiwind Ijtimah area and covering an area of over 100 kanals, there has been a tradition of the elders of Haji Manzoor Afridi that engaged in serving them till the last moments.

for the Ijtimah participants as well as ablution and worship are made especially for aged participants besides giving millions of cash donations to the organizers on the occasion of every Ijtimah at Raiwind.

Henceforth the Caretaker Minister Haji Manzoor Afridi himself participated in the preparation and distribution services of food for the participants of Tablighi Ijtimah last night and remained engaged in serving them till the last moments.

## ‘Sparlee Ranguna’ event held

PESHAWAR (APP): President Floral Art Society Lotus Chapter Peshawar Farrah Azam organized an event ‘Sparlee Ranguna’ (spring colours) at Peshawar Garrison Club on Sunday.

Parveen Azam, wife of Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan was chief guest of the ceremony. The purpose of the event was as fund raising for SSRD, a school for disabled children. The ladies had made beautiful arrangements with fresh flowers in different categories. These categories include spring allure, an enchanted forest, mystic marine.

Members from other sister clubs magnolia Islamabad, orchid Islamabad and rose from Lahore also participated in this event. A donation of 250,000 was collected at the event.

Speaking on the occasion Parveen Azam said that today she is happy to see different flowers. She said that such events should be held regularly. “We are trying to promote the love of flowers and make Peshawar the city of flowers again” Parveen Azam added.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali addressing Open Kacheri at Jehangir Pura.

# Coordinator ICRC visits Paraplegic Centre

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Francois Friedel, Program Coordinator for Physical Rehabilitation of the International Red Cross (ICRC) from Geneva, Switzerland, visited the Paraplegic Centre Peshawar along with his team, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

It may be recalled that the Paraplegic Centre was

established by the same institution which was handed over to the local team about 32 years ago.

On arrival, Francois Friedel was warmly received by Dr. Syed Mohammad Ilyas, CEO and the staff of (PCP) and briefed him of the achievements, changes and difficulties faced by the institution for the last 20 years.

Francois Friedel appreciated the efforts of Dr. Ilyas Syed and his team for reviving and further developing this unique health institution within a short period of time.

He expressed his pleasant surprise while recording his comments in the visitor's book.

He wrote that “I have come here after a long time. I'm very impressed with the evolution of the

Paraplegic Centre Peshawar. In particular, the multi-disciplinary approach here is very impressive. I congratulate you for such a wonderful performance for the most needy”.

On this occasion, on behalf of the staff of the centre, Dr. Ilyas Syed presented him a commemorative shield and gifted him books written by the graduates of the institution.

# ‘Small traders and industrialists causing splendor of Peshawar’

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Muhammad Adnan Jalil has said that the small traders and industrialists of Peshawar are the crown jewels of this historic city who have not only increased the splendor of Peshawar but also having very big hearts.

He said, always remain in forefront to help the suffering humanity and victims of any natural disaster including earthquakes and floods, and the latest proof of this is the goods they have collected for the earthquake victims of Turkia, consisting food items, men's and women's clothes, Peshawari chaplans, and children's toys, he



added and assured that the provincial government is grateful to the traders community for this generous initiative and will help them in contacting the relevant embassy to transport these goods to Turkey soon.

He expressed this while addressing a reception in his honour on behalf of Peshawar Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries at Nishtarabad. The Chamber President

Malik Salman Elahi, Chairman of All Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Association of Traders Malik Mehr Elahi and office bearers of various bazaar associations of Peshawar also spoke on the occasion and welcomed Adnan Jalil as the caretaker Minister of Industry and Commerce as well as highlighted the problems and difficulties faced by the traders community, including law and order situation,

extortion incidents and increase in property tax.

The Industries Minister assured to resolve all these issues at the relevant forum at the earliest and clarified that these are already being seriously reviewed by the caretaker government at the highest level. He also assured sympathetic consideration to the demand of allotment of land for the permanent office of the Chamber.

## Wedding breaks tradition by distributing meal to 600 poor families

PESHAWAR (APP): In a delightful gesture, a wedding ceremony held in Sarai Naurang tehsil of Lakki Marwat district broke away from the norm of lavish spending on Walima and instead distributed meals among 600 poor families. Tehsil Chairman Sarai Nourang, Azizullah Khan set a new precedent by sharing his happiness with the less fortunate through this act of charity at the wedding of his nephews.

The food packages distributed were worth millions of rupees and brought joy to many deserving families. Deputy Commissioner, Abdul Hadi, was in attendance as a special guest and lauded this unique and historic event.

He expressed his appreciation for this exemplary act of kindness, which sets an inspiring example for others to follow.

Chairman Azizullah Khan emphasized the importance of sharing happiness with the poor on happy occasions and called upon all well-off individuals to follow suit.

The DC said this noble act of kindness has touched the hearts of many and serves as a reminder that small acts of charity can go a long way in making a difference in the lives of others.



PESHAWAR: An open manhole at Fakirabad may cause any mishap and needs attention of concerned authorities.

## KP-chronic diseases

# Eradicating chronic diseases thro implementation of govt projects: A way forward

PESHAWAR (APP): Hamayun Khan (49), an employee of the federal government's department, was living a happy life with a smiley face in office and home unless he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer by the doctors that proved fatal for him.

Known for sharing cracking jokes with friends and colleagues, Hamayun Khan, a resident of Pabbi Nowshera was unaware of being the victim of the disease, used his tractor in fields at his native town after duty hours in a bid to earn additional income to feed his six-member family in the wake of exorbitant price-hike and inflation.

“My father was very kind and loving personality, who was known for cracking jokes with his friends and office colleagues. I took him for a medical checkup to a private clinic at Dabagari Garden Peshawar since he was not taking meal properly, looking anemic and getting weaker and weaker with

every passing day,” said Hamayun's elder son Jalal Khan.

Jalal told APP that the doctor diagnosed the last stage of pancreatic cancer, which had badly affected his key organ and advised to pray for him as the disease was incurable. In desperation, Jalal took his father to one and the other private doctor in a bid to save his life and spent all the hard-earned money on his surgeries but to no use and finally Hamayun lost a battle for life as cancer had spread throughout the whole body.

According to the KP health department report, cancers and neoplasm were the second largest non-communicable diseases (NCD), which accounted 9.92per cent of total death in 2019 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Among NCDs, the cardiovascular diseases claimed 21.95 per cent patients' lives out of the total casualties while the number of stroke and Ischemic heart disease

cases have jumped to 0.236 million and six lac respectively in the province.

Likewise, four million people have suffered from a mental health disorder, 1.18 million with diabetes and 5.17 million with a liver disorder in the province as reported by the KP burden of disease data for the year 2019.

The burden of NCD group, which was 32.6 per cent (16,050 disability adjusted life years “DALYs” lost per 100,000 population) of the total burden in year of 2000, has increased its share to 39.5per cent (15,457 DALYs per 100,000 population) in 2019 during PTI's government tenure.

The neonatal mortality has remained 42 out of 1000 live birth while under five years mortality was recorded 64 out of 100 live birth while 53 infants died out of 1000 live births in the province.

Malnutrition was also witnessed in mothers and children besides stunting

accounting 40.4 percent in the province where 30.2 percent women and 47.3 percent children were found anemic. Besides 41,129 cases of tuberculosis, 4,113 cases of HIV and AIDs were also reported.

The report revealed that only 1.2 percent essential and skilled health professionals including doctors, nurses, technicians and lady health workers were available for 1,000 people compared to the mandatory 4.44 percent staff for the same population necessary to achieve the universal health coverage (UHC) goals in 2019.

The essential universal health services (EUHCs) were not available in 57 percent primary healthcare centers in KP and 68 percent community health centers to deal with patients suffering from infectious and non communicable diseases, exposing PTI's hollow claims of health reforms.

Ikhtair Wali Khan, PMLN spokesman and for-

mer member provincial assembly told the news agency that the report has exposed the poor performance of PTI's incompetent rulers, who destroyed the healthcare delivery system during last 10 years in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

“The report's findings prepared by former PTI Governments itself were alarming. It revealed that current services and essential staff were not sufficient to achieve UHC's goals and has badly exposed various shortcomings in the community and primary healthcare centres during PTI Govt 10 years rule,” he said.

Ikhtair Wali said the patients of communicable and non communicable diseases have to wait for months to avail the sehat cards facility and accused the former PTI government for not implementing the MTI Reforms Act 2015 in its true spirit, resulting in an increase in the patients' agonies.

He claimed that former PTI government despite its

tall hallow claims and announcements has completely failed to construct cancer hospitals in Mardan and Chitral, resulting substantial increase of patients loads at IRNUM hospital at Peshawar.

Dr. Javed Sattar, Coordinator Health Sector Reforms KP told APP that KP government was working on a mega project for control and prevention of non-communicable diseases, and that preparation of PC-I for it was in final stage. Talking to APP, he said World Bank has pledged to provide USD 90 million for the project, which would be completed in five years in the province.

DHQs and THQs hospitals were being strengthened in terms of equipment, infrastructure, labs and staff in 32 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with the financial assistance of Asian Development Bank (ADB), he said and added that out of USD 100 million committed amount by

ADB, USD 25 million has been so far received for the project that would be completed by 2026.

Dr Sattar said five members' primary healthcare management committees for THQs and hospitals management committees at DHQs with representatives of doctors, LG representatives, civil society members and technicians were formed for speedy and transparent utilization of funds and financially supporting poor patients suffering from chronic diseases.

The KP government would spend Rs2 billion on strengthening and running of BHUs and primary healthcare centres through the private sector in 15 districts and Rs1.5 billion on maternal and newborn's health and allied services.

Besides Insulin for Life and Cancer Protection Programs”, he said the KP government has identified 56 sites in merged tribal districts for establishment of new hospitals, basic

health units and rural health centres. “Feasibility study of the project costing Rs12,440 million completed besides allocation of Rs3,900 million for it under Accelerated Implementation Program (AIP) 2022-23 and practical work on it would soon start,” said Mustaqeem Khan, senior planning officer KP health department while talking to APP.

Hepatitis, HIVs and AIDs control programs were made regular part of the budget while paraplegic centre at Bakakhel Bannu was being constructed with an estimated cost of Rs900 million for facilitation of spinal cord and orthopedics patients of merged areas.

He said Rs1.1 billion would be spent on the purchase of medicines for provision of free treatment to chronic diseases' patients including cancers, adding the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has already approved Rs3.1 billion for three years for anti-cancer program.





## In brief

### 80# listing completed

MULTAN (APP): The census team successfully completed 80 per cent listing here. According to Deputy Commissioner Multan Umar Jehangir on Sunday, the census exercise was heading towards a rapid conclusion. "The process of listing has been completed in over 1,300 blocks, out of a total of 1,700," he added. It is about 80 per cent of the total exercise, he held. Meanwhile, he also apprised that tight security had been provided to the census teams performing national duties.

### Registration of drug addicts

MULTAN (APP): Registration of drug addicts is in progress with an aim to discourage the trend and help make drug addicts useful and productive citizens by ensuring their proper treatment. Following instructions from the Punjab government, Deputy Director of Social Welfare Naeem Ahmed instructed officers to expedite the campaign for the identification and registration of drug addicts. He also sought assistance from non-governmental organizations in tracing drug addicts. The drug addicts will be treated in Drug Rehabilitation Centres and different hospitals. Similarly, programmes including seminars and walks will also be held to sensitise the people. He also urged parents and relatives of the addicts to focus on their dear ones so that they should be kept away from the menace of drugs.

### AC Sialkot visits various areas

SIALKOT (APP): Assistant Commissioner Sialkot Ghulam Sarwar visited various areas in the city and reviewed digital census and price checking and also inspected the anti-encroachment campaign. The AC inquired about the data recorded so far by the census teams. He checked petrol pumps, grocery shops and imposed a fine of Rs. 50,000 on profiteers. He also sealed a petrol pump and handed over two accused to the police. The AC said that 45 temporary encroachments had been removed from the areas near the Fort, Fish Market and Gohadpur Chowk.

### 21 arrested for violating Act

WAH CANTT (APP): Police on Sunday arrested over 21 persons from various areas of the twin cities of Taxila and Wah in a crackdown against violators of The Punjab Prohibition of Kite Flying Ordinance 2001. During the crackdown, the police arrested more than 21 accused including kite fliers, its sellers as well as manufacturers and registered FIRs against them under Punjab Prohibition of Kite Flying Ordinance 2001. More than 2,161 kites, 43 strings were also recovered from the accused along with kites manufacturing merchandise during the crackdown.

### Three drug pushers held

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Khangra police claimed to have arrested three drug pushers and seized 180 liters of wine from their possession. According to SHO Khangra Qaisar Hasnain, the alleged outlaws were preparing the wine in a factory and used to install stickers of branded wine on bottles. They used to sell it in different areas. SHO Qaisar stated that nobody would be allowed to commit illegal activity. Outlaws will be punished strictly.

# Supremacy of law, welfare of force top priority, says IGP

D.I.KHAN (APP): Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan on Sunday said that the supremacy of law and justice and the welfare of the police force were the top priorities of the department. He stated this during his visit to Ejaz Shaheed Police Lines, Dera Ismail Khan where he was welcomed by Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dera Abdul Ghafoor Afridi, DPO Dera Abdul Rauf Babar Qaiserani, DPO Tank Waqar Ahmed, DPO South Waziristan Shabir Hussain and other senior police officers.

On this occasion, a smartly turned contingent of police presented salute to the IGP. The IGP also visited 'Yadgar-e-Shuhada' at police lines and laid wreaths on the memorials of police martyrs.

The KP Police chief also planted a sapling in the premises of Police Lines in connection with the ongoing spring plantation drive.

While addressing a gathering of officers and officials of police, the IGP said the police job was a sacred profession which puts a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of the force to move forward as a team for establishing peace in the

entire province and the country.

He mentioned that the officers, from constable to the rank of IG, have rendered sacrifices for the bright future of the country and nation.

He said that the provincial police always fulfilled its responsibility with bravery in all difficult situations even by putting their lives at risk. The entire nation acknowledge the sacrifices of the police, he added.

He said that steps were being taken to equip the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police with modern equipment and Thermal eyesight TI cameras, weapons and ammunition to deal with terrorism.

He urged upon the policemen to play their role in changing the traditional 'Thana culture' by behaving the masses in good manners.

The policemen should adopt good morals, honesty and dedication during their duty, he said and added that no negligence in provision of public services would be tolerated.

Akhtar Hayat Khan said all the resources would be utilized for the welfare of the policemen. "Police Department will take measures at every forum to pro-

vide the best educational facilities to the children of the police. Equal health facilities will be provided to police personnel and their families," he said and added, besides, financial assistance will be given to the police officials for weddings of their daughters.

"All police officers and Jawans, including from the merged districts, will be given equal opportunities of promotion under the existing service structure and systematic development system in the force," he vowed.

On this occasion, the officers and Jawans presented their individual and collective problems, on which the IGP issued orders on the spot to solve their problems.

RPO Abdul Ghafoor Afridi presented an honorary souvenir to the IG.

Later, the IGP presided over a high-level meeting of police officers at Regional Police Office wherein RPO Dera Abdul Ghafoor Afridi gave a detailed briefing regarding the law and order situation, crime rate and challenges faced in the districts of Dera region including Dera Ismail Khan, Tank and merged tribal district of South Waziristan.

## IGP for accelerating operations against gangs

MULTAN (APP): Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr Usman Anwar ordered to speed up combing and targeted operations to curb dangerous gangs and criminals.

He expressed these views while presiding over high level meeting with police officials at DPO office Rahim Yar Khan along with Additional IGP South Punjab Maqsood-ul-Hassan on Sunday.

RPO Bahawalpur Rai Babar Saeed and DPO Rizwan Umar Gondal gave detailed briefing to the IG about the situation in Kacha

area of district Rahim Yar Khan. The meeting also discussed on the police actions against the criminal elements in Kacha areas.

The IGP directed to clean the Kacha area completely from criminal elements. He assured of provision of resources to the police teams required for operational action in Kacha area. He further said that the police was fighting against criminals with courage and bravery.

The IG encouraged the officers and SHOs who performed outstandingly in

Kacha by giving them awards.

Dr. Usman Anwar was informed about the deployment of police teams in Bhong and Machhka and operational raids.

RPO Dera Ghazi Khan Sajjad Hassan and DPO Rajanpur Mahar Nasir Ali Syal gave briefing about the ongoing operations in their districts.

Additional IG CTD Waseem Syal, Additional IG Special Branch Zulfiqar Hameed, DIG Operations Waqas Nazir and police officials attended the meeting.

## Police arrest criminals; seize drugs, weapon

LARKANA (APP): District Police raided various places here on Sunday and arrested many outlaws, criminals, drug peddlers, pro-claimed offenders and absconders along with weapons, mobile phones, narcotics, ammunition and motorcycles.

On the strict directives of Senior Superintendent of Police Larkana Dr Muhammad Imran, teams of various police stations conducted a number of raids.

Dari Police Station of Larkana city, Sachal Police Station Larkana, Allahabad Police Station Larkana, Market Police Station Larkana city, Gerello

Police Station, Ratodero Police Station, Sehar Police Station, Warisidino Macchi Police Station, Waleed Police Station and other police stations of Larkana district raided at various areas of the district and arrested the notorious criminal, outlaws, Robbers,

Drug-peddlers, proclaimed offenders and absconders in various heinous cases namely accused Sameer Phulpoto, Ali Gul Phulpoto, Baghro Jhatial, Saddam, Jamil Dhani, Farooque Kalhoro, Khurshed Bhurghari, Rasheed Chandio, Usman Chandio, Inam Holio and others and recovered

the drugs, arms and ammunition, mobile phones, robbed motorcycles and Robbed Rickshaw Loader from their possession.

Larkana Police have registered cases against the accused and further investigations are underway.

SSP Larkana Dr Muhammad Imran said the arrested accused were involved in different criminal cases and some of them were proclaimed absconders, criminal elements will be dealt with iron hands added that crackdown will be continued against the criminal elements till the desired results.

## Digital learning effects on kids with autism being researched

MULTAN (APP): A team of students has set out to explore the effects of digital learning on children with autism.

In recent years, the advent of digital learning has transformed the way students learn and interact with educational materials.

While this has been a boon for many students, there is a growing concern among educators and parents about how it affects children with autism. To address this issue, a group of students has come together to form a non-profit organization dedicated to researching the effects of digital learning on autistic kids.

The student-led NGO, which goes by the name of Alif, aims to explore the positive and negative effects of digital learning on children with autism.

Muhammad Zain Naveed, Meeral Fatima, Haris Masood and Maha Haider are conducting the research.

The organization is composed of a group of students who have a personal connection to autism and who are passionate about

making a positive difference in the lives of those affected by this condition.

The researchers of Autistic Learning have started conducting extensive research on this topic, examining the effectiveness of different digital learning tools such as educational apps, online tutoring, and virtual learning environments.

The researchers are also looking into the challenges faced by children with autism when using these digital tools and how these challenges can be overcome.

The organization has already designed their course of action and are passionate to work and their motive is to gather feedback from autistic children, their parents, and their educators about their experiences with digital learning.

The findings of many surveys have been illuminating, revealing that while digital learning has many advantages, it can also be overwhelming and difficult for children with autism to navigate.

Through their research, Alif aims to provide valu-

able insights and recommendations to parents, educators, and developers of digital learning tools to make them more inclusive and accessible for children with autism.

The organization also hopes to raise awareness about the unique needs of children with autism and the importance of providing them with tailored learning opportunities.

The work of Alif is crucial, as it addresses an issue that has been largely overlooked in the broader conversation around digital learning. By shedding light on the challenges and opportunities of digital learning for children with autism, this student-led NGO is paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable education system.

Alif's research efforts have been made possible with the help of a dedicated team of volunteers including Qirat Qureshi, Khizer Naqvi, Mahnoor Tahir, Schies Javaid, and Changeiz Haider, who have contributed their time and energy towards making a positive impact in the lives of children with autism



FAISALABAD: Central Leader of Pakistan Muslim League-N Muhammad Talat Chaudhary addressing a press conference.

## Two killed in clash between rival groups

QUETTA (APP): At least two people were killed while several others sustained injuries in a road accident near the Drazinda area of Dera Ismail Khan on Sunday.

According to a source of Levies Force, two sub-clans took position and used automatic weapons against each other.

As a result, two people were died on the spot while several others suffered wounds.

The bodies and the injured were rushed to the nearby hospital where the treatment of the injured was started. The identity of the victims and the reason of clash could not be ascertained so far.

Levies Force reached the site and got control over cross firing.

## One killed, three hurt in road accident

KOHISTAN (APP): At least one person died and three others were critically injured on Sunday when a car fell into a deep gorge at Tor Kamray Pattan Lower Kohistan.

According to Rescue 1122 sources, car No. BPU-024, which was heading towards Gilgit Baltistan from Rawalpindi, when reached Torkamray lower Kohistan fell into a deep gorge when the driver lost control of the car.

The dead passenger was identified as Zubair son of Abdul Malik, while the three injured were identified as Javed, Zahoor Elahi and Abu Bakr.

After the accident, DSP Circle Muhammad Sajjad Tanoli, SHO Pattan police station, Rescue 1122 and local volunteers reached on the spot and recovered the dead body and rescued the injured from the gorge and shifted them to Tehsil HQs Hospital Pattan.

After getting the first aid, doctors have referred all three injured to Ayub Medical Complex owing to critical condition.

## Flour mills fined

HYDERABAD (APP): The district administration on Sunday took action against flour mills for not selling Atta at the government fixed rate and imposed a fine of Rs 700,000 against 3 flour mills while one mill was sealed for being non-functional.

On the directives of Deputy Commissioner Fuad Ghaffar Soomro, the ADC Qaim Akbar Namai, AC Latifabad Shaista Munawar and DFC Shehzad Haider Shahani took action against flour mills for violating government orders.

The ADC also sealed Preet Flour Mills for being non-functional and imposed a fine of Rs 500,000 and asked the DFC to submit a detailed report about the flour mill. The New Sindhri flour mill and DM flour mill SITE area were also fined Rs 150,000 and Rs 50,000 respectively for not selling wheat flour as per sanctioned quota.

The ADC has said that all the flour mills have to sell 1,200 wheat flour bags of 10 kg at Rs 950 per bag by 5 pm every day.

## Five killed in road accident

D.I.KHAN (INP): At least five persons were killed while two others sustained injuries in a road accident coming from the opposite side and plunged into a ravine. As a result, three passengers died on the spot.

According to Rescue 1122, the incident occurred due to the brake failure of the container, resulting in the death of five people including children.

The container was reportedly loaded with clothes and the truck with cement. Upon receiving the information, rescue teams and police reached the spot and shifted the injured and the bodies to a nearby hospital.

In another incident, at least three passengers were killed and 24 others including women sustained injuries when a bus plunged into a ravine near Chilas on Sunday morning.

According to Rescue

1122, a bus en-route from Rawalpindi to Skardu collided with another vehicle coming from the opposite side and plunged into a ravine. As a result, three passengers died on the spot.

**Couple held for kidnapping newborn from DHQ, infant recovered**

Police recovered a newborn baby who was kidnapped from the DHQ, Dera Ismail Khan on Friday evening and arrested a couple for committing the crime.

Alam Noor Wazir, a resident of Madina Colony had reported to the cantonment area police that his newborn baby girl was taken away by an unidentified woman wearing an Abaya when his wife was offering prayer during admission to the hospital.

District Police Officer Abdul Rauf Babar Qaiserani took notice of the

incident and formed a special team under the leadership of DSP City Circle Iqbal Khan Baloch for the immediate recovery of the infant.

The DSP, along with SHOs of City police and Cantt police, after the initial identification of the case with the help of CCTV cameras recovered the abducted newborn from Himat, a suburb of the city and arrested a couple over a charge of kidnapping the baby.

The arrested accused woman, in her initial statement, told the police that she kidnapped the newborn girl as they did not have any child.

The police recovered and handed over the newborn girl to her parents. After this, the parents thanked the police and lauded their efforts in recovering their newborn.

## New licenses for wheat flour dealer to be issued

ABBOTTABAD (APP): District Food Controller (DFC) Shad Muhammad Khan Sunday said following the revised policy for wheat flour dealers, besides old licenses new licenses will also be issued after verification.

Talking to the media here, he said that shopkeepers are taking keen interest and up till now we have received 600 applications for Sasta Aata points in the Abbottabad district while earlier 300 dealers have been issued permits for the supply of flour in Abbottabad.

He said that after receiving a large number of applications which has crossed 600, Deputy Commissioner Abbottabad has decided that after the verification of

the applicant, the secretary of the village council will upload it online and inform the relevant forum.

In replying to a question the District Food Controller said that we will take strict action by excluding those who are trying to get permits by double number method or by forgery, according to the procedure only grocery stores will get a license while no vegetable, paper seller or Iron and cement business owner will get Sasta Aata dealership, adding he said.

**KP government reinstates old annual examination system**

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Sunday reinstated the old examination system which was halted owing to the Coronavirus

outbreak in the country.

According to the details, while restoring the old examination system in the province, the annual examination in all government schools including primary, middle, secondary and higher secondary schools would be held from the 10th of March and results would be declared on the 31st of March.

In primary schools, the annual examinations would be held for grades 1 to IV, for middle schools grade VI to VII while the annual examination for grade VIII would be held in the nearest higher secondary schools.

Class IX and X annual examinations would be conducted by the concerned educational boards from the 28th of April 2023.

## Sibi Mela positive impact on economy

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs Mir Ziaullah Langu on Sunday said that Sibi Mela has its own historical significance and it has a positive impact on the economy of the area and the province beside gives a message of peace and unity.

He expressed these views while addressing the closing ceremony of Sibi Cattle Mela which was inaugurated on March 3 by the Provincial Minister for Education Mir Naseebullah

Marree.

Ziaullah Langu said that the provincial government under the leadership of Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo was taking all possible measures for the development of local languages.

He said that efforts were being made to promote livestock and agriculture sectors because over 60 per cent associated livestock and agriculture sector.

"Those who were angry with the state due to some misunderstanding, I invited

them to come back to play a role in the development of the country and province", he said.

He told the angry Balochs that Balochistan could not afford any more bloodshed.

The Minister announced Rs. 0.2 million for presenting saluting bands and Rs. 0.2 million for the Press Club.

He also announced cash for Levies Force, police and Frontier Corps (FC) for arrangements of security during the Sibi Mela.

## RPO inaugurates Police Tahafuz Markiz

MULTAN (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Capt (ret'd) Muhammad Sohail Ahmed Chaudhry on Sunday inaugurated "Police Tahafuz Markiz" at Shamsabad Chowk through which special persons, waif and homeless kids, transgenders and drug-addicted kids would be provided relief.

Speaking on the occasion, the RPO said as per the vision of Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr Usman Anwar, the facil-

itation centre has been set up in the city. He said police taking different initiatives to protect rights of the deserving people.

He said the transgender community would be provided legal and social assistance and their problems would be resolved on priority. He said a representative of the transgender community would be deployed in the "Markiz" to ensure the best services for them.

Muhammad Sohail Cha-

udhry maintained that keeping public facilitation on priority, the "Police Tahafuz Markiz" would be established in all districts of the region. Giving a briefing to RPO, CPO Mansoor-Ul-Haq Rana said maximum facilities would be provided to people in the "Markiz", adding that special arrangements have been made to ensure rehabilitation of drug-addicted kids and resolve problems of the transgender community.





# Greek train crash: PM Mitsotakis seeks forgiveness from families



ATHENS (BBC): Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has asked for forgiveness from the families of the 57 victims of this week's train crash.

In a Facebook message, Mr Mitsotakis said that "in the Greece of 2023... two trains heading in different directions cannot run on the same line and no-one notice".

Protests have continued for days. Clashes with police were reported on Sunday as thousands joined a demonstration in the capital Athens.

Police estimated 12,000 people attended the protest.

Some demonstrators set fire to rubbish bins and threw petrol bombs. Police responded firing tear gas and stun grenades, clearing the central Syntagma Square of the protesters within a few minutes.

The protesters also reportedly released hundreds of black balloons into the sky in memory of the dead, with some holding signs reading "Down with killer governments".

On the night of 28 February, a pas-

senger train and a freight train that were travelling in opposite directions ended up on the same track.

The first four carriages of the passenger train were derailed, and the first two caught fire and were almost completely destroyed.

The train crash has been widely attributed to human error.

Earlier this week, a 59-year-old station master in Larissa was charged with manslaughter by negligence and is due to appear in court. His lawyer Stefanos Pantartzidis said the station master had admitted to having a share of responsibility in the accident.

But many in Greece see the crash as an accident that had been waiting to happen, and the railway workers' union blamed successive governments' "disrespect" towards Greek railways for leading to this "tragic result". Union members were joined by residents of Athens and Thessaloniki in taking to the streets throughout the past week, shocked by the scale of the disaster. The protests were also attended

by many students - several of the passengers on board one of the trains were students in their 20s returning to Thessaloniki after a long weekend celebrating Greek Orthodox Lent.

"The rail network looked problematic, with worn down, badly paid staff," Nikos Savva, a medical student from Cyprus, told AFP news agency. Train drivers in Greece have said there have been long-running problems with the electronic systems that are supposed to warn them of danger ahead.

The transport minister, Kostas Karamanlis, also resigned as a "sign of respect" for the people who had died. Mr Karamanlis he was taking responsibility for the government's failure to modernise the country's railways in the three-and-a-half years it had been in power.

Immediately after the accident, the Greek government declared three days of national mourning and said the cost of the victims' funerals would be paid for from the public purse.

# Estonia goes to polls with parties split on Ukraine aid

TALLINN (AFP/APP): Estonians go to the polls on Sunday to elect a new parliament in a vote that could bolster far-right nationalists, who have campaigned on opposing further arms deliveries to Ukraine.

Prime Minister Kaja Kallas's centre-right Reform Party is set to win, according to opinion polls, but would likely have to form a coalition to stay in power.

The party is expected to garner 28.7 percent of votes, according to a February survey by Kantar Emor that put the far-right EKRE in second place with 18.2.

The February poll placed the Centre Party on 13.4 percent, Estonia 200 on 13.4 percent, the Social Democrats on 10.1 and Isamaa (Fatherland) on 8.5.

Estonia, a country of 1.3 million people bordering Russia, has a unicameral parliament with 101 seats, all at stake in Sunday's vote.

The Baltic state, a member of the EU and NATO, has led international calls over the past year for more military aid to help Ukraine fight off Russia's invasion.

Estonia's military assis-



tance to Ukraine currently amounts to more than one percent of GDP -- the biggest contribution of any country relative to the size of its economy.

"We support an open, friendly, Western-minded European, smart country," Kallas told AFP in an interview.

"My biggest competitor thinks that we shouldn't help Ukraine, we shouldn't support Ukraine, we should only look for our self-inter-

est," she said.

According to EKRE's leader, Martin Helme, Estonia should not be "further escalating tensions" with Moscow.

EKRE has campaigned against additional military aid to Kyiv and called for an end to accepting Ukrainian refugees and for lower immigration rates to protect Estonian workers.

At the same time, the cost of living crisis has spiralled in Estonia, with one

# Large number of feral animals to get culled in Australian national park

CANBERRA (Xinhua/APP): A large number of feral pigs and buffalo will be culled in an iconic Australian national park in an attempt to protect biodiversity.

More than 10,000 wild pigs have been killed in Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory (NT) since mid-2022 following a population boom, with thousands more expected to be destroyed throughout the year.

According to the federal government, feral pig numbers have doubled to approximately 70,000 since culls were halted in the world heritage-listed park in 2019, while buffalo numbers have grown to 7,500 and feral horse numbers to 15,000.

The feral population



boom poses a major threat to the park, one of Australia's top tourist attractions, causing widespread destruction of native fauna and damaging aboriginal rock art dating back thousands of years.

Aerial culls were sus-

was important for National Parks to take full account of the safe work environment that they should be providing for their staff," Tanya Plibersek, minister for the Environment and Water, was quoted by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) on Sunday.

"But we know that the feral population in Kakadu National Park had blown out through the roof because of that suspension of aerial culling." A spokesperson for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which oversees the world heritage list, said the feral animals in Kakadu were a "significant concern" but not a threat to its heritage status.

# Ocean treaty: Historic agreement reached after decade of talks

NEW YORK (BBC): Nations have reached a historic agreement to protect the world's oceans following 10 years of negotiations. The High Seas Treaty aims to place 30% of the seas into protected areas by 2030, to safeguard and recuperate marine nature.

The agreement was reached on Saturday evening, after 38 hours of talks, at UN headquarters in New York. The negotiations had been held up for years over disagreements on funding and fishing rights.

The last international agreement on ocean protection was signed 40 years ago in 1982 - the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. That agreement established an area called the high seas - international waters where all countries have a right to fish, ship and do research - but only 1.2% of these waters are protected. Marine life living outside of these protected areas has been at risk from climate change, overfishing and shipping traffic.

In detail: The plan to protect the high seas

In the latest assessment of global marine species, nearly 10% were found to be at risk of extinction, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). These new protected areas, established in the treaty, will put limits on how much fishing can take place, the routes of shipping lanes and exploration activities like deep sea mining - when minerals are



taken from a sea bed 200m or more below the surface.

Environmental groups have been concerned that mining processes could disturb animal breeding grounds, create noise pollution and be toxic for marine life. The International Seabed Authority that oversees licensing told the BBC that moving forward "any future activity in the deep seabed will be subject to strict environmental regulations and oversight to ensure that they are carried out sustainably and responsibly".

Rena Lee, UN Ambassador for Oceans, brought down the gavel after two weeks of negotiations that at times threatened to unravel.

Minna Epps, director of the IUCN Ocean team, said the main issue was over the sharing of marine genetic resources.

Marine genetic resources are biological material from

plants and animals in the ocean that can have benefits for society, such as pharmaceuticals, industrial processes and food.

Richer nations currently have the resources and funding to explore the deep ocean but poorer nations wanted to ensure any benefits they find are shared equally. Dr Robert Blasiak, ocean researcher at Stockholm University, said the challenge was that no one knows how much ocean resources are worth and therefore how they could be split.

He said: "If you imagine a big, high-definition, widescreen TV, and if only like three or four of the pixels on that giant screen are working, that's our knowledge of the deep ocean. So we've recorded about 230,000 species in the ocean, but it's estimated that there are over two million." Laura Meller, an oceans campaign-

er for Greenpeace Nordic, commended countries for "putting aside differences and delivering a treaty that will let us protect the oceans, build our resilience to climate change and safeguard the lives and livelihoods of billions of people" "This is a historic day for conservation and a sign that in a divided world, protecting nature and people can triumph over geopolitics," she added.

Countries will need to meet again to formally adopt the agreement and then have plenty of work to do before the treaty can be implemented. Liz Karan, director of Pews Trust ocean governance team, told the BBC: "It will take some time to take effect. Countries have to ratify it [legally adopt it] for it to enter force.

Then there are a lot of institutional bodies like the Science and Technical Committee that have to get set up."

# France faces massive strikes over pension reform

PARIS (AFP/APP): French trade unions are heading for what is expected to be a decisive showdown with President Emmanuel Macron over pension reform, with massive strikes from Tuesday aiming to bring the country "to a standstill".

After five separate days of protests so far this year, this week's stoppages herald a new phase in the battle between the centrist government and opponents of the changes, which includes an overwhelming majority of French voters. "We always said that we would go into a higher gear if necessary," the head of the influential hard-left CGT union, Philippe Martinez, told the Journal du Dimanche newspaper on Sunday. "It will be the case on Tuesday."

More than 260 demonstrations are expected nationwide, many in small and medium-sized towns where opposition to the reform is strong, while strikes will affect transport, the energy sector and public services.

Police are expecting between 1.1-1.4 million people to hit the streets, a source told AFP on condition of anonymity. The upper limit of that range would represent the biggest day of protests in decades, higher than the



1.27 million who took part in demonstrations on January 31, and bigger than previous pension reform protests in 2010. Unions representing workers on the national SNCF railways, the Paris metro and the energy sector, including refineries, have called for rolling strikes for the first time, with other industries expected to join in.

All eight major French trade unions have called for the stoppages to bring the country "to a standstill" on Tuesday, with shopkeepers also encouraged to down shutters. "The 7th (Tuesday) is going to be very difficult," Transport Minister Clement Beauce admitted on Friday, calling on workers to stay home where possible.

# China secures new, hard-won achievements in development in 2022

BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): China stabilized the economy, steadily enhanced development quality, and maintained overall social stability in 2022, securing new and hard-won achievements in development, according to a government work report submitted Sunday to the national legislature for deliberation.

China succeeded in maintaining overall stable economic performance while overcoming great difficulties and challenges, and was able to generally accomplish the main targets and tasks for the year amid a complex and fluid environment, the report noted, saying that "such achievements are a testament to the tremendous resilience of China's economy."

The report reviewed the government's work last year in a host of areas, including efforts to effectively coordinate COVID-19 response with economic and social development, and decisive and timely macro regulation to tackle new downward pressure on the economy.

The country gave priority to ensuring stable growth, employment and prices, thus bringing about a steady economic recovery, according to the report.

Citing major efforts made last year to support the economy, the report said the government stepped up relief support to enterprises facing growing difficulties, guided financial institutions on increasing credit supply and lowering financing costs, and adopted a combination of measures to expand investment, stimulate consumption and stabilize foreign trade. It also boosted policy support to stabilize and increase employment, and strived to ensure market supply and stable prices, particularly those of food

and energy in the face of a global surge in inflation, the report said.

Greater support was given to people experiencing increased difficulties in their lives to ensure their basic living needs, the report noted. China's economy grew by 3 per cent last year. A total of 12.06 million urban jobs were added, with the year-end surveyed urban unemployment rate falling to 5.5 per cent. The consumer price index rose by 2 per cent. The total volume of trade in goods rose by 7.7 per cent, while the deficit-to-GDP ratio was kept at 2.8 per cent.

viewers deep into what I am seeing through my eye and out through my lens," Nichols wrote on his website. The choice of a roadside installation site for his works was deliberate, organizers said. On January 7, Nichols -- who had been taking photos of a sunset, his family said later -- was stopped by police on suspicion of reckless driving, and beaten viciously. He died in hospital three days later.

# Tyre Nichols' photos honored at California desert art fest

PALM SPRINGS (AFP/APP): Out in the California desert, nestled between billboards advertising hairline restoration and varicose vein removal, six hauntingly beautiful images of steel bridges and sunsets loom incongruously over the dusty highway.

They are photographs taken by Tyre Nichols, a 29-year-old amateur photographer who in January became the latest high-profile Black victim of US

police brutality during a traffic stop in Memphis, Tennessee. The billboards have been installed in Palm Springs for Desert X, an art exhibition known for placing giant outdoor installations -- often with political messages -- against the stunning, arid mountain backdrop. "Nearly all of us know about Tyre through his tragic and brutal death in the hands of law enforcement in Memphis," said artistic director

Neville Wakefield, at a press conference launching the festival. "What we may not know is the insights that he gave into his life through his art."

California-raised Nichols was a keen photographer who trained his camera on the bridges, murals, neon lights and fiery sunsets of his adopted home city of Memphis, exploring the connections between people and their surroundings. "My vision is to bring my



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## Will NAB brace its role under new emcee?

Recently, the federal government has appointed Lieutenant General (retd) Nazir Ahmad Butt as the National Accountability Bureau's Chairman for a three-year term. According to the official press release of the Ministry of Law and Justice, the appointment had been made by the federal government after a consensus between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Raja Riaz. The appointment had been made for a non-extendable three years, while the powerful executive could not be removed from the chairman NAB office except on the grounds and in the manner, as provided in Article 209 of the Constitution

The office of the Chairman NAB is the most important and sensitive position in the country after the top slots of the Army Chief and the Chief Justice of Pakistan, while it became more controversial and troublesome after massive political victimization and dubious conduct of the top brass of the country's elite anti-graft watchdog in recent years. After the former Chairman of NAB Mr. Aftab Sultan suddenly stepped down prematurely on alleged political interference and pressure from the government for harassment of its opponents. The appointment of a new NAB Chairman amid the controversial resignation of its predecessor and a pretty col- lusion between the so-called leader of the 10 members' opposition and the Prime Minister speaks volumes about the spongy arrangement that could be fatal for the anti-graft watchdog and the country at large if the new Chairman does not walk away from the party or bureaucratic lines. The opposition is preparing to challenge this appointment in the court on political grounds, yet the department must seek an impartial and constitutional role to rebuild its trust in the public.

Constitutionally, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) owes a very important role in the elimination of corruption, accountability of public office holders, and strengthening anti-money laundering efforts in the country, but this important national institution fell victim to a political bargain between the ruling party and the opposition, political interference and biased prosecution of public office holders. Meanwhile, recurrent legislation by successive governments such as excluding bureaucracy, military, and judiciary from NAB's mandate along with defining a minimum threshold for prosecutable corruption left only a limited space for the watchdog to test its expertise.

Founded in 1999, as the nation's sole anti-graft watchdog to combat corruption, economic terrorism, and financial crimes, the regulating body gradually became a political tool in the hands of the ruling elite over the past 24 years. NAB's philosophy of plea bargain not only promoted corruption within its ranks but undermined national accountability efforts and set a trend for whitewashing of black money through out-of-court settlements. Similarly, the Broadsheet case and the \$28 million fine by the London Court of International Arbitration (LCIA) are unfading stains on NAB's reputation that raise multiple questions regarding the character and conduct of its past high-ups and will be lessons for current and future leaders forever.

According to the. Transparency International Global Corruption Perception Index 2022, Pakistan stood 140th least corrupt nation out of 180 countries. These figures clearly illustrate that the menace of corruption boomed in the past years despite the presence of massive anti-corruption infrastructure in the country. There is an urgent need that the government and concerned departments to gauge their performance vis-a-vis the growth of financial crimes. Currently, Pakistan has all the essential institutions, human talent, and capabilities to build a modern nation but we lack sincere leadership and loyal bureaucracy, as and when we make it the nation will grow in no time.

## UK should look East for radical healthcare solutions

Jonathan Gornall

On May 24, 1948, my maternal grandfather, Herbert Johnson, died suddenly in bed, the victim of a cardiac arrest. He was just 50 years old.

Bert, as the family knew him, had seemed indestruc- tible.

During the First World War he was wounded several times, but somehow survived four years of fighting in France. During the Second World War, the bombs that rained down on the East London docks where he worked claimed the lives of dozens of his workmates but spared him and his family.

But Bert, who came into the world in 1898, could not escape the fate inscribed in the genes of every child born in the UK at the beginning of the 20th century — the limited average life expectancy for a boy of about 48 years.

Not without irony, Bert died just over a month before the birth of the UK's National Health Service, which was founded on July 5, 1948.

Seventy-five years later, thanks in large part to the

UK's visionary provision by the NHS of universal “cradle to grave” healthcare, free for all at the point of delivery, a boy born in the UK today can expect to live to see their 78th birthday.

And that, as the omni- crisis currently threatening to overwhelm the NHS demonstrates on an almost daily basis, is a massive problem.

As Britons are living longer, but not necessarily healthier lives, the burden on the NHS has grown ever larger, even as the working, tax-paying proportion of the population has grown ever smaller.

As a result, ambulances are taking hours to respond to even the most urgent calls, injured and seriously ill people are lying unat- tended, and occasionally dying, in hospital corridors or inside ambulances stacked up outside overwhelmed emergency departments.

Waiting times for every kind of operation grow ever longer, and patients are dying because cancers and heart problems are going undiagnosed.

Nurses, who only recently were being applauded on doorsteps by the public and politicians for their part in the battle against the COVID-19 pan- demic, are now striking for a living wage and safe lev- els of staffing.

Doctors, too, and ambu- lance staff, are under- staffed and overworked, even as government spend- ing on healthcare has risen from £121 billion in 2008-2009 to the record £182 billion budgeted for 2023-2024.

It is obvious to everyone that something must change, but the NHS has always been a political football. Those on the left, who regard the NHS as a sacred cow, resist all change and demand that the government must sim- ply find more money.

Free-marketeers, mean- while, salivating at the thought of a blizzard of pri- vate sector windfalls, are baying for the NHS to be privatized. Waiting in the wings, ready to pounce, are numerous mainly US-

based healthcare and insur- ance companies keen to start charging Britons for services which, for the past three-quarters of a century, have been free.

The immensely complex US healthcare system, which mixes publicly financed Medicare and Medicaid with diverse pri- vate insurance schemes, is a stab in the right direction, but fails so many people on such a regular basis that it is clearly not a model that could or should be adopted off the peg.

However, there are other systems around the world that rarely crop up in all the furious NHS debates, that blend public and private healthcare provision.

The systems of countries such as Singapore and Denmark usually feature near the top of global healthcare rankings, and in the Middle East, it is the UAE that leads the way.

Of course, the UAE is not the UK. The vast majority of its much small- er population are expat workers.

But the insistence of the government since the earli- est days of the UAE boom that all employers must provide every employee with health insurance has created and funded one of the world's most modern and efficient healthcare systems, which attracts some of the world's best clinicians.

For the Emirates them- selves, who account for only a fraction of the UAE's population, health- care is provided free of charge at publicly funded hospitals and clinics. This is something the govern- ment is able to fund easily, because the burden of healthcare for the vast majority of the population — the expats — is borne by the companies that employ them.

With imagination, this system could be adapted and adopted in the UK, perhaps with free health- care provided only for chil- dren and those no longer of working age — and in the latter case perhaps only after means testing.

By law, each job could come with private health-

care insurance — not as a perk for a handful of high earners, as it is now, but for all.

Of course, employers would moan — especially those who are currently offering pitifully low wages to staff on so-called zero-hours contracts — but the existing and frankly byzantine tax system could be tinkered with to reduce the impact.

But for the UK to adopt the UAE's healthcare model would require huge politi- cal courage, and something more than a bit of tinkering.

For decades now, Western consultants have sold Western best practice in everything from educa- tion to engineering to the Gulf states, but times are changing. Now, perhaps, is the time for consultancy to start flowing in the other direction.

If Western governments can discard the ingrained and outdated notion that good ideas flow only West to East, they might discov- er it could also be good for their people's health, and for their treasuries.

## The West Bank is on fire and who can stop it?

Yossi Mekelberg

As in Akira Kuros- awa's acclaimed film, “Rashomon,” where the four different witnesses of an heinous crime provide four mutu- ally contradictory versions of events, there are many — too many — versions about who carries responsibility for the lack of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and for the suffering caused by it. It is mainly a blame game that lacks an end game outlining a peaceful path forward to resolving it. However, under these circumstances there are certain acts and behaviors that are unequiv- ocal and unacceptably wrong, and last week's pogrom committed by Jewish settlers against the Palestinian residents of the town of Huwara is one of them. Justifying such an act as revenge for the earlier killing of two settlers, as condemnable as that was, is a contemptible excuse, and those responsible for this barbaric act should face the full force of the law.

We are barely two months into 2023 and already 66 Palestinians — militants and civilians — and 13 Israelis, one of them a paramilitary police offi- cer, have been killed, and this is before we enter into the tense period when the holy festivals of Ramadan, Passover and Easter will take place in close succe- sion. Much of what is tak- ing place in relations between the Israelis and the Palestinians is disturbing, especially when non-com- batants are on the receiving end, but the scenes of 400 Israeli settlers rampaging through the Palestinian West Bank town of Huwara and setting ablaze houses and cars are the most alarming for a very long time. These extreme ele- ments among the settlers seem to have prepared their attack well in advance and

were looking for an oppor- tunity to carry it out. The two settler brothers had been killed when a Palestinian gunman, who was reportedly wearing a shirt bearing the insignia of the Nablus-based Lions' Den militant group, six of whose members were killed

***Grief, even anger at the killing of two young settlers, regardless of how clearly damaging the settlements are for Israeli-Palestinian relations, is understandable, but to commit a pogrom against innocent people in Huwara is a particularly unacceptable and unforgivable act of terrorism. By torching cars and houses, and not for the first time, this gang of racist zealots were clearly prepared to burn entire families alive. It was through sheer luck and the initiative of local people and emergency services that they were led to safety, and that an even worse tragedy did not take place. This group of settlers might be relatively small in number, but they practice and weaponize a most dangerous and distorted version of Judaism and Zionism, which acts in direct defiance of the authority of the state. The representatives of these settler militias boast of the atrocities that they are more than happy to carry out while the security forces don't dare to, according to them.***

during an Israeli raid while five other civilians includ- ing two elderly men were killed in the same raid, shot them as they were stuck in a traffic jam in Huwara. In this cycle of violence, with hardly anyone in either community willing or capa- ble of putting their full weight behind containing it, the next loss of life is only a matter of time.

What is most frustrating is that this deteriorating security situation is taking place in circumstances both predictable and preventa- ble. With the formation of the most far-right, provoca- tive and anti-Palestinian

coming to an end, and also of their own leadership playing any positive role in improving any aspect of their lives. Consequently, the hubs of the armed strug- gle are beyond the tradi- tional Palestinian centers of power, and there are now independent groups or even individuals carrying out attacks. Within Israel, the main worry is of the gov- ernment committing a judi- cial coup, but many of those who protest against it are too short-sighted to see the link between the ero- sion of Israel's democracy and the occupation and oppression of Palestinians.

religious-messianic ideolo- gy, which will turn a blind eye to, if not facilitate, ter- ror attacks on Palestinians at will as they behave as an armed militia while the IDF is either unwilling or too afraid to stop them.

Grief, even anger at the killing of two young set- tlers, regardless of how clearly damaging the settle- ments are for Israeli-Palestinian rela- tions, is understandable, but to commit a pogrom against innocent people in Huwara is a particularly unaccept- able and unforgivable act of terrorism. By torching cars and houses, and not for the

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Ironically, on the very same day of this outburst of violence, senior officials from Jordan, Egypt, Israel, Palestine and the US met in the Jordanian coastal town

of Aqaba to discuss how to quench the burning conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, but their joint communique comes across as something between des- peration and wishful think- ing. De-escalation of the situation, committing to past agreements, avoiding unilateral measures and confidence-building moves are all commendable objec- tives, but didn't these hors- es bolt a long time ago?

What stands out about this meeting is that it took place at all, as things seem to be falling apart as both the PA and the Israeli government are losing ground to non- state militant groups that take the law into their own hands, be they Lion's Den or some among the settlers. One could welcome stop- ping unilateral actions, but legalizing outposts or expanding settlements is one of the pillars of the Israeli coalition govern- ment's agreements. In his flippant and customary irre- sponsible manner, Israel's Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said: “What hap- pened in Jordan (if it hap- pened), will remain in Jordan.” In other words he and his party have no obli- gation to adhere to it, while other right-wing politicians expressed sympathy with the vandals who attacked Huwara, not to mention several who encouraged such criminal acts.

At this rate, the sym- pathy that large parts of the world have shown throughout the years for Israel's security concerns is going up in flames together with the burning houses in Huwara. It is first and foremost for every decent Israeli to dis- tance themselves from these settler-terrorist gangs, and for the authori- ties to stop handling them with kid gloves and make sure that they are brought to justice.

## Maintaining sanctions on Syria will not harm donor conference

Ghassan Ibrahim

The Swedish presiden- cy of the EU Council has announced that the bloc is organizing a donor conference in Brus- sels on March 16 to mobi- lize funds to support the victims of the earthquakes in Turkiye and Syria.

However, some coun- tries are trying to use the conference to demand the lifting of European and US sanctions on the Syrian regime, which would allow it to utilize the conference funds for its political agen- da, away from humanitari- an goals. It is essential to keep all funds from the donor conference separate from the attempts to lift the sanctions.

Anyone who calls for the lifting of the sanctions imposed on the regime on the pretext of facilitating humanitarian aid seems to be concerned not so much with getting humanitarian assistance to the victims of the earthquake as with res- cuing the Syrian regime from its political crisis.

Those calling for the lift-

ing of sanctions are trying to use the aid and the donor conference for purely polit- ical purposes. I do not think they will achieve their goals.

Western sanctions do not prevent the flow of human- itarian aid to Syria, so why are some countries calling for them to be lifted? Any attempt to politicize the conference will delay or prevent the humanitarian aid from reaching its desti- nation.

It is also necessary that the regime and its institu- tions, or any organizations associated with it, do not attend the conference. Ultimately, this conference is humanitarian, not politi- cal, in nature.

Syrian activists in France and London have launched efforts to thwart the regime's participation in the donor conference. These activists sent a legal memorandum to the French parliament, the European parliament and the European Commission to warn of the dangers of

allowing the regime to par- ticipate.

For the financial aid to reach those who need it, especially concerning Syria, the conference and sponsors in the EU should take into account 10 impor- tant points.

Firstly, there should be a strict mechanism to ensure that the Syrian regime does not benefit from the funds, primarily due to corruption and the presence of certain companies and organiza- tions associated with the leaders of the Syrian army and security forces. These leaders are interfering with everything that enters Syria.

In the same context, the UK's ambassador to the UN, Barbara Woodward, called for the UN Security Council to continue to “monitor this closely in the light of ongoing concerns that the regime continues to divert and interfere with aid deliveries.”

Point two is that the EU

must issue a clear and strongly worded resolution in line with the one adopted by the US. The US House of Representatives last week overwhelmingly approved a resolution condemn- ing the Syrian regime for using the earthquake to avoid international pressure and accountability.

Next is that communica- tion technologies and sys- tems should be introduced to monitor and track the movement of aid, such as linking aid trucks to GPS chips or other satellite- linked networks.

Fourthly, the US should create databases of the peo- ple and associations receiv- ing aid in a way that makes it possible to determine where this aid goes and who receives it.

They should also use electronic fingerprint or facial recognition for each recipient, thus narrowing the scope for corruption or wastage of the funds.

Cutting red tape is the

sixth point. A large propor- tion of financial assistance goes to aid workers and officials. Many of these workers work remotely or in administrative offices outside Syria and command high wages compared to what ultimately reaches the beneficiaries.

Next is dedicating part of the aid budget to areas related to job creation or supporting small projects, whereby the aid would help to invest in the future, thereby reducing pressure on humanitarian resources over time.

They should also improve public services in remote areas or those sub- jected to natural disasters or war devastation.

Ninth is to ensure that militias deployed through- out Syria do not benefit from this assistance. These militias, especially Iranian ones, tend to interfere in every detail of life in the areas they control. Activists have already confirmed that Iranian militias have inter- cepted humanitarian aid

sent to people in Aleppo who were affected by the earthquake.

Finally, conference attendees should remember that the damage done by the Syrian regime's war against its people — in cooperation with Iranian-linked terrorist militias — is far more sig- nificant than the damage caused by the earthquake. Therefore, the sanctions should remain in force.

Looking back, it was not the sanctions that prevented the arrival of humanitarian aid during the war years. It was the Syrian regime that obstructed the work of international organizations and the flow of humanitari- an aid.

It is unreasonable for some states to try to legit- imize the Syrian regime under the pretext of human- itarian aid. Helping the Syrian regime to survive, supporting it and normaliz- ing relations with it could cause more suffering for the Syrian people than the magnitude of the earth- quake.



# US must put in the legwork to build ties with Central Asia

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken this week visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan en route to the G20 meeting in India. Secretary Blinken's visit to Central Asia was the first by a US Cabinet-level secretary since Mike Pompeo visited the region in February 2020. In addition to meeting with his Kazakh and Uzbek counterparts, Blinken also took part in a meeting of the C5+1.

The C5+1 is an annual meeting of the five Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and the US that was started by the Obama administration and continues today. Often this meeting takes place outside Central Asia, on the margins of other major international gatherings like the annual UN General Assembly meeting in New York. Besides offering a useful format for America's top diplomat to meet with Central Asian counterparts, few practical outcomes have resulted from the C5+1 format in recent years.

Since the emergence of the five new republics after the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the US has had a standoffish approach to its engagement with Central Asia. Too often, US relations with the Central Asian republics were built around a single issue that was most relevant at the time. For example, in the early 1990s, the focus of US engagement in Central Asia was built around democracy promotion. In the late 1990s, the focus shifted to energy. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, US attention in the region was almost exclusively on counterterrorism cooperation. When America did not need access to the region for military basing and overflight rights as the mission in Afghanistan was winding down, there was very little attention at all given to Central Asia by policymakers.

However, since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and Russia's campaign against Ukraine, there is renewed interest by American policymakers in the region. This makes sense. In the era of great power competition, many of the geopolitical challenges the US deals with converge on Central Asia:

**There is also an important energy component. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and, to a lesser extent, Uzbekistan could play an important role in helping Europe achieve energy independence away from Russian and Iranian oil and gas. If infrastructure investments are made, and political will is found, new pipeline systems could be built connecting Central Asia to Europe. The situation in Afghanistan is also an important factor for the US in the region. Now that Washington has no military or diplomatic presence in Afghanistan, it is becoming increasingly reliant on engagement with neighboring countries such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Meanwhile, transnational terrorist groups are now freely operating in Afghanistan in a way not seen since the 1990s. The lack of US engagement in recent years has left policymakers with few options in Central Asia. However, there are some things that can be done immediately to build on Blinken's trip to help get the US relationship with the Central Asian republics back on track.**

an imperial Russia, an emboldened China, Iranian meddling, and the rise of extremism.

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Luke Coffey

Europe achieve energy independence away from Russian and Iranian oil and gas. If infrastructure investments are made, and political will is found, new pipeline systems could be built connecting Central Asia to Europe.

The situation in

Tajikistan. Meanwhile, transnational terrorist groups are now freely operating in Afghanistan in a way not seen since the 1990s.

The lack of US engagement in recent years has left policymakers with few options in Central Asia. However, there are some things that can be done

region, it is unbelievable that no sitting American president has visited any Central Asian republic. Meanwhile, the leaders of Russia, China and Iran routinely visit the region and meet with their counterparts.

Secondly, the US needs to develop a new Central Asia strategy. The last one was published in February 2020 but is already outdated. Even though this policy document was, at the time, billed as a Central Asia strategy, it was predominantly focused on Afghanistan. Obviously, the region has changed drastically since 2020. The US was defeated in Afghanistan, Russia is weaker because of its invasion of Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic altered the global economy, Turkey's influence in the region is on the rise and China's influence is also growing. The US needs a new guiding policy document for the region.

Finally, US policymakers need to take a longer-term approach to building relations with the Central Asian republics. US engagement in the region has been transactional. For example, access to a military base might mean tens of millions of dollars in American foreign aid. Washington missed an opportunity after 9/11 to jettison the transactional framework of US engagement in the region. This needs to be replaced with a more enduring approach that allows America's relations with the Central Asian republics to weather the ups and downs of geopolitics.

In the aftermath of America's handling of Afghanistan, many in Central Asia do not trust the US and Washington has not put in the required legwork over the years to keep close relations. Secretary Blinken's visit to Central Asia was positive but long overdue. Unless there is newfound momentum to build on the visit, it will likely prove to be too little, too late.



## The road to Saudi Vision 2030

Tariq A. Al Maena

Core tenets of Vision 2030

One of the core tenets of Vision 2030 was social responsibility through its youth, which underpins the Kingdom's vision of a thriving, inclusive, and supportive society.

The country is on a mission to empower its citizens to become positive and independent contributors to the nation, with a shared responsibility for its ongoing prosperity and well-being, and that of future generations.

Those efforts are already bearing fruit. Saudi Arabia ranked first in the Arab world in the 2021 World Happiness Report, produced by the UN's Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and 21st globally.

The annual report, which scores countries globally on

Saudis? Leila, 27, a financial analyst, says: "My grandmother dreamt, and so did my mother. But for me, Vision 2030 turned their dreams into a reality. What they were forbidden from doing, today I am taking full opportunity available to all my peers in marching towards excelling myself and contributing to this nation. Today I can drive myself to work among men and women in a professional and respectful atmosphere without any issues of harassment, thanks to Vision 2030."

Hussein, an oil industry analyst, adds: "It is essential that the plan be continuously monitored for key performance indicators and corrective action be taken whenever the need arises. It is encouraging to note that since the plan was announced seven years ago, our foreign direct investment has increased by more

**One of the core tenets of Vision 2030 was social responsibility through its youth, which underpins the Kingdom's vision of a thriving, inclusive, and supportive society. The country is on a mission to empower its citizens to become positive and independent contributors to the nation, with a shared responsibility for its ongoing prosperity and well-being, and that of future generations. Those efforts are already bearing fruit. Saudi Arabia ranked first in the Arab world in the 2021 World Happiness Report, produced by the UN's Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and 21st globally. The annual report, which scores countries globally on the health and happiness of their populations, is widely seen as a barometer for prosperity and a key snapshot of the nation.**

Journey of success

MBS has set several key benchmarks towards achieving these goals, such as increasing the percentage of non-oil exports as a share of total exports from 16% to 50% by 2030 and increasing the share of non-oil government revenues from 17% to 50%.

Additionally, the government has committed to cutting unemployment from 12.9% to 7% by 2030 and increasing female participation in the labour force from 22.5% to 30%.

Tehran's arms sales can set the stage for a confrontation within these states. Does Iran want to upset the Somali political landscape with weapon sales in Somaliland as a way to garner access to the tip of the peninsula and earn greater influence?

Overall, Iran's arms transfers to the African continent serve a number of purposes, which signal that Tehran continues its illicit revenue practice, while facing morality issues at home.

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NEOM, part of the Vision and a challenging prospect that is already in the works will be a global hub for energy and water, biotech, media and entertainment, advanced manufacturing and technology, as well as food production. NEOM will also focus on investing in renewable energy sources, creating the world's largest renewable energy hub by 2032. NEOM's development will include building an independent economic zone to attract talent and investments from around the world.

All of these objectives are expected to create thousands of jobs for the Kingdom's citizens and bring vital foreign investments into its economy.

Great public feedback So how does this vision play in the hearts of

than 200%, our borders have welcomed millions more than ever before and our economy had sustained the brutal onslaught of the Covid years without much significant impact. There still remains more work to be done, but all signs point to the objectives being met when 2030 rolls around."

Salma, a local florist tells me: "Look around. I still have a few red roses left from Valentine's Day. I have sold thousands this year. Remember when shops would be stormed by a frenzied mobs on such occasions? Well, Vision 2030 took care of that by ensuring that such things do not happen anymore. And we women are particularly grateful as we were the most marginalised back in the day."

Yes indeed, Vision 2030 is beginning to shape the future of Saudi Arabia and its people in a positive and meaningful way and will herald a new era of prosperity for Saudi Arabia. All hands on board!

## Iran's growing weapons transfers to Africa

Iran's arms smuggling to Africa has been ongoing for years. A cat-and-mouse game has been taking place, with the international community tracing Iranian weapons transfers ever since the 1983 Beirut bombing that killed hundreds of Americans. Significantly for Europe and the West, Iran seems to be increasing its activities in Africa. Iranian arms sales in Africa, particularly in certain regions, are beneficial to Russia and China and run counter to Western interests.

Iran's weapons production is increasingly sophisticated. It moves from market to market, depending on buyers and the pervasiveness of the environment. Iran's increasing partnerships with China and Russia make Tehran increasingly seek new interests in Africa, especially regarding Moscow and its proposed base in Sudan. The Iranian merchant shipping industry is also seeking to increase its capacity to sail around the East Coast of Africa to the Gulf of Guinea. Weapons get mixed up in this trade flow.

Iranian foreign policy toward African states is undergoing a sharp

increase in activity and outreach. Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian visited Mali and Tanzania last year and Mauritania this year, opening new lines of diplomatic and shipping/trade opportunities. Weapons get mixed into such activities, as was witnessed during the days when Iran had arms factories in Sudan under Omar Bashir.

With Yemen becoming an increasingly difficult market to sell in because of increasing interdiction by Arab Gulf partners, Tehran is funneling more weapons into the Horn of Africa, specifically Puntland. Such a move by Tehran runs counter to a multitude of interests. Last week, an agreement was signed between Somalia, Qatar, Turkey, the UAE, the UK and the US to support Somalia's efforts in the fight against weapons smuggling.

The seaborne Iranian arms transport system uses the same route that has been run for decades by maritime shippers and traders. The arms network that runs along the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula into the Horn of Africa is tough to police. Prohibitions of Iranian weapons shipments help

Dr. Theodore Karasik

but delivery outside of the Bab Al-Mandab Strait makes for a wider maritime space to police.

Iran has sold weapons to many African countries. Research shows Iranian ammunition is in service with a range of entities, including government forces (Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya and Sudan), warring civilian communities (Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda) and rebel, insurgent and militia groups (Ivory Coast, Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Niger). There is a strong history of Iranian arms falling into the "wrong hands."

Research shows that Iranian ammunition is in service with factions aligned with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb operating in Niger. Transfers of Iranian ammunition have contravened UN sanctions on Ivory Coast and plausibly violated UN embargoes on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Darfur. There is no evidence to suggest the direct involvement of Iran in these violations, but the potential is there. Why play with fire?

According to a 2012

report by Conflict Armament Research, "with the exception of Khartoum-aligned forces in Darfur and South Sudan, the regional sources of this ammunition are unclear. In the Ivory Coast case, ammunition deliveries certainly transited the territory of Burkina Faso and match the types of ammunition circulating in Darfur." It remains to be seen what happens as China and Russia boost their involvement in African affairs. Iran acts as a fifth column source when necessary.

In a meeting with his Senegalese counterpart Aissata Tall Sall, Amir-Abdollahian this week emphasized the importance of Africa in Iran's foreign policy and the important position of Senegal in Africa. Senegal is a key country on the continent, as the African Union was until last month led by Senegalese President Macky Sall and the UN's mission in Libya is headed by prominent Senegalese diplomat Abdoulaye Bathily.

Combined with Tehran's relations with Mali and Algeria, in addition to Mauritania, there is a growing Iranian presence in the Sahel, especially in

Libya's "underbelly." North Africa is a key Iranian focus, particularly the areas around Libya.

The state-to-state level matters for Iran in Africa. Tehran's close ties with Algeria are a particularly important factor. Algeria's relationship with the Palestinians is key for Tehran, giving it an added voice, especially during today's troubling situation in Israel and the Occupied Territories. Tehran is able to go to other countries and perhaps weaponize the issue if necessary.

Israel's growing interactions with the Horn of Africa states, particularly Somalia and Sudan, brings up questions about the intersection with Iranian arms sales.

Tehran's arms sales can set the stage for a confrontation within these states. Does Iran want to upset the Somali political landscape with weapon sales in Somaliland as a way to garner access to the tip of the peninsula and earn greater influence?

Overall, Iran's arms transfers to the African continent serve a number of purposes, which signal that Tehran continues its illicit revenue practice, while facing morality issues at home.

## New Brexit deal shows value of negotiation

Years have passed and a deal has, on a number of occasions, been despaired of, but Britain and the EU have finally reached an agreement over the future of Northern Ireland.

There were problems in the shipping of goods. EU officials wanted to inspect goods entering the island of Ireland but they could not. The border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is open and without infrastructure, in part because of years of terrorism. This is one of the terms of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement signed in 1998, which finally brought peace to Northern Ireland after

years of war. Civic peace was thought to rely on that border staying open.

This was an unhappy compromise. The Northern Irish Protocol was struck to solve it.

It was an agreement that effectively kept Northern Ireland within the EU — despite Britain's vote to leave. Instead, the border was moved between Northern Ireland and Britain, into the Irish Sea. EU laws, administered by EU courts, also took precedence in Northern Ireland. This was not popular in Britain and had other ill effects.

In Northern Ireland, it was considered economi-

cally ruinous. Companies that depended on goods from Britain went without inventory. Even the supply of medicine was affected. Food prices rose.

The discontent was real. But negotiation was finally able to allow Britain and the EU to reach a compromise more acceptable to all. The new Windsor Framework, which was announced this week, is the result.

It solves many problems. Goods from Britain to Northern Ireland can now be moved easily and without regulatory barriers.

Medicines will travel freely. EU laws that once

applied without heed to a part of the UK will be amended and, if the Northern Irish legislature considers new laws excessive, it can use what is called the "Stormont Brake" and avert them.

All of this might seem a small question amid a world of problems. But it has been a time of difficulty and complexity for Britain and Europe. The Northern Ireland Protocol itself arose as a last-minute solution until it became a problem. Governments have risen and fallen, each promising Brexit deals and failing to get the country over the line. But now, a

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

deal has finally been done.

Negotiations work. People can compromise if needed, and over time, with enough good faith, solutions can be found.

Britain's new prime minister, Rishi Sunak, has for some of his brief tenure been considered something of a lightweight. He was a finance minister, with little apparent interest in international affairs. That judgment now appears in retrospect to be wrong and this appears to be a real triumph for him.

And it is a success too for European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. After years of con-

tion, she and the prime minister seemed contented. Their negotiations had borne fruit.

They had done what their predecessors had failed to do: Reach a new status quo that was broadly acceptable on the most divisive of issues — one which respects the British electoral mandates to leave the EU and the treaty obligations of both powers to keep the Irish border open

after the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement of 1998.

This is not quite the end of a long and no doubt ongoing process but it is an acceptable solution.

This episode is a small one in a world of trouble but it proves the value of negotiations and hard work. Many said that Northern Ireland was condemned to limbo — fitting awkwardly between two

jurisdictions, unable to find a modus vivendi.

However, that has not proved true. Instead, two geopolitical entities that have had moments of difficulty and disagreement — the EU and the UK — have managed to find something acceptable upon which to build. In a world of war and terrorism, of bitter disagreements and threats, it is positive to see that such things can still happen.

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# TIFA meeting agreed for follow up engagements to ensure progress: Naveed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Commerce Minister Syed Naveed Qamar said that the meeting of the Pakistan-US Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Ministerial Council had agreed to have regular follow-up engagements during 2023 to ensure progress on all issues to achieve tangible results, whereas it was also agreed to convene the next TIFA Council Ministerial meeting in Islamabad in early 2024.

In a statement issued here Sunday, the minister said that the meeting reflected the mutual understanding and commitment of Pakistan and United States to pursue a broad-based agenda.

Expressing satisfaction

over the high-level dialogues in various sectors including energy, and climate change, the minister said that the series of dialogues reflected that Pakistan was being seen as a sovereign trading partner of the United States.

“United States is an important country for us and we want our relations to further grow in all possible areas,” he added.

Commerce Minister said that he had a fulsome and comprehensive dialogue with the United States Trade Representative (USTR) focusing on a wide spectrum of trade and investment, issues of mutual interest including agriculture, textiles, digital trade, enhancing market

access, cooperation on good regulatory practices including intellectual property and labor rights, and women’s economic empowerment and entrepreneurship.

He said that the two sides discussed key issues including enhancing exports of Pakistani mangoes and dates to the US, increased market access for Pakistan’s textiles, increasing US investments in Pakistan’s agriculture sector especially in the development of hybrid, climate-resilient seeds and supporting Pakistan’s IT and tech industry.

Talking about the economic challenges being faced by the country, the minister said that Pakistan

has taken tough decisions to revive IMF program.

The minister expressed the hope that with formal approval of revival of the program by IMF Board, the reserves would increase with inflow from friendly countries and international banks. He, however, stated that the revival of the program alone was not a panacea for all ills. “We need structural reforms. Our processes need to be changed,” he remarked.

Naveed Qamar further said that the revival of the dialogue would significantly boost confidence of the business community and would help in providing them with a conducive environment marked by stability and predictability.



ISLAMABAD: People purchasing vegetables from vendors at Sunday Bazaar.

## Economy nosedives due to poor policies, mismanagement

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry’s Businessmen Panel (BMP) on Sunday said that the country’s economy has nosedived partly due to external factors but majorly due to non-serious

and poor domestic policy decisions and mismanagement of the economic managers, as the rupee saw yet another dramatic fall in just over a month, plummeting 6.66% while the key interest rate have been escalated by the central bank by 300 basis points to the record historic level of 20%, which will destroy the economy completely.

Asking the authorities to include serious and progressive fiscal reforms in the IMF program FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar observed that it is very clear that IMF programs focus on stabilization and crisis management rather than growth-oriented policies that require structural reforms.

He stressed need for a revisit of government policies including the coordination exercise between the Ministry of Finance and SBP, as no independent economist could support the economic policies that are currently in place.

He said that rupee has plummeted 6.66% against the US dollar during the trading session on Thursday, as it settled at 285.09 against the greenback, a decline of Rs18.98 in the inter-bank market. Earlier during the day, the rupee had depreciated to 284.88 against the US dollar in the inter-bank market before posting a minor recovery that proved short-lived.

The rupee had plummeted against the US dollar on Wednesday as well but the fall was less severe as the currency settled at 266.11 after a depreciation of

1.73% or Rs4.61 in the inter-bank market. The local currency had earlier suffered a dramatic fall when it went from 230.89 to 255.43 on January 26 as the government loosened what were seen as administrative measures to keep the currency in check.

In the open market, the rupee lost 14 rupees for buying and selling against USD, closing at 285.00 and 288.00, respectively.

He said that reports around International Monetary Fund (IMF) are not positive, denting investor sentiment. He added volatility would remain until IMF program is revived and inflows are materialized. He said the delay in IMF funding is creating uncertainty in currency market and added that a number of payments related to imports have been made, leading to pressure on the rupee, as the move to a market-based currency exchange rate regime is one of a list of actions the IMF wants Pakistan to complete to clear its 9th review.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has already taken most of the other prior actions, which include hikes in fuel and energy tariffs, the imposition of new taxation measures, and withdrawal of subsidies in export and power sectors.

The development comes on a day when the SBP has announce further monetary tightening to control inflation at the central bank’s emergency Monetary Policy Committee meeting.

He said that the Pakistan’s economy can grow sustainably only if the country

introduces productivity-enhancing reforms that facilitate a better allocation of resources into more dynamic activities, and productive uses. He stated that the country’s inability to allocate all its resources to the most productive uses has stunted economic growth. It presents evidence of systematic productivity stagnation across firms and farms. In manufacturing and services, most of the productivity stagnation is related to firms losing efficiency over time.

The government needs reminding that remittance inflows were 29.4 billion dollars last fiscal year and this large inflow was also due to the fact that the interbank and open market rates did not diverge significantly during the previous tenures. Thus the current untenable situation is due to a perceived policy of exchange rate manipulation and cannot be attributed entirely to the warnings of impending default or criticism of the handling of the economy.

He observed that coordinating fiscal and monetary policies may be beneficial yet with inflation attributed to administrative decisions in nearly all recent Monetary Policy Statements and the government unwilling to implement key reforms in the power sector and tax structure the SBP needs to be vigilant in ensuring market-based exchange rate policy and a positive discount rate while the Ministry needs to revisit its tax policy, utility pricing policy and of course continued massive injections into loss-making state-owned entities.

## State Bank urged to resolve exporters’ issues proactively

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA) has urged the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to resolve the issues of exporters proactively besides getting them on board in taking any step or decision as the exporters were facing numerous problems due to uncertainty and frequent fluctuations in the US dollar rate against Pak rupee.

Chairing the association’s meeting here on Sunday, PCMEA Senior

Vice Chairman Usman Ashraf said that the SBP should properly consider the letters forwarded to it by the association for resolving their problems. PCMEA Senior Central Leader Abdul Latif Malik, Chairperson Carpet Training Institute (CTI) Ijazur Rehman, senior members Parvez Hanif, Riyaz Ahmed, Saeed Khan, Akbar Malik, Major (Retd.) Akhtar Nazir, Shahid Hasan, Umeir Usman and others were also present.

Senior Vice Chairman

Usman Ashraf also urged the government to appoint authorized focal persons for solving exporters’ problems.

The participants of the meeting expressed serious concern over the difficulties faced by exporters especially due to political uncertainty and fluctuations in the US dollar rate.

They were of the view that political stability was inevitable for economic development therefore all political leaders should sit together for this national

cause.

Usman Ashraf said that economic decisions without taking stakeholders would have adverse impact on the export, adding that long-pending issues must be focused and speedy progress be made on these so that Pakistani products could grab their due share in the international market.

The government should also arrange business and exporters’ representatives meetings with the SBP officials to solve their issues at the earliest.

### Flour price reaches up to Rs2,800

QUETTA (INP): Amid a shortage of flour, the 20-kg bag of flour is being sold between Rs2,640 to 2,800 in Quetta.

The price of flour is skyrocketing in Quetta due to the shortage of commodities. Sensing the opportunity, the profiteers have become active and selling the flour bag of 20kg between Rs2,640 to 2,800 in Quetta and its adjoining areas.

The residents of Quetta said that they are unable to get the flour at the government’s fixed rate and are compelled to buy the commodity at an excessive price.

The residents of the area have demanded of the provincial government to take action against the profiteers and ensure the availability of the flour.

Meanwhile, the President of Flour Mills Association Balochistan, Nasir Agha said the supply of wheat to the mills is suspended for the last ten days. “Masses are paying the price of the incompetence of the Balochistan food department,” he added.

## ICCI for capitalizing on export potential of GB’s dry fruit

ISLAMABAD (APP): President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that Gilgit-Baltistan region can earn millions of dollars from the export of almonds, walnuts, apricots, cherries and many other dry fruits, as the annual production of almonds alone in the region is over 120,000 tons.

While talking to Gilgit-Baltistan Minister for IT and former FPCCI Vice President Mohammad Ali, he urged the government to extend full cooperation to the private sector in pro-

moting the export of dry fruits to potential markets.

The dry fruits are in demand around the world, so he emphasized that the economy of the region can be improved by capitalizing on this export potential of Gilgit-Baltistan, he said and assured that ICCI will provide all possible support in promoting business and investment in Gilgit-Baltistan and solving the problems of the business community of the region.

Gilgit-Baltistan Minister for IT and former Vice President FPCCI Muham-

mad Ali Quaid said that CPEC has increased the importance of Gilgit-Baltistan and this historic project ushers in a new era of development in the region.

He said that many new opportunities can be created for the youth by promoting IT in the region and many projects are under consideration for this purpose. He said that Gilgit-Baltistan has great potential to promote business activities of forestry, livestock and poultry farming and many other sectors, but there is a need to provide

all possible facilities to the business community of the region in this regard. He also discussed many other matters of mutual interest with President ICCI.

Gilgit-Baltistan Chamber of Commerce Group Leader Qurban Ali said that Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Gilgit-Baltistan Chamber of Commerce should focus on solving the problems of the business community of both regions through close cooperation, thereby improving business activities in both regions will be promoted.

## Jaggery production threatened existence of sugar mills

### Laraib Athar

My husband has decided to make jaggery himself instead of giving the sugarcane crop to sugar mills this year. Farida Bibi said while running a sugarcane in a large cauldron, in which molasses syrup was being cooked.

Making molasses is a better job than the price we are getting from sugar mills. As much as my husband and I work, we don’t get rewarded as much as we deserve. What do we owe? Based on this, we have decided to install a jaggery making machine, now we will extract jaggery and we will be much happier. Farida was still talking to me when his husband started the generator, and started making sugarcane juice which was being extracted by running a machine.

Farida Bibi and Rehman Kaka hail from Charsadda and they own five acres of land and do farming together. “Last year our sugarcane crop was good but the sugar mill owners ran the mill late so our sugarcanes dried up. We spend so much on sugarcanes but get nothing, it takes 10,000 seeds per acre, then fertiliser, agricultural drugs, tractor and labour costs are separate and in the end nothing is saved.” Rehman kaka said while collecting juice in a big empty container, and then poured it into the Kadhai.

This was the indigenous method of making jaggery.

Premier Sugar Mills Mardan was the largest sugar mill in Asia in 1949, the construction of this sugar mill started before the creation of Pakistan and it had its first crushing in 1949, but now the sugar mill runs one day and has to be closed the next day, due

to lack of sugarcane supply, because the farmers are prioritizing making molasses. According to Jameel Khanzada, former general manager of Premier Sugar Mills Mardan (new manager is not hired yet).

Jameel Khanzada said, Mardan district produces 8 to 10 million tons of sugarcane while the requirement of the mill is 400,000 tons of sugarcane, if the mills still get four lakh tonnes of sugar, eight lakh bags of sugar can be produced, which will help to overcome the sugar crisis and also will benefit the government exchequer in terms of tax collection.

At present we are buying little by little from four to five districts, which is very expensive due to transportation. The effort is to keep the mill running, but even so it runs one day and stops the other day.

Sugarcane farmers in the area prefer to make molasses instead of giving their crop to sugar mills, they say that the price of molasses is high while the sugar mill owners buy sugarcane at a very low price from us. On the other hand, sugar mill owners say that due to shortage of sugarcane, the mill runs one day and has to shut down the next day. If they get sugarcane as per requirement, the sugar crisis in the country can be reduced.

My father, grandfather and even myself used to always sell my sugarcane to Mardan Sugar Mill, but some time ago the owner started to harass me and other farmers a lot, did not give money, so from 2018 I started selling my sugarcane to Mardan Jaggery makers and received 100% more benefits than the sugar mill Mardan. This was said by 40-year-old

Shaukat Batiani, a resident of Malakand and a sugarcane farmer.

Batiani further said that in 2018, me and some other fellow farmers had gone to the Supreme Court against Mardan Sugar Mill, at that time Saqib Nisar was the Chief Justice.

Saqib Nisar asked the owner of Mardan Sugar Mill to pay all the remaining money to farmers, otherwise we will take control of the sugar mill.

Further batiani said that we added in court that the owner of the Mardan sugar mill is not ready to pay Rs 180 per maund, saying that if he gives Rs 180 to us, he will not be a man’s child. On which the Chief Justice said that we will call the owner of the Sugar Mill Mardan, and will ask him the matter, the official rate will be decided later, at present, the mill owners should pay at the rate of 180. We will look into the matter later, it is possible to inquire about the matter from the session judges. Batiani added, further he said that even after that there was no significant difference, then I never sold my sugarcane to Mardan Sugar Mill after that nor will I sell it in the future, I am very happy with Jaggery making owners.

While the owner of the sugar mill said that I never received any court notice from Saqib Nisar or the Supreme Court, I don’t know about it.

And when I filed the RTI for the record of court cases to Mardan Sugar Mill legal team, so according to information received from them:

“We don’t have any case of Supreme Court and Saqib Nisar in our record, we are listing the cases running in Peshawar Court.

Cases related to Grower

and Sugar Cane to the Premier Sugar Mill & Distillery Com. Ltd. Mardan

1). In WP No.5276-P/2020 Premier Sugar Mills Vs Govt of KPK and Others Premier Sugar Mills And Distillery Com. Ltd Mardan filed a writ petition before Peshawar High Court Peshawar in which the Grower Associations i.e. President of Anjuman Kashkaran and President of Gur Mandies Association impleaded as a necessary party to defend, the Company has challenge to Impose the Gurr Control Act 1948 and Sugar Factories Control Act 1950 along with other Act, which is pending for disposal.

2). In WP No.419-P/2021 titled Premier Sugar Mills Vs Govt of KPK and others the payment to cane growers through bank account, the Provincial Govt KPK through Industries, Commerce and technical Education has issued a Notification dated 15-June 2021 for payments to the growers, without the consultation and illegal manner, which is pending before Peshawar High Court Peshawar.

3). In WP No.420-P/2021 titled Premier Sugar Mills Vs Govt of KPK and other the progress and outcome of the action against the illegal agents and middlemen under KPK sugar factories control 1950 and to punished the unlicensed agent and middleman’s u/s 21 and 22 of KPK Sugar Factories Control Act 1950, which pending before Peshawar High Court Peshawar

On the other hand, Rizwan Khan, a merchant

of Mardan, who deals in molasses told, the sugarcane farmers were preferring to make molasses instead of giving sugarcane to the sugar mill, because the price of molasses is high.

He said that there are thousands of Jaggery production areas in Mardan district where thousands of tons of molasses are produced annually which is not only sold here but goes to Punjab as well.

He added: “The molasses business runs throughout the year in our Jaggery areas while the sugarcane season is from October to April.” He further added that now the price of 32 dari i.e. 115 kg bags of molasses in the market is more than 20 thousand and compared to this, the sugar mill gives a very low price to the farmer.

Former Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan said, when I asked him about the matter that, we are active against illegal profiteers, we have approved the Sugar Factory Control Amendment Bill. According to the Bill, the transfer of funds between the landowners and sugar mill owners will be through the bank and if the amendment of bill is not completed, the sugar mill owner will be imprisoned for three years and fined up to Rs.50 lakh, as an offence for violating the law.

The bill also includes that the transfer of funds between the landowners and sugar mill owners will be through the bank and in case of non-payment to the landowners within the specified period, the Sugarcane commissioner will be authorised to recover the amount from the sugar mills owner.

Khanzada said that the government has controlled sugar prices, but there is no control over molasses and the price of molasses is also high.

“We definitely don’t want Jaggery places to be closed because if all the farmers supplied their sugarcanes to sugar mills, so our mills are not in a position to crush all the sugarcanes so we support jaggery places as well.”

Further he said that the landlords should keep in mind that the employment of our employees is related to sugarcane and when these mills are closed due to non-availability of sugarcane, these people will be affected. He further said, since Jaggery is a local industry, they do not pay taxes etc on it, while we are subject to government duties and taxes, so it is very difficult for us to compete with them.

“We have started a new program for landlords, which will provide interest-free loans, fertilisers and good quality seeds so that people can produce more and build good relations with our landlords.” He said.

Awais Yousafzai, a resident of Rashkai, farmer of sugarcane, says that from one maund of sugarcane, we earn about 400 or 500 rupees, while they get only 200 rupees from the mill.

Awais added, “If the mill owners are paying good rates, we will be spared the hard work of making jaggery. If not, we cannot give sugar to the mills because Ijara (renting land for cultivation) is expensive and the wages of the workers have also increased along with the price, so we cannot afford to sell our sugarcanes on low price to sugar mills. One of Govt official

without mentioning his name said that we are working on it since 2020 when Ex Prime Minister Imran Khan had ordered Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to launch an investigation against sugar barons in light of the sugar inquiry commission report so the federal cabinet had approved an action plan against them.

He further said that “we then decided to bring amendments to the Sugar Factories Control Act 1950”, with the amendments the amount of fine over the sugar mills would be increased from Rs10,000 to Rs 100,000. The amendments are aimed at resolving the problems of farmers in the crushing season and to ensure timely payments but the implementation is still in process because of some confidential reasons.

Jameel Khanzada said that Farmers should give 30 percent of sugarcane to the mills, he said that sugarcane is cultivated on 75 thousand acres in Mardan district which produces 37 lakh tons of sugarcane while 5 lakh tons of sugarcane is required to run the mills. So farmers let the mills run because if the mills are closed, not only more than 400 employees will be laid off, but the price of jaggery will come down drastically, which will be the loss of the farmers as well.

We do not want Mardan Sugar Mills to be closed. He also demanded the government to abolish 17/18 percent sales tax so as to give relief to the farmers. So that the mills remain operational during the crush season, which will

not only strengthen the economy but also benefit the farmers.

Dr. Barkat Khan, director of Institute of Research of sugarcane seed production in Mardan district said, the government should formulate a policy under which agricultural lands are protected from settlements so that the people of the province can get food in the future and be secure from shortages.

He further said that compared to other provinces of Pakistan, there has been a decrease in sugarcane cultivation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since 2005. He said that Punjab produced an average of 66 tons per acre, Sindh 63 and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 50 tons.

Dr. Barkat added, “The cultivated land in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is decreasing day by day, roads and housing societies are being built. At this time, 30 acres of land has been allocated for a girls’ college in Mardan due to which the cultivation of sugarcane is decreasing.

He further said that, “In the current season too, the sugar mills were operated late, not only the farmers were affected but also the related workers remained unemployed.” According to him, the employment of two and a half lakh workers is involved in the steps from sugarcane harvesting to access to sugar mills. Last year, there was a dispute between farmers and sugar mill owners over the determination of sugarcane rates. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government fixed the official price of sugarcane last year at 180 rupees per maund, but due to the tense situation, many farmers limited cultivation.





## In brief

## Guinness World Record

ISLAMABAD (APP): A six-year-old Pakistani martial artist, Salaar Mehsood has set a Guinness World Record by doing the most cartwheels in 30 seconds. "Salaar did 26 one-handed cartwheels in 30 seconds and broke the previous record of 25," Pakistan's renowned martial artist Irfan Mehsood told APP. Salaar is a student of Irfan, who is the holder of 60 Guinness World Records. Irfan has broken various records including the most push-ups (fingertips, carrying a 60 lb pack) in one minute, most step-ups in one minute (carrying a 100 lb pack), and the longest time in a reverse abdominal plank position carrying a 100 lb pack. Irfan said he was also the only athlete to break world records using 80 to 100 pounds of weight. "I'm the only Pakistani athlete to break most of India's world records. I have so far broken records of nine countries, including India, USA, UK, France, Philippines, Iraq, Egypt, Italy, and Spain," he said.

## Shehroze wants to summit 14 peaks

ISLAMABAD (APP): Young Pakistani mountaineer Shehroze Kashif deems to summit all 14 peaks above 8,000 meters in the world. According to details, Shehroze, who became the youngest person to summit the world's second-highest mountain, K2, has left for Nepal to attempt Annapurna 8091m and Dhaulagiri 8167m. Shehroze wants to become the world's youngest climber to summit all 14 peaks above 8,000 meters. He has already summited 10x 8000m above peaks and is the youngest climber in the world to do so. After a successful summit, he would be left with only 2 peaks (Shishapangma and Choyou) to become the youngest climber to summit all 14 x 8000m. Shehroze's perseverance, passion, and skill have made him an inspiration to young mountaineers all over the world. He believes that anyone, no matter how big or small, can achieve their dreams with hard work and dedication. Shehroze said, "I am determined to achieve this goal and bring honour to my country. I want to inspire young people to pursue their dreams and passions, no matter how difficult they may appear." Shehroze's world-record ascent would not only bring international attention to Pakistan but will also highlight the country's natural beauty and diverse landscapes.

## Asian Jr Girls Netball C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Netball Federation (PNF) has announced a four-member selection committee to pick the national junior team for the Asian Junior Girls Netball Championship. According to the details, the selected team would participate in the Asian Junior Girls Netball Championship to be played in Korea in June this year. The four-member selection committee has been approved by PNF President Mudassir Arain. The selection committee would be headed by Muhammad Riaz while members include Ijaz ul Haq, Anwar Ahmed and Qurat ul Ain. The national junior girls team selection would be held on March 12 at the PSB Coaching Center Karachi and girls from all over the country can participate in the trials.



RAWALPINDI: Islamabad United's Azam Khan (R) and Faheem Ashraf (L) celebrate a boundary score during the Pakistan Super League (PSL) Twenty20 cricket match.

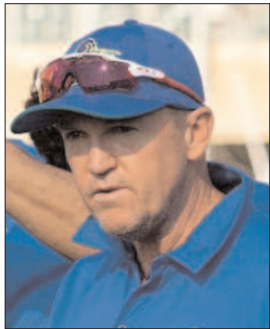
## ‘Fast-bowling, wrist-spin makes PSL an exciting cricketing environment’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Zimbabwean Captain and Multan Sultans' head coach Andy Flower believes the fast bowling and wrist spin makes Pakistan Super League (PSL) an exciting cricketing environment.

"Each franchise tournament and the country has a different feel. That's one of the really nice things about coaching around the franchise world – you're experiencing different cultures, not only from a national perspective but also cricketing cultures. Pakistan cricket has its own thing, particularly around fast bowling and wristspin, which makes it a really exciting cricketing environment."

But also just being exposed to a lot of interesting cultures in the dressing room is quite interesting, in a wider perspective for me. The support for the PSL in Pakistan has been incredible. I love that sort of vibrant energy that you get from the crowds. We've been really lucky in Multan with our crowds.

But I think the other teams will feel similar things, certainly here in Lahore, with Lahore having some of their first success last year and then also playing good cricket this year," espncriinfo.com quoted him as saying.



Speaking about Mohammad Rizwan, he said his faith and humility keep him at a very solid foundation from which to work. "But from a sporting point of view, and particularly white-ball cricket, I think once you establish a successful batting formula in your head, you know the type of cricket you need to play to be successful. "He's repeating a simi-

lar formula all the time and that gives him a real consistency about what he does. Which is good for him and for whatever team he plays for. I think he's put in a lot of thought, practice, trial and error. In his younger days, I saw him when he was playing for Pakistan A against England Lions. I think from paying attention to what he's done and from developing his game, he's worked out a formula that works really well in white-ball cricket," he said.

He said he had worked with some great captains over the years and he finds Rizwan as an excellent leader. "He's got strength and positivity, which means that people will follow him. I like debating cricket with him, debating selections or strategy, but he has very clear views and courage about the way he plays, something that makes him a leader other people want to follow. They see that he's not afraid to challenge the opposition, to take on particular situations, to lose," he said.

## Mbappe, 24, becomes PSG's record goalscorer

PARIS (Agencies): Kylian Mbappe scored a club-record 201st goal for Paris St-Germain in an entertaining 4-2 win over Nantes.

He had to wait until the 92nd minute but was clinical as he turned to finish left-footed and clear of Edinson Cavani at the top of the PSG goal list.

The France forward, who turned 24 in December, has established himself as a footballing superstar. "I play to make history," said Mbappe, who joined in 2017 initially on loan from Monaco before a 180m euros move.

"I have always said I wanted to make history in France, in the capital of my country, in my city, and I am doing that. It's magnificent, but there is still a lot to be done." Mbappe finished the game as captain and told Canal Plus: "For me, as a native Parisian, this is special. If someone had said to me I would score the goal to beat the record while wearing the captain's armband, I would not have believed it."

The Frenchman has played at two World Cup finals, winning the trophy in 2018 and earning the Golden Boot as top scorer in 2022. Mbappe, who also won the 2021 Nations League with his country, scored a hat-trick in December's World Cup final against Argentina, which France lost on penalties after a 3-3 draw.

Since joining PSG from Monaco in 2017 for a world-record fee for a teenager, Mbappe has won four Ligue 1 titles and topped the division's scoring charts for each of the past four seasons. This season, the forward has now scored 30 goals and made eight assists - taking his total to 85 for the club in 247 games. PSG went 2-0 up at the Parc des Princes with Lionel Messi opening the scoring before Jaouen Hadjam's own goal.

However, Nantes came back to level before half-time thanks to goals from Ludovic Blas and Ignatius Ganago, with PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma caught out at his near post for the first and making a fumble that led to the second.

Mbappe crossed for Danilo Pereira to head the home side back in front on the hour mark before his crowning moment came late in the game.

## Munro, Azam, Ashraf seal Islamabad United's playoff spot

RAWALPINDI (Monitoring Desk): Islamabad United beat Quetta Gladiators by two wickets in a seesawing game to confirm qualification for the last four for the seventh time in eight seasons. Half-centuries from Mohammad Nawaz and Najibullah Zadran helped Gladiators recover from a horror start to post 179. In response, United blazed away in characteristic fashion, even if the resulting fall of wickets brought Gladiators back into the contest. But Azam Khan and Faheem Ashraf struck up a valuable partnership, with Ashraf finishing off the game with three balls to spare.

United put Gladiators in to bat, and immediately put them on the back foot. Fazalhaq Farooqi struck in each of his first two overs to remove Will Smeed and Yasir Khan, while a stunning boundary catch from Mubasir Khan got rid of Sarfaraz Ahmed. Ifikhar Ahmed fell to Ashraf soon after, and Gladiators were reduced to 17 for 4 in the sixth over.

Nawaz and Zadran led a recovery effort, putting together a 104-run partnership that lifted their side out of the doldrums. Perhaps learning from Lahore Qalandars, they refused to consolidate after losing early wickets, going after

the bowling even as it made the loss of wickets more probable. They were rewarded for that intrepid approach, and within relatively little time, the run rate crept upwards. When Farooqi got rid of Nawaz, he had scored a half-century, and with four overs to go, Gladiators were set up for a big finish.

Enter Umar Akmal. Remember him? In a stunning display of pure power hitting, the former Pakistan batter clubbed five sixes in 14 balls to smash an unbeaten 43, meaning Gladiators put on 58 in their final four overs.

United went about that chase as you might expect. Even though Naseem Shah trapped Rahmanullah Gurbaz in front off the second ball, Colin Munro dazzled in the powerplay. 18 runs off the second over of the innings - bowled by Odean Smith - made his intentions plain. Naseem was treated with more respect as Munro showed restraint, but when Umaid Asif followed up with the fourth over, 18 more came off it. By the end of the seventh over, a staggering 96 runs had been scored, 63 off which came off Munro's bat.

United wobbled in the passage of play that followed. Shadab Khan holed

out to Ifikhar before Nawaz struck next ball to draw the curtain on the Munro show. Umaid cleaned up Mubasir as he heaved at one with little convictions, before Nawaz got one to skid on to Asif Ali to suddenly leave the two-time champions reeling.

United still needed 69 from nine overs and had just four wickets left. But just as Faheem and Azam had put on a vital rearguard stand earlier in the week, they rose to the occasion once more. Aware they needed to consolidate - anathema to United's ostensible philosophy - it wasn't until his 17th ball that Azam struck his first boundary. Ashraf, too, bided his time as they took the game to the final three overs, of which United needed 31.

Azam roared to life at this moment, pummelling Naveen-ul-Haq for a four and a six, before pulling Umaid for six more to bring the asking rate almost run a ball. He fell the next ball and Hasan Ali holed out soon after, leaving Ashraf needing nine in the final over. It took him just three balls as Smith missed his lengths, with the experienced United all-rounder hitting three fours to take his side through, and leave Gladiators on the cusp of their fourth straight elimination.

## FG Polo clinches coveted trophy of 2nd President Polo Cup 2023

## F.P. Report

LAHORE: FG Polo clinched the coveted trophy of the 2nd President of Pakistan Polo Cup 2023 sponsored by Takmeel Square after edging past BN Polo by 9½-9 in the main final here at the Jinnah Polo Fields.

President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi graced the final as chief guest and witnessed and enjoyed the enthralling and entertaining final. The president also gave away trophy and mementos to the winners and the participants. Jinnah Polo Fields Patron, President, Secretary as well as Takmeel Square CEO Dr. Kamran Fazal, and people from different walks of life were present on the occasion.

The main final of five rounds remained very enthralling and interesting. Raul Laplace was the hero of the final as he amused the spectators with his outstanding mallet and polo pony skills and techniques. He contributed with superb six goals while his teammates Ramiro Zavaleta, Saqib Khan Khakwani and Mian Abbas Mukhtar converted one goal apiece. For BN Polo, Hamza Mawaz Khan fired in four goals while Tito Ruiz Guinazu contributed with a hat-trick and Baber Naseem with a brace.

The main final saw both the teams scoring one goal each in the first chukker to end it at 1-1. FG Polo started the sec-

ond chukker with a conversion of 30-yard penalty to take a 2-1 lead but BN Polo bounced back well by thrashing in two back-to-back goals to earn a slight 3-2 lead. FG Polo then dominated the third chukker by cracking a classic quartet against one goal by BN Polo to gain a healthy 6-4 lead.

The highly-charged fourth chukker saw both the sides playing out their hearts and scoring one goal after another but BN Polo played better polo and smashed in five goals against three goals by FG Polo to draw the score at 9-9. It was a half goal handicap advantage that helped FG Polo emerge as winners of the prestigious tournament and clinch the coveted trophy, handed over to them by President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi. Chris Hyde and John Fisher officiated the match as field umpires.

Earlier, Master Paints defeated Remounts by 9½-7 to win the subsidiary final. Manuel Crispio emerged as star of the day for Master Paints, which had a half goal handicap advantage, as he smashed in superb five goals while Sufi Muhammad Haroon banged in a brace and Agha Musa Ali Khan and Pelagio Balazaldi struck one goal each. For Remounts, Manuel Sundblad hammered five goals while Ahmad Zubair Butt and Jota Chavavanne converted one goal each.

## WSF World Jr Squash C'ships in July

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 2023 WSF World Junior Squash Championships would be held at Melbourne Sports Centres (MSAC) from July 18 to 29.

The event would include a junior men's and women's individual tournament, as well as the junior women's team championships, said a press release issued here. Squash Australia CEO Robert Donaghue said, "We are extremely excited to be hosting the World Junior Championships right here in our backyard. This event is not only a key step in our 22-26 strategic plan, but it is also the ideal way to kick off a decade of sport leading up to the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Victoria."

"Being able to showcase the best junior squash talent from nations all over the world is truly a unique opportunity that not only excites the squash community but also our own junior athletes, many of whom are aiming to compete in the Commonwealth Games," he added. Australia is considered a traditional powerhouse of the game, winning a total of 13 junior championships across the men's, women's and team events.

WSF President Zena Wooldridge expressed her excitement at the championships - returning to Australia. "Bringing these Junior World Championships to Melbourne contributes to the positive momentum we see behind Squash Australia's growth and performance strategies. WSF is delighted to bring a World Championship back to Australia as part of an exciting decade ahead for major events in Australia," Wooldridge said. Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Steve Dimopoulos said.

## Marina, Sana, Urooj excited for Women's League exhibition matches

RAWALPINDI (APP): The three Women's League exhibition matches are all set to take place at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on 8, 10 and 11 March with 10 foreign players from seven countries to feature in the T20 matches. Women's matches will start at 2pm and will be followed by the men's matches at 7pm.

Bismah Maroof will captain Amazons, which include Ireland's Laura Delany, England's trio of Lauren Winfield-Hill, Maia Bouchier and Tammy Beaumont, and Australia's Tess Flintoff. Nida Dar will lead Super Women, which will comprise Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu, Danni Wyatt of England, Jahanara Alam of Bangladesh, South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt and Lea Tahuhu of New Zealand.

Former Pakistan captains Sana Mir and Urooj Mumtaz and former international player Marina Iqbal, who are all part of the commentary panel for the HBL PSL 8, expressed their delight on the hosting of the women's exhibition matches next week in Rawalpindi.

Marina Iqbal, who represented Pakistan in 78 matches in a statement said: "The hosting of exhibition matches is a step forward in the growth of women's cricket. The matches provide a huge opportunity to the emerging players to share the dressing room with international stars. When we used to play, we always looked forward to such opportunities, meeting with the stars, interacting with them and asking them about their skills and fitness."

"It is an opportunity for budding cricketers to play alongside top cricketers,

learn from them, compete with them and also see where they stand in the game."

Sana Mir, who represented Pakistan in 226 international matches, said: "I am really excited as this is the first time exhibition matches are taking place for the women's league. This will provide an opportunity to the women cricketers to come forward and showcase their skills."

"These exhibition matches are very important for the local players to know and understand the requirements of the modern day cricket, what international players are doing, how they can improve their skill-set and how they can perform in the pressure situations."

"The league at home will not only help players to improve their game, but it also gives them a chance to get selected in foreign leagues."

Urooj Mumtaz, who played for Pakistan in 48 international matches from 2004 to 2010, said: "These exhibition matches taking place alongside HBL PSL 8 is a huge thing, it will increase the viewership and attracts the younger audience to come forward and adopt this game, boosting women's cricket."

"The cricketers playing in the league have a great opportunity to inspire young women not just pick this game but pick up any other sport because cricket is playing a huge role for other sports in Pakistan."

"I will urge the people in Pindi to come and support women's cricket and enjoy the level of women's cricket which has gone up in this country after a time."

**Squads:** Amazons –

Bismah Maroof (captain), Aliya Riaz, Anam Amin, Areesha Noor, Eymaan Fatima, Fatima Khan, Fatima Sana, Ghulam Fatima, Gull Feroza, Kainat Imtiaz, Laura Delany (Ireland), Lauren Winfield-Hill (England), Maia Bouchier (England), Nushra Sundhu, Sadaf Shamas, Tammy Beaumont (England), Tess Flintoff (Australia) and Umm-e-Hani

Super Women – Nida Dar (captain) Aimen Anwar, Chamari Athapaththu (Sri Lanka), Danni Wyatt (England), Iram Javed, Jahanara Alam (Bangladesh), Laura Wolvaardt (South Africa), Lea Tahuhu (New Zealand), Muneeba Ali, Natalia Parvaiz, Omaima Sohail, Sadia Iqbal, Shawaal Zulfiqar, Sidra Amin, Sidra Nawaz, Syeda Aroob Shah, Syeda Masooma Zahra and Tuba Hassan

**Schedule:** 8 Mar – 1st match, 2pm, Pindi Cricket Stadium. Shozab Raza and Saleema Imtiaz (on-field umpires), Tariq Rasheed (third umpire) and Humaira Farah fourth umpire. Mohammad Anees (match referee)

10 Mar – 2nd match, 2pm, Pindi Cricket Stadium. Shozab Raza and Humaira Farah (on-field umpires), Tariq Rasheed (third umpire) and Saleema Imtiaz (fourth umpire). Mohammad Anees (match referee)

11 Mar – 3rd match, 2pm, Tariq Rasheed and Saleema Imtiaz (on-field umpires), Shozab Raza (third umpire) and Humaira Farah (fourth umpire). Mohammad Anees (match referee).



LAHORE: President Dr Arif Alvi giving away trophy to winners of FG Polo team in Final of 2nd President of Pakistan Polo Cup 2023.





## In brief

### 59 kite sellers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police on Sunday arrested 59 kite sellers and kite flyers during a crack-down here, informed a police spokesman. Rawal Town police arrested 12 kite flyers and recovered 108 kites and strings from them. Similarly, Potohar Town police held 45 kite sellers and recovered 725 kites and strings from their possession. While, Saddar Division Police arrested 02 kite flyers and recovered kites and strings from them. Police have registered separate cases against all the accused. City Police Officer Syed Khalid Mahmood Hamdani said the ongoing crackdown against kite flyers and kite sellers will be intensified. He made it clear that strict action will be taken against those involved in illegal activity.

### IRSA releases 97,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 97,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 54,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1449.30 feet and was 51.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 16,800 cusecs while outflow as 55,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1106.30 feet, which was 56.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded 20,000 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 63,000, 39,800, 34,100 and 9,700 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 9,100 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### 4349 emergency calls received in Feb

RAWALPINDI (APP): The District Emergency Officer, Engineer Kamran Rasheed reviewed the performance of all the stations during the last month of February with the aim of improving the delivery service. He said that delivery of emergency services of the same quality would be continued without any discrimination. Media Coordinator Rescue Rawalpindi released the data and said that Rescue 1122 received 4349 emergency calls in the last month and 3942 emergency victims were responded timely. Some 1214 of these emergency calls were related to road traffic accidents. Similarly, 115 minor fire incidents and 482 special rescue operations were conducted whereas 05 incident of gas explosions and 02 building collapse incidents were reported, 2378 medical emergencies and 153 crime incidents were included in the report. He further said that most of the traffic accidents due to rash driving and one wheeling on motorcycles were reported.

### Three POs arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested three proclaimed offenders wanted in miscellaneous cases during crackdown here on Sunday, informed police spokesman. Westridge Police held Farooq Hussain in cheque dishonor case and wanted by police since 2020. Similarly, Airport Police nabbed Shaukat in case of breach of trust and wanted by police since 2021. While, Wah Cantt police arrested Zubair in kidnapping and rape case and wanted by police since last year. SP Potohar Waqas Khan appreciated the performance of police teams said that the strict action will be taken against the wanted criminals and their facilitators.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi addressing a press conference.

## Pakistani universities contribute over Rs 500m for earthquake relief

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani universities have pledged an amount of Rs 500 million for earthquake relief activities in Türkiye.

A 34-member high-level Pakistani delegation from 18 universities participated in the Eurasian Higher Education Summit in Istanbul under the auspices of Private Sector Universities Pakistan (APSUP). The universities pledged more than Rs 500 million for the earthquake-affected areas of Türkiye which would be spent on relief, rehabilitation, and scholarships for students from the affected areas.

During the summit, the Pakistani Pavilion was set up, and the Chairman of APSUP, Prof. Dr. Abdul Rehman, along with Rector Superior University, Prof. Dr. Sumaira Rehman, handed over a cheque of 400,000 Turkish liras to Elif Aydin, Vice Chairman of the Board Anatolian

Education and Cultural Foundation Türkiye.

The President of Eurasian Universities Union, Prof. Dr. Mustafa Aydin, expressed his gratitude to APSUP and the Pakistani nation for their continued support to the Turkish people, especially during hard times.

Several universities in Pakistan extended their support to the earthquake-affected people of Türkiye.

The University of Lahore donated one million US dollars in the form of 150 tons of edibles, fire-proof and waterproof tents, blankets, and medicines. The University of Faisalabad donated 110 hundred dollars for community services, and a 20-member team from the University of Faisalabad participated in rehabilitation activities in the affected areas.

The University of Sialkot and the

International Institute of Science, Arts, and Technology Gujranwala jointly announced scholarships worth 10 million Pakistani rupees for Turkish students affected by the earthquake.

Under the University of Management and Technology Lahore Scholarship Program for Türkiye, scholarships worth one million dollars will be awarded, with special preference given to students from the affected areas. Additionally, the Coordinator General of COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Chaudhary who was also part of the Pakistani delegation, offered fully funded scholarships and research fellowships to Turkish nationals severely affected by the earthquake in collaboration with APSUP and member universities of COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence.

The book will be launched under the banner of the Institute of Policy Studies in collaboration with the National University of Science and Technology. According to Institute of Policy Studies, Prof. Dr. Tughrul Yamin was a professional soldier before he opted for a second career in academia.

He served in the elite 7 Frontier Force Regiment and retired as a brigadier after 36 years of active service. He was awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military) for his meritorious service.

The book is the first brief academic account on international peacekeeping focusing on Pakistan's perspective, a press release said. Its various chapters provide a detailed account of different aspects of the UN peacekeeping missions around the world. The book includes 14 chapters each covering several subjects by different authors related to the peacekeeping. The book also gave an insight into various areas of UN peacekeeping operations, including its historical background.

"UN peacekeeping forms an important tenet of Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan began participating in UN peacekeeping operations in 1960. Since then the country has earned the distinction of being one of the most consistent and professional peacekeepers.

"Evidence-based authentic data as per international standards will be used for delimitation of constituencies in the next general elections as well as for public policy planning."

The success of the census only depends upon the quality of data collection, therefore, we had conducted quality training programs for enhancing the capacity of field staff on concept and tablet usage, he concluded.

Islamabad. A commuter in the park commented that my daughter is quite amused after seeing so many different kinds of flowers here in spring, especially alongside the roads of the capital city.

A student said that apart from beautification, flowers and roses in this season are a great source of recreation and entertainment for the residents.

An owner of a local nursery near Jasmine Garden claimed that almost all varieties of flower's sale was being raised in the local nurseries, adding, a rush of buyers, including women and children, can be seen in the nurseries these days, especially on Sundays.

A buyer woman said the prices of flower saplings were still beyond the purchasing capacity of the common man. Nursery owners also added that Gezanea, Petunia, carnations and other flowers are suitable for the Spring season. "Most of the citizens buy Korean grass as it grows slowly and demands less care with a great carpeted look that suited Pakistan's environment", said a visitor in the nursery.

## Book launched on March 8

ISLAMABAD (APP): A book titled 'International Peacekeeping, perspectives from Pakistan' by Dr Tughrul Yamin will be launched on March 8 which includes research work on international peacekeeping.

The book will be launched under the banner of the Institute of Policy Studies in collaboration with the National University of Science and Technology. According to Institute of Policy Studies, Prof. Dr. Tughrul Yamin was a professional soldier before he opted for a second career in academia.

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## Nursing Profession: The backbone of healthcare system

ISLAMABAD (APP): The nursing profession is considered as the backbone of the healthcare system due to its essential role in the functioning of hospitals and provision of patient care.

However, despite the important role of nurses, many people still view them as assistants to doctors, and their job descriptions are often overlooked or misunderstood.

In developing countries like ours, nursing faces a unique set of challenges that make it more difficult to provide quality care and attract people to the profession. One of the biggest challenges the profession faces is the shortage of trained professionals in the field as according to the World Health Organization (WHO), low, and middle-income countries will face a global shortage of 10 million health workers, including nurses, midwives, and doctors by 2030.

In Pakistan, the shortage of nurses is particularly acute, with a ratio of 1.5 nurses per 1,000 population, which is lower than the WHO's minimum recommendation of 2.5 nurses per 1,000 population. Moreover, in many healthcare settings nurses often find themselves taking on additional responsibilities to ensure that patients receive the care they need.

This shortage has a significant impact on the quality of healthcare thus making the nurses to overwork and compromise on patient care. "We have a lot of patients to take care of, and not enough staff to handle them all. It's a challenge to provide quality care when we're stretched so thin," said Ujala Javed, a registered nurse Pakistan Nursing Council.

The nurses are also often asked to perform tasks that are outside of their scope of practice, such as performing procedures that require a physician's expertise or making decisions that are typically reserved for doctors. These situations can arise due to a lack of

## BISP beneficiaries to get 25 per cent increase in quarterly installment: Faisal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday said the beneficiaries of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) would get 25 per cent increase in quarterly installments from March as per the government efforts to extend relief to the masses of the country.

Addressing a press conference, the SAPM said that Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) is providing relief to 8.9 million people across the country and decided to increase the number of quarterly installments keeping in view of the suffering of people of Pakistan owing to the current inflation.

He said that the government is also providing subsidies on essential food items through Utility Stores Corporation to the beneficiaries of BISP aiming to extend the maximum relief to the vulnerable segment of the society.

Talking about the Dynamic Registry survey, Faisal Kundi said that survey has been inaugurated in all districts across the country including Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir to identify and register more deserving beneficiaries living below the poverty line.

He said that all the people who do not have BISP cards can visit Dynamic Registry offices adding that it is not a door to door survey and intended beneficiaries have to visit survey offices for the registration". Faisal Kundi said that the present government is fully cognizant of the suffering of the people of Pakistan and has serious concerns about inflation which is effecting the down-trodden segments mostly.

He at the outset also lauded the

efforts and working of BISP team and said that in case of any grievance the beneficiaries could register their complaint in the district offices and we are committed to resolve the issues within 24 hours.

About Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) resignations, he said that resignations of the PTI members of the National Assembly (MNAs) were accepted at their own request but later they went to court and said they were not serious.

He said that Shah Mehmood Qureshi on the floor of the house said that they want to resign now how he can deny his own statement. Faisal Kundi said that they are saying that we are hiding from election but the fact is that they themselves are doing so and going to court for the cancellation of their resignation. However, the court has yet not issued any order about the cancellation of their resignations, he added.

The SAPM said that PPP is ready for elections in the country, however, decision in this regard will be taken in accordance with the constitution. It is the duty of the Election Commission of Pakistan to announce the date of the elections.

Kundi termed PTI government responsible for worsening of economic situation in the country saying that he inherited devastated economy from PTI but we have taken the responsibility to put the country back on track and we are committed at doing so. He said that Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) always respect courts and we want to make Pakistan a country where the law is equal for everyone. We don't want to make courts political.

## Railways track rehabilitation in full swing

ISLAMABAD (APP): The rehabilitation work on railways track was in full swing, improving the speed of the locomotives to carry passengers to their respective destinations on time, Pakistan Railways officials said on Sunday.

The infrastructure, including the track and signalling system from Karachi to Peshawar, Main Line-I (ML-I), and doubling of track from Lahore to Peshawar (462.20 Km) was also being revamped, he told APP.

The official noted that the length of the track was 1,726 kilometres and the department has planned to improve speed up to 160 kilometres per hour in the project of up-gradation of ML-I under the China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC). In this regard, the official said that a modified PC-I amounting to Rs. 9.851 billion has got approval from the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC).

To improve the speed of the trains and ensure fixed timings, he said the procurement of 230 passenger coaches and 820 High Capacity Wagons under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) project was also under process.

The official said that around 46 Completely-Built-Up (CBU) passenger coaches have been procured up till now

while the remaining 184 would be manufactured in the country and the coaches would be able to travel at the speed of 160km/h.

He said the rolling stock being procured under this project would be capable to run at a speed of 160 km/h whereas the department has a dedicated fleet of 55 diesel-electric locomotives of 4000-4500 HP for freight operation to cater maximum haulage at higher speed.

"The installation of Computer Based Interlocking (CBI) system on 48 stations on ML-I to improve signalling and interlocking for higher speed and safety of train operation," the official added. To a question, he said Pakistan Railways was a big organization comprising of around 63000 employees and its network was spread throughout the country. The official said the employees were well cared for owing to having several welfare activities, including healthcare facilities through an intensive network of hospitals, dispensaries and child healthcare units.

He said that provision of government accommodation according to entitlement and priority list, staff benevolent funds, benefits and incentives provided through Prime Minister's Family Assistance Package policy for deceased employees' families were part of these facilities.

## Media awareness stressed for countrywide first-ever Digital Population Census 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): Spokesperson of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Muhammad Sarwar Gondal on Sunday stressed for media awareness for the society about the first-ever digital population census 2023 in the country which would continue for one month to help make future development plans, creation of jobs, assembly seats and for keeping development funds for local urban and rural areas. Around 121000 field enumerators have been deployed for the purpose, he said while talking to PTV news channel.

Muhammad Sarwar Gondal further said during this phase, the enumerators are visiting door-to-door with the latest tablet technology to collect household family data, adding that the aim of the census was to collect and collate details about property usage, types of businesses and the demographics of individuals, nationals and

residents alike. "The government aims to conduct this census to plan better policies for the growth and development of the society", he added. To a question, Gondal replied, "There are already many reservations over the sixth population census conducted in 2017, and now after a long gap of five years, we are again conducting a digital population census with the coordination of all provincial stakeholders."

He urged the citizens to actively participate in the census and their personal information would remain confidential. "All the nationals and residents, families and private sector companies should cooperate with the census teams, as it benefits everyone and contributes to advancing the development of the country's services."

"Every piece of information provided to the census teams contributes to serving the community, whose mem-

## Multi-coloured spring flowers becoming key attraction for citizens

ISLAMABAD (APP): With the ongoing spring season, a number of multi-coloured flowers around the Capital city's roads and its nurseries had become a key attraction for commuters where residents in large numbers are thronging nurseries to buy plants to enhance the beauty of lawns.

Spring season starts from February in Pakistan and is considered one of the most ideal weather for growing plans and flowers, said a worker in H-9 nursery while talking to PTV news channel.

Colorful flowers adorn nurseries and roads which was attracting to plant lovers towards themselves, said a resident.

"With the start of this season demand for indoor and outdoor plants, flowers, bulbs has been tremendously increased and surprisingly youngsters and old age people are taking a keen interest not only in traditional gardening in homes", said a resident.

Horticulture exhibitions and Jashn-e-Baharan festivals are also helping people and nature enthusiasts closer to the beauty of nature, said a worker in Jasmine Garden

Islamabad. A commuter in the park commented that my daughter is quite amused after seeing so many different kinds of flowers here in spring, especially alongside the roads of the capital city.

A student said that apart from beautification, flowers and roses in this season are a great source of recreation and entertainment for the residents.

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A buyer woman said the prices of flower saplings were still beyond the purchasing capacity of the common man. Nursery owners also added that Gezanea, Petunia, carnations and other flowers are suitable for the Spring season. "Most of the citizens buy Korean grass as it grows slowly and demands less care with a great carpeted look that suited Pakistan's environment", said a visitor in the nursery.



Mol top team visit Badghis

BADGHIS (Agencies): A top delegation of Interior Ministry traveled Badghis amid to intensify fighting against drugs. A delegation with the headship of the Inspection and Evaluation department chief of Interior Ministry met with Badghis governor Mawlawi Abdul Samaad to discuss accelerating fight against drugs. He reminded saying that based on the decree of the supreme leader, cultivation and drug trafficking are prohibited in the country.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Shabaan 13, 1444 — Monday, March 06, 2023

New bridge inaugurated

KHOST (Agencies): A bridge that connects two districts of Ismail Khel and Mandozi inaugurated in Khost after reconstruction. The bridge cost 40 million Afghanis, which is paid from the government budget, said Engineer Mohammad Habib Wardak, in charge of the project. The residents of the region expressed happiness with the construction of this bridge, saying that this bridge was destroyed by floods a while back, which caused many problems for the people of the region.

Nimroz residents call to reopen girls' schools

NIMROZ (TOLOnews): As the new academic year approaches, residents of Nimroz province asked the Islamic Emirate to reopen girls' school above sixth grade in the new year. They said women make up half of the society and they urged the current government to obey the wishes of the citizens of the country. A student, Razia, told TOLOnews that she eagerly awaits the news of the reopening of schools each morning. Razia said that she hopes to study in medical school after graduating and through this way serve the citizens. "I wake up every morning hoping that we hear

good news about the opening of schools. This is what we are really waiting for," Razia told TOLOnews. "We ask the Islamic Emirate to pay attention to the education of our children soon," said Omid, a resident of Nimroz. Meanwhile, some students at a private school in the province asked officials of the current government to reopen schools for all girls in the country. "We ask the Islamic Emirate to reopen girls' schools and universities," said Qudratullah, a student. "I ask the government to open the educational institutions for our sisters. We need the education of our sisters," said Jan

Mohammad Alekozi, head of Bawar School in Nimruz. Nimruz local officials said that they are waiting for the order of the Ministry of Education to reopen girls' schools above the sixth grade. "Following the direction of the high ranking official of the ministry, we are ready for it," said Gul Ahmad Haqqani, head of education in Nimroz. It has been nearly two years since girls' schools above the sixth grade were closed, and it has been about three months that they have been banned from going to universities, yet it is still unknown when these institutions will reopen.

Embassy identifies 32 Afghans in shipwreck

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Embassy of Afghanistan in Italy said in a statement that the identity of 32 Afghans had been confirmed as the victims of the Italian shipwreck. According to the press released by the Embassy, out of 180 people on board, 67 bodies have been found so far. The Afghan ambassador in Italy met with the representative of the Italian Ministry of Interior during his visit to the site of the accident and asked them to address the needs of the victims' families. The statement also said that the relatives of almost all the victims allowed the Italian authorities to bury the bodies in the cemetery in Crotone and other cemeteries in Italy. Meanwhile, five Afghan citizens were transferred to Croton hospital for necessary treatment, and 72 others were sent to the immigration centre in the city. According to the report, last Sunday, at least 80 Afghan migrants, including women and children, died in the shipwreck off the southern coast of Italy.

DAB to auction 16m USD today

KABUL (Agencies): Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) said that it will put in auction 16 million US dollars as part of efforts to keep the local currency afghani stable by Monday. The Central Bank has asked eligible banks and money changer services to participate in the tender, adding that the winners of the auction are obliged to settle their accounts by the end of the day. Partial settlement of transactions is not allowed and the winners of the auction are obliged to deliver the money owed to Da Afghanistan Bank in cash once, within a certain time, the bank added. A day back, the central bank auctioned 16 million US dollars to further strengthen the value of the Afghani currency.

Over 60m Afs collected monthly

BAGHLAN (Agencies): Local officials at the department of Mines and Petroleum of Baghlan say that over 60 million Afghanis are collected monthly from Tala wa Barfak Baghlan coal mines. The provincial head of Baghlan Mines and Petroleum, Mawlawi Abdullah Hamid, said: "For better extraction from Tala wa Barfak coal mine and to prevent abuses, plans have been drafted and more people have been recruited to weigh the extracted coal, adding that monthly over 60 million afghanis are collected from the mines and transferred to the government account.

EU Special Envoy urges Afghan interim govt to reopen girl's school



KABUL (Khaama Press): The special envoy of the European Union for Afghanistan met with the acting prime minister's political deputy of the de facto government, calling for reopening of girls' schools. Thomas Nicholson, EU special representative for Afghanistan, accompanied by Raffaella Lodice, the EU

Charge d' Affairs and acting head of delegation, said the political deputy prime minister, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir: "Afghan boys and girls want education, and we support both of them; I wish that the gates of education will be opened for boys and girls." The de facto authorities banned girls' education beyond sixth grade since

they took control of Power in Afghanistan, which faced an intense backlash from international organizations, European Union, and Islamic countries. Many organizations, including European Union Mission in Afghanistan, have called on the Taliban to immediately reverse the decree ban on women's education and work.

Meanwhile, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the political deputy of the acting Prime Minister's office, asked the EU special envoy to recognize the Interim regime of Afghanistan. He continued by saying that the world should recognize the interim government since they have met all requirements for recognition.

Over 1600 Afghan nationals return to country from Iran

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation announced that 1,682 Afghan refugees returned to the country from Iran. The returnees entered Afghanistan through the 'Islamqala' crossing point in western Herat province, and the needy families have been introduced to the United Nations Agency for Refugees for help. The Afghan refugee authorities have reported that thousands of Afghan citizens have returned from Iran in the recent past. However, it is still not clear whether the returnees were forced to leave Iran, or willingly came back to Afghanistan. After the Islamic Emirate seized power in August 2021, thousands of Afghans migrated to the neighboring countries including Iran and Pakistan, mostly through Chaman and Torkham crossing points. A large majority of these migrants did not have legal stay documents including visas or stay permits, now facing serious challenges in the host countries. Furthermore, the Iranian government forcefully extradites those Afghan refugees who fail to provide legal stay documents (visa or refugee card) from UNHCR. Meanwhile, Afghanistan's



Consulate General in Karachi on Saturday said that 137 Afghan nationals were released and will be extradited to Afghanistan in the coming days. Since the return of the Taliban to power, more than 250,000 Afghan migrants have entered Pakistan, some legally, others without valid passports and visas, according to The Guardian reports. Since last summer, Pakistan's Interior Ministry has taken serious steps to arrest undocumented Afghan

nationals and forcefully deport them to Afghanistan. It is believed that more than 600 Afghan refugees have been extradited in three days in January alone, and detentions have increased throughout Pakistan. The incarceration and forceful deportation of Afghan citizens in the neighboring countries including Iran, and Pakistan continue, as they flee Afghanistan fearing persecution and death threats under the Taliban regime.

Chinese family supporting business

K A N D A H A R (TOLOnews): A Chinese family living in Kandahar has provided job opportunities for vulnerable families in the province. Xin Fie is one member, along with two others. The family has lived in Kandahar for the past four years. The family is engaged in

business-supporting activities. "I would advise that a business should begin small. It will become major within 10 to 20 years," Fie said. "I am my husband's assistant. We coordinate with the representatives of some companies in China and I also run the financial

affairs of a family and a company," said Fie's wife. This comes as a number of families in Kandahar called on the caretaker government and traders to provide them jobs. "The government and the traders should work on a plan to create jobs, so that the people can rescue their families from poverty,"

said Ghamai, a shopkeeper. "These vulnerable families need to have a job to at least make 5,000 to 10,000 Afs," said Sardar Aha, a resident of Kandahar. The Chinese family has helped dozens of families in forming chicken farms. The family also provides business consultation to the residents of Kandahar.

Chemical arms put negative impact on environment



KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, attended national planting campaign on Sunday. "Afghanistan an agricultural country with an abundance of water and a good natural environment", said Deputy PM Baradar adding, that the

use of hazardous bombs and chemical weapons has had a negative impact on our country's air and natural environment. Deputy PM Baradar, termed planting and maintaining trees the only way to counteract the impacts of this toxic environment and lethal poisons. He said that making the country green and environ-

mentally friendly is not just the government's job, but everyone's responsibility. On this campaign, he called on all citizens, mainly Kabul residents, to plant and take care of at least one sapling in their houses. Deputy Prime Minister Baradar said that if the citizens do so, all the corners of Kabul will turn green in the next few years.

19 people killed in violent incidents nationwide last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Afghan and American officials last week accused each other of violating and not fully implementing the Doha Agreement, but Washington evinced an interest in engagement with Kabul despite reservations about its policies. **Casualties** Last week, 19 people were killed in separate incidents of violence across the country. Two Daesh affiliates were killed and a third captured alive during an operation by security forces in the 17th district of Kabul city. Three kidnappers were killed and a fourth arrested and a man rescued from their clutches in Kabul. In western Herat province, six Daesh militants including a woman were killed during an operation in Herat city last night. According to reports, unidentified gunmen killed

a person in Parwan, a young man in Logar, a doctor in Samangan, a shepherd in Faryab, and a person killed his wife in Baghlan. A suicide bomber was killed before reaching his target in northeastern Badakhshan province last week. Note: The casualties' figures are based on reports reaching Pajhwok Afghan News. Some incidents may have gone unreported or sources provided incorrect figures. In the previous week, according to sources, six people were killed and two others were injured in various incidents across the country. Before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of civilians, government forces and insurgents would get killed and wounded every week. **Doha agreement and world's interaction with**

**Afghanistan** Last week, the Afghan Embassy in Iran and the Afghan Consulate in Istanbul were officially handed over to the Islamic Emirate without recognizing their government. The Islamic Emirate has so far sent its diplomats to Pakistan, Turkmenistan, China, Qatar, Turkey and Russia. The Doha Agreement was signed on February 29, 2020 between former US special representative for reconciliation in Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban's top negotiator Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in Doha. The agreement paved the way for complete withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan and intra-Afghan talks. The intra-Afghan talks that started in Doha failed to reach a conclusion and the previous government fell on August 15, 2021 and

was replaced by the current caretaker government. Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, now deputy prime minister, told a gathering marking the third anniversary of the deal in Kabul, said the Islamic Emirate opened a new chapter in the history of Afghanistan by signing the Doha agreement. He accused Washington of repeatedly violating the Doha agreement, insisting the Islamic Emirate wanted good interaction with all countries, but the US did not want to interact with the Afghan government and was not allowing other countries to do so. But the spokesman of the US State Department, Ned Price, said the Islamic Emirate was not committed to the Doha Agreement. Zalmay Khalilzad, former US special representative for reconciliation in Afghanistan, called the Doha Agreement a good opportunity for Afghanistan

and asked the Islamic Emirate and the United States to take advantage of this opportunity. In an interview with a private broadcaster, the US special envoy for Afghanistan said the caretaker government had not taken significant steps towards normalisation. Thomas West said the US had concerns about the interim government's policies towards Afghans. The IEA did not have a permanent representative at the UN and formal links with international financial institutions, he noted. West added the Afghan rulers did not have access to the country's frozen assets abroad. "I do not envision that we will budge on any of these issues until they make more responsible decisions." Despite its concerns about the current government's policies toward the Afghan people, the US

desired to engage with them, he explained. "We do favour a policy of engagement, that is why I met Taliban leaders in December," he argued, indicating future meetings with IEA representatives on American interests in Afghanistan. However, Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said US representatives had been and were in contact with them. "They should tell us what they want from the Islamic Emirate. The Islamic Emirate has taken effective steps and is ready to protect the relations between the two countries and to change from war situation to political and cooperation situation." In its latest report, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) blamed the Doha agreement, withdrawal of foreign forces, differences between former president

Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah and some of Ghani's decisions for the collapse of the Afghan forces. **Girls' education and human rights** US special representative Thomas West and former Senate chairman Fazl Hadi Muslimyar discussed the political, humanitarian and economic situations of Afghanistan and the need for national dialogue between the Afghans. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the United Nations Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva that Afghanistan's caretaker government had closed the door of relations with the international community by stopping girls' from education and women from work. Also, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Turkey and the United Nations Special Representative for Human Rights criticized the restrictions on girls' education

and women's work in Afghanistan and asked Kabul to cancel its decisions. About women's work, Zabihullah Mujahid said women were allowed to work in sectors where they were required like health, passport office, education, police and prisons. He said the girls' education would resume after necessary conditions were put in place. Some residents of south-easter Khost province also asked the government to reopen schools for girls above the sixth grade. Previously, various sources had requested the opening of girls' schools above the sixth grade as well as universities for girls. Two days ago, the Ministry of Higher Education said public-sector universities in cold provinces, including Kabul, would reopen next week only for male students.



# PEMRA imposes ban on broadcast of Imran Khan's speeches, pressers

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has imposed a ban on broadcasting 'live and recorded' speeches and press conferences of former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan on all satellite TV channels with immediate effect.

"It has been observed that Imran Khan [Chairman PTI] in his speeches/statements is continuously alleging state institutions by leveling baseless allegations and spreading hate speech through his provocative statements against state institutions and officers which is prejudicial to the maintenance of law and order and is likely to disturb public peace and tranquility," stated the notification issued by the regulatory authority.

PEMRA noted that airing of "baseless allegations, hateful, slanderous and unwarranted statement" against state institutions and officers was in sheer violation of Article 19 of the Constitution of Pakistan and a judgment of Supreme Court of Pakistan (SC) passed in Suo Moto Case.

The authority further said that after analysing the content of Imran's speech, it

has been observed that the content was aired live by the licensees without effective time delay mechanism which is a violation provision of Pemra laws and in disobedience of judgements passed by the courts. "The competent authority i.e. Chairman PEMRA in view of the above mentioned background and reasons, in exercise of delegated powers of the Authority vested in Section 27(a) of the PEMRA Ordinance 2002 as amended by PEMRA (Amendment) Act 2007, hereby prohibits broadcast of live speech of Imran Khan on all satellite TV channels with immediate effect," it added.

It further directed all satellite TV channels to ensure that an impartial Editorial Board be constituted as required under Clause 17 of Electronic Media (Programmes and Advertisement) Code of Conduct 2015 in order to ensure that their platform is not used by anyone for uttering remarks in any manner "which are contemptuous and against any state institution and hateful, prejudicial to law and order situation". It warned of legal action as per Pemra laws in case of any violation of the directives.

## TIFA meeting agreed for regular follow up engagements to ensure progress: Naveed

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Commerce Minister Syed Naveed Qamar has expressed hope that after revival of the program by International Monetary Fund (IMF) Board, the reserves would increase with inflow from friendly countries and international banks.

In a statement Sunday, the Federal Minister said the revival of the program alone is not a panacea for all ills, rather; we need structural reforms and our processes need to be changed. Naveed Qamar said that the revival of the dialogue would significantly boost confidence of the business community and would help in providing them with a conducive environment. He said that the meeting of the Pakistan-US Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Ministerial Council had agreed to have regular follow-up engagements during 2023 to ensure progress on all issues to achieve tangible result.

Expressing satisfaction over the high-level dia-

logues in various sectors including energy, and climate change, the minister said that the series of dialogues reflected that Pakistan is being seen as a sovereign trading partner of the United States.

"United States is an important country for us and we want our relations to further grow in all possible areas," he added.

Commerce Minister said that he had a fulsome and comprehensive dialogue with the United States Trade Representative (USTR) focusing on a wide spectrum of trade and investment, issues of mutual interest including agriculture, textiles, digital trade, enhancing market access, cooperation on good regulatory practices including intellectual property and labor rights, and women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. He said that the two sides discussed key issues including enhancing exports of Pakistani mangoes and dates to the US, increased market access for

Pakistan's textiles, increasing US investments in Pakistan's agriculture sector especially in the development of hybrid, climate-resilient seeds and supporting Pakistan's IT and tech industry. Talking about the economic challenges being faced by the country, the minister said that Pakistan has taken tough decisions to revive IMF program.

The minister expressed the hope that with formal approval of revival of the program by IMF Board, the reserves would increase with inflow from friendly countries and international banks. He, however, stated that the revival of the program alone was not a panacea for all ills. "We need structural reforms. Our processes need to be changed," he remarked.

Naveed Qamar further said that the revival of the dialogue would significantly boost confidence of the business community and would help in providing them with a conducive environment marked by stability and predictability.

## Islamabad police to launch crackdown against Shibli Faraz for 'misinformation'

LAHORE (NNI): The Islamabad police announced on Sunday a crackdown against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Shibli Faraz for making a "false statement" over former prime minister Imran Khan's presence in Zaman Park.

The Islamabad police shared a post on Twitter, saying, "The PTI leaders had said Imran Khan was not present at his residence. Action will be taken against Shibli Faraz for giving misinformation."

"The PTI leaders have ensured to obey the law. We hope that they will present themselves before the court. We are trying our all-out efforts to maintain the law and order situation in the country. We will implement the court's order in a bid to present accused Imran Khan before the court on March 7." Earlier, Mr Faraz had received the arrest warrant for the deposed premier. He wrote on the warrant that he [Imran] was not present in his residence, adding that the law will be followed.

## Stop human traffickers, says Pope Francis

ROME (Agencies): Pope Francis on Sunday called on authorities to stop human traffickers operating in the Mediterranean, as he expressed his sorrow over last week's migrant boat disaster off Italy's Calabrian coast, in which dozens of people were killed. "I renew my appeal to prevent such tragedies from happening again. May traffickers of human beings be stopped," the pope said in his weekly address to crowds in St. Peter's Square.

Local authorities said 70 bodies had so far been recovered following the incident. The migrants had departed from Turkey and were from countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Somalia and Syria.

"May journeys of hope never again turn into journeys of death, may the clear waters of the Mediterranean no longer be bloodied by such dramatic accidents," the pope said.

Around 80 people survived after the boat broke up and sank in rough seas near Steccato di Cutro, a resort on the Calabria region's eastern coast. Authorities estimated it had carried up to 200 migrants.

Three alleged traffickers were arrested this week and prosecutors began looking into the way emergency services responded to the disaster, after accusations that authorities were slow to react. "I pray for the many victims of the shipwreck, for their families and for those who survived," the pope said.

Right-wing Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who this week called on fellow European Union leaders to do more to halt illegal immigration, praised the pope's remarks.

The government was "continuing to deploy all necessary forces to combat human traffickers and stop deaths at sea," she said in a post on Facebook.

"Some 2,000 shelters have been burnt, leaving about 12,000 forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals shelterless," Mijanur Rahman, Bangladesh's refugee commissioner, told AFP news agency.

The blaze was brought under control within three hours but at least 35 mosques and 21 learning centres for the refugees were also destroyed, he added.

Hrusikesh Harichandan, from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, told the BBC there had been "massive damage" to the camp.

He said basic services such as water centres and testing facilities had also been affected. "My shelter was gutted, [My shop] was also burnt," Mamun Johar, a 30-year-old Rohingya man, told AFP. "The fire took everything from me, everything." Thick black clouds were seen rising above Camp 11, one of many in the border district where more than a million Rohingya refugees live.

The camps, overcrowded and squalid, are vulnerable to fires. Between January 2021 and December 2022, there were 222 fire incidents in the Rohingya camps including 60 cases of arson, according to a Bangladesh defence ministry report released last month.



ISLAMABAD: An official collecting data from a citizen during the first-ever digital population and housing census at Ghouri Town.

# Fazl sees Imran as inept for holding talks

--Says Faiz Hameed, Saqib Nisar still lobbying for IK

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman bashed on Sunday Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman, saying the latter was inept for negotiations.

Addressing the press conference, the PDM President has alleged that Lt Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hameed and former chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) Saqib Nisar were still lobbying for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, urging institution to take notice of the matter. The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) chief claimed that ideological divisions were being witnessed within the institutions for the first time in history, adding that such things happen when 'some outsiders' were calling the shots.

The Maulana urged the institutions to take notice of Lt Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hameed and former chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) Saqib Nisar's involvement, saying that they were still lobbying for PTI Chairman Imran Khan.

He also regretted that the country's situation has worsened due to the policies of last three-year, alleging that whichever country starts helping, Imran Khan becomes an obstacle in its way. The PDM president also questioned holding of general elec-

tions amid 'rising terrorism' in the country. "Law and order situation in the country is not suitable for elections," he said.

He also pointed out terror activities in the country, saying that several attacks were orchestrated on police stations and security forces. "There are areas where many politicians cannot visit," he said, adding that in such a situation election cannot be held.

Last month, the Ministry of Defence had excused itself from providing security for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab Assembly elections and the by-elections of 93 National Assembly constituencies.

Asserting that his party believed in elections at the given time, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, however, expressed surprise over the Supreme Court of Pakistan's decision in which it had ordered elections to the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) assemblies within 90 days. "We believe that the elections should be held on time," he remarked.

Fazl said that neither the party wanted the interim setup in both KP and Punjab to prolong.

"We have always respected the judiciary and abide by the Constitution and law and said that

they also respect the judiciary's decision to hold elections within 90 days. They must look at the country's current situation," the JUI leader asserted. At the same time, however, he said that the party had always respected courts, and stood by the constitution and the state.

Fazl also held Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-led government responsible for the prevailing economic crisis and ruining the country's economy. "Today, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is preparing our budget and controlling the prices," he added.

He said that Rs80 billion are being demanded by relevant authorities for ballet papers at a time when the state is unable to provide bread to the poor.

Speaking about the relation between the census and elections, Mr Rehman said, "The elections in the two provinces will happen in the old census." He further said that the census is also underway in the country and they believe the elections should be held after the census.

He said that the JUI-F did not accept the legitimacy of the elections to be held in the light of the SC's verdict. He was of the view that Imran did not have the courage to go to jail.

## China sets modest growth target of about 5% as parliament opens

BEIJING (Reuters): China set a modest target for economic growth this year of around 5% on Sunday as it kicked off the annual session of its National People's Congress (NPC), which is poised to implement the biggest government shake-up in a decade.

The economy gave one of its weakest performances in decades last year, when gross domestic product (GDP) grew by just 3%, squeezed by three years of COVID controls, a crisis in the vast property sector and a crackdown on private enterprise. In his work report, outgoing Premier Li Keqiang stressed the need for economic stability and expanding consumption, setting a goal to create around 12 million urban jobs this year, up from last year's target of at least 11 million, and warned that risks remain in the real estate sector.

Li set a budget deficit target at 3.0% of GDP, widening from a goal of around 2.8% last year.

"Global inflation remains high, global economic and trade growth is losing steam, and external attempts to suppress and contain China are escalating," Li said during his speech to open the parliament, which will run through March 13.

"At home, the foundation for stable growth needs to be consolidated, insufficient demand remains a pronounced problem, and the expectations of private investors and businesses are unstable," he said. This year's growth target is at the low end of expectations, as policy sources had recently told Reuters a range as high as 6% could be set. It is also below last year's target of around 5.5%.

## Sharjeel demands Supreme Court to take Suo Moto on the violation of law by Imran Khan

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Provincial Information Minister Sindh Sharjeel Inam Memon said that today is a darkest day in the history of Pakistan as court orders are being flouted. He added that Islamabad police reached Zaman Park to arrest the Imran Khan but he resisted.

The minister reminded that a person who use to advise other not to panic, he himself was in state of panic. The minister said this while talking to media at Sindh Chief Minister House on Sunday. The minister said no one is above the law and Court orders should be implemented in similar way on weak and power ful people.

The Provincial Information Minister said that when the same Islamabad Police reached the residence of former President Asif Ali Zardari to arrest him, everyone witnessed that former President presented himself self with graceful manner for arrest. The former president showed courage and proved to be a true political leader. He said that the test tube baby, who was artificially brought into politics, his legs are shivering today in the fear of arrest.

Sharjeel Inam Memon demanded

that the Supreme Court on Sunday should take notice of the situation that the court orders are being flouted as it is an insult to the rule of law. He added that message is being spread that there is no rule of law in this country. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Imran Khan used to say that there is a separate law for the rich and the poor, there is a separate law for the poor and the powerful. But today it has been proved that Imran Khan has brought himself in this class, for which there is no law. 'Had there been a case of arresting a common citizen, the police would have shown such restraint. Would the police treat a poor man like this?' he added.

The minister said that if it was a case of a poor person, the police would have beaten him and thrown him in police mobiles. Whereas Imran Khan is being given VIP treatment. He asked why PTI workers are being given a call to gather at Zaman Park. Every party possesses street power.

PTI is flaunting its small street power to violate the law. The provincial minister said that these arrest warrants were not issued in any ideological or political struggle, these arrest warrants were issued in case of theft and rob-

beries in Tousha Khana.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Supreme Court should immediately take notice of this spectacle and Imran Khan should be arrested. He said that the impression is being established that Imran Khan was always treated like a 'ladla' and that 'ladla' was always considered above the law. The minister said that in fact there was no law for PTI chief Imran Khan in the country, he free to do what he wanted. The minister remarked that it should not be taken as insult to a subordinate court or a lower judiciary. It is a slap on the law of the country and an insult to the whole judiciary. He said that the law of the country and the courts have become helpless in front of this person.

He said that if this person is succeeded in his plans today, the police will not be able to execute any court orders in future. He said that this type of anarchy should not prevail in the country and rule of law in the country should be implemented. In response to a question, he said that Pakistan is a strong country, no one can harm this country. No one should threaten that if Imran Khan is arrested, they will harm the country. He said that we all will protect this country.

## Bangladesh fire Thousands shelterless after blaze at Rohingya camp

DHAKA (BBC): Thousands of people have been left without shelter after a massive fire broke out in a crowded Rohingya refugee camp in southeastern Bangladesh.

The blaze, which is now under control, engulfed some 2,000 shelters at Cox's Bazar camp on Sunday. It is estimated that about 12,000 people, most of whom escaped violence in neighbouring Myanmar, have had their accommodation destroyed.

The cause of the fire is not yet clear and no casualties have been reported.

The blaze started at about 14:45 local time (08:45 GMT) and quickly tore through the bamboo-and-tarpaulin shelters, an official said.

"Some 2,000 shelters have been burnt, leaving about 12,000 forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals shelterless," Mijanur Rahman, Bangladesh's refugee commissioner, told AFP news agency.

The blaze was brought under control within three hours but at least 35 mosques and 21 learning centres for the refugees were also destroyed, he added.

Hrusikesh Harichandan, from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, told the BBC there had been "massive damage" to the camp.

He said basic services such as water centres and testing facilities had also been affected. "My shelter was gutted, [My shop] was also burnt," Mamun Johar, a 30-year-old Rohingya man, told AFP. "The fire took everything from me, everything." Thick black clouds were seen rising above Camp 11, one of many in the border district where more than a million Rohingya refugees live.

The camps, overcrowded and squalid, are vulnerable to fires. Between January 2021 and December 2022, there were 222 fire incidents in the Rohingya camps including 60 cases of arson, according to a Bangladesh defence ministry report released last month.

## PTI warns of countrywide protests if 'Imran Khan arrested'

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Sunday warned that it will hold country-wide protests in case of party chairman Imran Khan's arrest.

Addressing a press conference outside the former premier's residence, PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry noted that Islamabad Police had arrived at Imran Khan's residence to arrest him in the Toshakhana case.

He claimed that Imran's arrest was aimed at postponing the upcoming general elections in Punjab and disturb law and order situation. "There are 74 cases against the PTI chief," he said, adding that it is humanly not possible for any person to appear in court in all cases. Fawad Chaudhry further said that Imran had always respected the judiciary and appeared before courts whenever he was called. However, he said, they want Imran Khan to go to court so that terrorists can target him again.

The former information minister also claimed the Inspector-General of Police (IGP) and Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah want a

clash to take place at Zaman Park. "They are deliberately trying to create an untoward situation," he added. Fawad Chaudhry urged the party workers and supporters across the country to prepare. "If they arrest our party Chairman, there will be a protest that Pakistan has never seen before," he warned.

Islamabad police attempt to arrest Imran

The Islamabad police on Sunday reached former prime minister Imran Khan's Zaman Park residence to arrest him after his non-bailable arrest warrant was issued by the Islamabad sessions court in the Toshakhana case.

Additional sessions judge Zafar Iqbal of an Islamabad court had issued the former prime minister's non-bailable arrest warrant on February 28. In a series of tweets, the Islamabad police said the former premier is avoiding arrest.

Taking to Twitter, Islamabad police spokesperson said that they have reached Lahore to arrest PTI chief on court orders. He said that Khan

will be arrested after all legal requirements are completed. It stated that the PTI chief was "avoiding" the arrest, adding that the superintendent of police had "gone into Imran's room but he was not present there". He also warned of legal action against those creating hurdles in the arrest of the former premier. "Imran will be shifted to Islamabad under police custody," he said. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) disqualified former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan in the Toshakhana reference under Article 63(1)(p).

In the written judgment, the ECP said: "As per the statement of Imran Khan he had purchased the gifts from Toshakhana paying 21,564 million rupees while the Cabinet Division said that the gifts had a value of 107.943 million." "The amount in his bank account was around half of the value of the state gifts. Imran Khan was bound to declare the cash and bank details in his returns but he didn't declare it," ECP decision read.

## Russian minister inspects troops, US puts up new Ukraine aid

MOSCOW (AFP/APP): Russia's defence minister has inspected troops in frontline regions in eastern Ukraine, after the United States offered more support to Kyiv whose forces are struggling in Bakhmut.

Sergei Shoigu inspected an advance command post in the direction of the south of the Donetsk region, the defence ministry said, without specifying exactly where or when. It put out a rare video of the Russian defence minister travelling in a helicopter and talking to a soldier in front of damaged buildings.

Shoigu handed state awards to servicemen and held a meeting with his deputies "on organising the uninterrupted provision of troops with armaments, military hardware and ordnance", his ministry later said.

The visit came with fierce fighting ongoing around Bakhmut, the longest battle of the conflict, which has further exposed rivalries between the conventional army and the Wagner paramilitary group. Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin said Friday his fighters had "practically encircled" Bakhmut. Well-versed in social media, Prigozhin

has for weeks been publicising the advances of his men towards the eastern city, whose symbolic importance outstrips any military significance.

Prigozhin regularly posts videos of himself alongside mercenaries, on the ground or even in a fighter jet, in contrast with Russian generals criticised for shirking the frontline. In his latest video Friday, Prigozhin directly called on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to abandon Bakhmut, which Russia is determined to seize as part of the wider aim of capturing the entire Donetsk region.