

## NA session rescheduled

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly session, which was initially scheduled to be held on Wednesday, May 3, 2023 at 4:00 pm, has been rescheduled to Tuesday at the same time. The session will be hosted in the Parliament House. The National Assembly Secretariat has communicated the change in schedule through a notification.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX

No. 103

Regd. No. 241

SHAWAAL 10 1444 -- MONDAY, MAY 01 2023

QUETTA EDITION

12 PAGES

Price. 20

# PM expresses satisfaction over 27.5 mln metric tons bumper wheat production

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday attributed the production of 27.5 million metric tons record bumper wheat crop in the country to government's efforts at timely decisions, provision of quality seed, interrupted supply of fertilizer and Kissan package.

Expressing his satisfaction over the country's produce which surpassed production during the previous ten years, the prime minister thanked Allah Almighty for the blessing.

The prime minister chaired a meeting to review

countrywide wheat procurement drive at the official level, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The meeting was informed about the production of wheat in the current year, its available stock, carry forward stocks and the procurement targets of the federal and provincial departments. The meeting was attended by Minister for National Food Security Tariq Bashir Cheema, PM's Adviser Ahad Khan Cheema, Special Assistant Tariq Bajwa, Caretaker Punjab Minister for Industries SM Tanveer and other senior authorities.

The prime minister congratulated the minister for food security and other relevant authorities and appreciated their steps. He said that despite heavy rainfalls and floods last year, achieving a bumper wheat crop was the result of the government's timely decisions and the best governance.

Felicitating the nation on achieving the milestone, the prime minister said that the government was formulating a strategy for achieving enhanced production next year. Due to mismanagement of the previous government, Pakistan became a wheat-importing

country, he said, adding the farmers were made to wait in long lines for the whole day to get fertilizers.

He said that the provincial and federal departments should directly purchase wheat from farmers to provide them benefits.

They should also increase the procurement targets of wheat, so as to ensure its uninterrupted supply throughout the year, he added. The prime minister also directed for strict action against hoarders.

He also directed for provision of required resources through banks to get a specified quantity of wheat.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting to review country wide wheat procurement drive.

## President returns National Accountability (Amend) Bill to parliament unsigned

ISLAMABAD (NNI): President Dr Arif Alvi has sent back National Accountability (Amendment) Bill 2023 to the parliament for reconsideration after observing that the amendments brought earlier in the National Accountability Ordinance 1999 were sub-judice before the Supreme Court of Pakistan. President Arif Alvi sent back the piece of legislation, in terms of clause (1)(b) of the Article 75 of the Constitution, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release issued on

Sunday. The president said that this aspect of the legislation was neither referred to in the bill nor in the prime minister's advice.

He observed that without considering the implications of a pending matter, further amendments in the National Accountability Ordinance 1999 should be reconsidered.

Earlier, the prime minister had sent his advice seeking assent of the president over the said bill. In a couple of tweets, the president also gave same reasons for his action. On April 8 last, President Arif Alvi had also

returned the bill curtailing the Chief Justice of Pakistan's powers unsigned to the Parliament with the request for reconsideration in order to meet the scrutiny about its validity. President Alvi said he had returned the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023 for reconsideration to the Parliament as per the provisions of the Article 75 of the Constitution, stating that the bill prima-facie travels beyond the competence of the Parliament and can be assailed as colourable legislation.

## Lawyers warn countrywide protests

QUETTA (NNI): Bar council's representatives from across the country have expressed their support for the Constitution and have warned nationwide protests if the Supreme Court of Pakistan does not revoke its stay order, which was issued against a bill limiting the powers of the CJP, by May 2.

On April 13, the apex court stayed the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act 2023. Despite the stay order, the bill was enacted as an act by the federal government on April 21. Earlier, representatives from various bar councils gathered at the BHC to attend a lawyers' convention, where they criticised the CJP's decision of not constituting a larger bench to hear the polls case.

## Imran Khan says 'caretaker govt is unconstitutional'

LAHORE (NNI): Former premier and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan has said that the caretaker government is unconstitutional and PTI will demand its constitutional right in the upcoming rally in Lahore.

While addressing PTI workers and supporters via video link, Imran Khan said that PTI is going to organise a public rally from Liberty Chowk to Nasir Bagh tomorrow. He invited nationals to attend the rally to demand their constitutional rights. He said the caretaker government is unconstitutional and PTI will demand its constitutional right.

Khan said that PTI always cared about the labourers and paid tribute to all labourers on Labour Day. He added that the PTI government established panahgahs for labourers but 'imported thieves' shut all

of them. He also slammed the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government for closing the health insurance cards.

Imran Khan said that he is aiming to convert Pakistan into a welfare state. He announced that education cards would be introduced alongside the health insurance cards after PTI comes into power again. "We have to stand beside the Supreme Court (SC) and the Constitution. These rulers are afraid and fleeing away from the elections." "I will lead the PTI rally in Lahore, whereas, Asad Umar and Shah Mahmood Qureshi will lead a rally in Rawalpindi. Pervaiz Khattak along with other office bearers will lead a rally in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)."

Earlier, Khan demanded the dissolution of national and provincial assemblies

before May 14 amid talks with the government on date for holding general elections of Punjab Assembly. The former prime minister said that his party would be ready to move forward with the negotiations if the government dissolves the national and provincial assemblies before May 14.

Imran Khan reiterated that his party does not want to delay the elections, stressing that "we will not accept polls after the budget". "If the hope of elections ends, then Pakistan could face a worse situation than Sri Lanka.

I am not frightening you; I am just expressing my opinion," he added. The PTI chief further said that the government was saying that first, it would pass the budget, and then hold the election, saying that this shows the incumbent rulers' 'ill-intention'.

## 139 Pakistanis brought home from Sudan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Another group of 139 Pakistani nationals from Sudan have returned home as people continue to flee the war-torn country.

A special plane carrying 139 passengers and 11 crew members landed at Jinnah International Airport in Karachi. All of the passengers and crew members underwent tests for coronavirus at the airport.

In line with the directives of PAF's senior leadership, Pakistan Air Force transport aircraft are conducting arduous evacuation missions to bring back fellow countrymen who were stranded in war-torn Sudan.

The transport fleet of the Pakistan Air Force has always been at the forefront to respond to the call of the Nation during natural disasters and calamities.

Pakistan's embassy in Sudan was in constant touch with the 1500 Pakistanis living in Sudan and was providing them with all possible facilities. The embassy in Sudan had formed a WhatsApp group to remain in touch with Pakistanis who were advised to stay at home.

## Corruption case registered against Pervaiz Elahi

GUJRANWALA (NNI): A second case of corruption has been registered against former Punjab chief minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi in Gujranwala.

According to the FIR, Elahi made advance payment worth Rs20 billion of a contract after accepting Rs2 billion as a bribe.

A case has been registered against 9 accused including Pervaiz Elahi's front man Sohail Asghar and contractor Tariq.

According to the FIR, Elahi allegedly received huge bribe while awarding the contract for the construction of 29 km patch of road. The deal worth billions of rupees was made by Sohail Asghar.

The Gujranwala anti-corruption establishment arrested front man Sohail Asghar again and started investigation. Ch Pervaiz Elahi, Sohail Asghar, Tariq, XEN Highway Azmat Hayat, DEO Ashfaq Hamad, sub-engineer Salman Ahmed and others have been involved in the case.

## MQM again shows reservations over census

KARACHI (PPI): The Muttahida Quomi Movement has once again expressed its dissatisfaction over the ongoing digital census being carried out across the country, saying that its reservations over census have proved correct. MQM leaders Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and Mustafa Kamal were addressing a press conference in Karachi on Sunday. Siddiqui called for holding a truthful census. "At least, we should be counted truthfully," he implored, adding that counting each and every person is the responsibility of the state.

## 'People will not forgive those who destroyed progressing country'

LAHORE (NNI): PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif said on Sunday people would never forgive those who had ruined the progressing country. Addressing a meeting of the PML-N leadership, attended by PM Shehbaz Sharif and others, via video link, he said on one side, negotiations were being held for the sake of the country while on the other side, there was a fight to safeguard vested interests and to degrade the country and its institutions. "No one is ready to

guarantee for those who ruined the country for three years," he added.

The meeting underscored the exchange of thoughts on the country's economic and political affairs and the party's matters. Mr Sharif went on to say that the PML-N-led federal government had to take immediate steps to control skyrocketing inflation adding that policies should be made to give relief to people before elections. "All political parties should contribute to the country's

development," he added.

The former PM said his party had pushed the country to the path of progress after a lot of hard work which was washed away by enemies in three years. "People will never forgive them and they will have to save themselves from such people," he added. PM Shehbaz Sharif, addressing the session, said the government would soon announce a piece of good news for the people. "The relief package will lessen the troubles people are facing," he added.

## UN chief, envoys in key talks on Afghanistan crisis

DOHA (AFP/APP): UN chief Antonio Guterres will gather international envoys at a secret location in Doha on Monday in an increasingly desperate bid to find ways to influence Afghanistan's Taliban rulers.

The Taliban government, which took back power in August 2021, will be absent from the talks with representatives from about 25 countries and international organisations, according to diplomats. The UN secretary-general is to give an update on a review of the world body's critical relief operation in Afghanistan, ordered

in April after the authorities there stopped Afghan women working with UN agencies, diplomats said.

The UN has said it faces an "appalling choice" over whether to maintain its huge operation in the country of 38 million. Torn apart over the Ukraine war and other global tensions, the UN Security Council powers united on Thursday to condemn the curbs on Afghan women and girls and urge all countries to seek "an urgent reversal" of the policies. The Afghan foreign ministry rejected the call and said the ban "is

an internal social matter of Afghanistan". "There are lots of differences among Security Council members over Afghanistan. But everyone, including Russia and China, agrees it is better to have the UN in Kabul than not." The United Nations has given few indications of what proposals could be made at the meeting.

UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday the aim "is to reinvigorate international engagement around common objectives for a durable way forward on Afghanistan".

## Five die in torrential rains in Balochistan

QUETTA/CHAMAN (NNI): At least five people were killed due to torrential rains in different parts of the Balochistan province, said the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Sunday.

Two people were killed in Khuzdar, two in Machh and Lasbela and one was killed in Ketch in rain-related incidents. According to PDMA officials, under the

influence of a powerful weather system, several mud houses were damaged in Chagai and Panjur while parts of Bolan Panjira Bridge and Sonari Bridge were swept away by the Kohlu floodwaters due to recent rains. The PDMA said that the work of repairing the bridges and restoring traffic was underway at both places. Both the main national highways connect-

ing Balochistan with Sindh were closed after torrential rains in Chaman, Pashin, Mastung, Daki, Dera Bugti, Kohlu, Awaran and Naseerabad flooded the streams and nullahs.

Traffic was suspended in Bolan area when alternate route of Panjara Bridge was washed away. The Quetta-Karachi Highway near Lasbela was also washed away in the flood torrents.

# The Frontier Post

## FC man injured in explosion

PESHAWAR (INP): A FC man was injured in landmines explosion in district Khyber of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) on Sunday. Official sources said that a landmine laid by miscreants in Ghabi Neka area of Tirah Valley of Khyber exploded leaving a FC man injured. The injured FC man was shifted to a nearby hospital and security forces cordoning off the area started search operation.





## Former cop kills youth in Karachi

KARACHI (PPI): A former police officer shot and killed a young man in Karachi on Sunday.

Police said a young man, Majid Hussain, was shot dead by a former police officer over a dispute on marriage proposal in Baldia area of Karachi. The deceased was an OT technician in a private hospital.

Majid wanted to marry the daughter of the suspect and during a clash the suspect killed him.

The suspect is in police custody and he is being interrogated. The dead body of the victim has been shifted to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital. Sources said the suspect had called Majid and invited him over. Majid was shot on the chest and the suspect also tortured him.

## PPP's ticket holder Nasrullah Tarin joins PML-N

KARACHI (NNI): 'Politics has no heart' is proved when a tussle surfaced between major coalition partners of the federal government who started blowing each other's wickets just before upcoming elections. The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) blew the important wicket of its coalition partner, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) on Sunday.

The channel report said as the election time draws near, political divisiveness is on the rise as the government allies in the federation have started blowing each other's wickets. On Sunday, Sardar Nasrullah Khan Tarin, PPP's nominated candidate for the Punjab Assembly seat from PP-294 joined the PML-N without any hesitation.

## Thundershowers to hit many Pakistani cities

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecasted that strong wind and thunderstorm are likely to hit many cities including different parts of Karachi in next 24 hours as westerly wind system has entered south and north-west regions of the port city, turning the weather pleasant on Sunday.

Rain with thunderstorm is expected in different areas of the city, including Sarjani, Orangi, Baldia, Kemari, Saddar Clifton, Defence, Federal B Area, Liaquatabad, Nazimabad, North Karachi and other areas. On the other hand, the weather got pleasant after it drizzled and wind began to blow in various parts of Lahore in the wee hours of Sunday, providing relief to the those facing the first heat wave of summer.

The change in weather brought the temperature at 26 degrees Celsius in the provincial capital.

There was drizzling in the areas of Model Town, Gulberg, Garden Town, Kalma Chowk, Mall Road, Jail Road, and Lakshmi Chowk. In next 24 hours, there is a possibility of strong winds and 5 % chance of rain in the city. Lahore will also remain partly cloudy. However, a significant downpour will lash out the city from Tuesday.

# Naqvi denounces police raid on Shujaat's residence in bid to arrest Elahi

LAHORE (NNI): Denouncing the police raid on Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain's house in a bid to arrest former Punjab chief minister and PTI President Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi has said that though he is not in Pakistan these days, but no one will be allowed to take illegal action against anyone. Taking to his Twitter handle, Chief Minister Naqvi wrote: "No Illegal action will be allowed by anyone."

"I am in Medina and getting all the details. Appalled to know that team went to arrest Ch Pervaiz Elahi but stormed Ch

Shaujaat's House in which Ch Salik Hussain got injured. Law should take its course." Anti-corruption and police officials raided the residence of PTI President Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi in Lahore to arrest him late on Friday night. The police officials thoroughly searched the house but could not find Elahi.

Then the police tried to force their entry into the adjoining residence of PML-Q President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, but they were resisted by Shujaat's sons and his son Ch Salik Hussain also got injured during the police action.

## Shin Wazaristan (Green Waziristan) Campaign 2023

**E.P Report**

SERWAKAI: Security Forces conducted the Shin Waziristan Campaign in different Educational institutes of Tehsil Serwakai and Tiarza area of District South Waziristan. During campaign, youth committees were engaged and students of Schools and Madaris were motivated through lectures for maximum plantation in respective educational institutes.

The Concept of ONE CHILD ONE PLANT is adopted to cultivate a sense of ownship & responsibility and to foster greater care of plants. More than 5000 saplings were planted during campaign season of 2023. The locals of Sarwokai and Tiarza appreciated the initiative of Security Forces for starting the Shin Waziristan campaign (Green Waziristan) and regarded it very useful for the environment of District South Waziristan.



## PTI announces names of new office-bearers in Sindh

KARACHI (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has announced the names of new office-bearers of the party's Sindh chapter following the directives of Imran Khan. PTI Secretary General Asad Umar announced the appointment of MNAs Mahmood Moulvi and Saifur Rehman as senior vice presidents of the Sindh chapter. Jamal Siddiqui has been appointed as the infor-

mation secretary of PTI. Siddiqui replaced the lawmaker Arsalan Ghumman from the post of PTI Sindh information secretary. Moreover, Nisar Shar was appointed additional secretary information and MPA Adeel Ahmed and Ufaq Baloch was appointed deputy information secretaries. A notification was also issued by Asad Umar in this regard.

In another development

today, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President Fawad Chaudhary said that his party wanted talks with the coalition government to succeed but at the same time contended that it had a "strategy" in place in case the talks failed. "PTI wants the success of negotiations [with the government], but it has formulated a strategy in case of failure of talks," the former information minister tweeted.

## NIRC established Industrial Relations Commission

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The National Industrial Relations Commission (NIRC) is an attached department of this Ministry established under Section 53 of the Industrial Relations Commission (IRA), 2012. The Commission is mandated to deal with adjudication of industrial disputes, registration of trade unions, determination of collective bargaining agents, unfair labour practices and individual grievances in trans-provincial establishments and those located in Islamabad.

Nine posts of Members were vacant since last few months. The appointment

against these vacant posts was required to be made with the approval of Federal Cabinet. This Ministry accordingly submitted a Summary for the Cabinet on 30.04.2023 forwarding a panel of nominations for appointment against the vacant posts. The Federal Cabinet vide its decision Case No. 223/Rule-19/2023 dated 30.04.2023 has approved the appointment of following persons as members in NIRC with immediate effect against nine posts as proposed by this Ministry.

1) Syed Noor ul Hasnain (Retired Civil Servant)  
2) Mr. Abdul Qayyum

(Retired District and Session Judge)

3) Mr. Sohail Akram (Retired District and Session Judge)

4) Muhammad Zubair Khan (Retired District and Session Judge)

5) Mr. Shabbir Hussain Awan (Retired District and Session Judge)

6) Mr. Muhammad Siraj-ul-Islam Khan (Advocate)

7) Mr. Abdul Ghani (Advocate)

8) Mr. Munawar Hussain Turi (Advocate)

This Ministry has, therefore, in compliance of the Cabinet decision, has issued formal notifications for appointment of members accordingly.



KARACHI: Pakistan Food Workers Federation organizes torch-bearing rally with solidarity to laborers from Press Club to Arts Council on the Labour Day.

## Govt. committed to ensuring well-being of labourers, workers: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif while highlighting the workers' pivotal role in the economic development, on Sunday reiterated that the government was committed to ensuring the benefits of economic progress translated into prosperity for all sections of the population, particularly the labourers and workers.

In a message on the "International Workers Day", which is being celebrated globally on May 1, the prime minister said the day reminded them of the sacrifices of those workers who laid down their lives while waging a relentless struggle for their rights.

The day symbolized the sanctity and dignity of labour and at the same time, it was an acknowledgement of the importance of workers and labourers for being central to the economic growth of the country, he added. Paying tributes to the working classes for their contributions to the development of the country, he called upon all the stakeholders to renew their pledge both at the individual and collective levels to ensure the well-

fare of working classes by investing in their socio-economic and social well-being. The prime minister further said "Our great religion, Islam, emphasizes the principles of social justice, equity and respect for the rights of the people. Allah Almighty and the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) have ordered us to fulfill the rights of the workers and not be lax in the performance of this core duty," he added. He said they found numerous inspiring examples of the dignity of laborer and respect for the rights of the working classes in the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). "Respect for hard work and recognition of the rights of workers are extremely important in the process of progress. Islam accorded the sanctity to these fundamental human rights much before the establishment of labour laws," said the press release issued by the PM Office Media Wing quoting him as saying.

On the same ground, the prime minister said, they believed that workers and employers were partners in the production process and their cooperation

and amicable relationship was essential for the socio-economic development of the country. He said that the present government was committed to improving the working and living conditions of workers and to supplement their well-fare by providing better housing, education facilities and health cover for them and their families.

Keeping in view the high inflation rates and other economic challenges, the government had increased the minimum wages of workers from Rs. 17,500 to 25,000 per month, he said, adding that it also aimed to develop automated, integrated systems for workers' welfare institutions to ensure transparency and to curtail delays in providing relief to the labourers and workers. Keeping in view the requirements of the labour market, the prime minister further said that the present government had embarked upon programmes of vocational training and skills development to enable workers to get their due share in job markets within and outside the country.

## International Labor Day highlights importance of public communication in amplifying workers' voices: Fahd Haroon

**E.P. Report**

KARACHI: The 1st of May, International Labor Day, is an occasion of great significance, as it highlights the contributions of workers and the importance of their rights and dignity. Public Communication has a critical role to play in amplifying the voices of workers and raising awareness about the challenges they face.

On the occasion of International Labor Day, Fahd Haroon, the Minister of State/Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Public Communication and Digital Platforms, commends Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party, for his unwavering commitment to the labor struggle in Pakistan. In his message, Fahd Haroon acknowledged the challenges faced by workers in Pakistan, including low wages, poor working conditions, and lack of social protection. He highlights that the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges and pushed millions of workers into poverty and unemployment.

Fahd Haroon appreciated the efforts of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and the Pakistan People's Party's efforts in advocating for workers' rights and rais-

ing their voices at the national and international levels. He also appreciated Chairman Bilawal's support for public communication, through which we can mobilize public opinion, create a sense of solidarity and empathy, and put pressure to prioritize workers' rights and well-being. He notes and appreciated that the Foreign Minister and Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has announced an immediate increase of 25% in the amount of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) stipend, vowing that the process of providing relief money to the flood-affected small farmers by the Sindh government be accelerated also.

Fahd Haroon emphasizes that the labor struggle is not just a matter of economic justice but also a fundamental human right. He calls upon all political leaders, civil society organizations, and employers to join hands and support the labor struggle in Pakistan and around the world. International Labor Day highlights the importance of Public Communications in amplifying workers' voices, Fahd Haroon appreciated Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's efforts towards ensuring labor dignity and equal wages without gender and other discriminations. Fahd encouraged

everyone to take inspiration from past and present labor struggles and work towards a better future of work based on dignity, fairness, and social justice.

In Pakistan, the labor movement has a rich history dating back to the early 20th century when workers first organized themselves to demand better working conditions and wages. After the country gained independence in 1947, the labor movement grew in strength and importance, and 1st May was recognized as an official public holiday to honor the contributions and struggles of workers. However, Pakistan's labor movement has faced numerous challenges, including repression, violence, and discrimination.

Despite these obstacles, workers in Pakistan have continued to organize and mobilize for their rights, and the 1st of May remains an important occasion to celebrate their achievements and renew their commitment to the labor struggle.

The Office of the Minister of State/Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Public Communication and Digital Platforms in Pakistan is a vital institution that contributes to the country's public communication strategy and digital platforms.

## People's Party will conquer the fort of Lahore again: Memon

**E.P. Report**

KARACHI: People's Party digital media in-charge and provincial information minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the day is not far, God willing, when the People's Party will conquer the fort of Lahore again.

The leadership of the People's Party is not afraid, our competition is not with any party but with lies and propaganda. Fight against polarization and hatemongers.

He was addressing a grand function of Pakistan People's Party Digital Media's meetup program at a local hotel. He said that the first digital show was held in Karachi and then in Multan, but the most fun was in Lahore. My intention is getting worse to change my domicile and ask the party for ticket here, People's Party comes to power only by the power of the people. Other parties have been brought to power by some force, Jayala workers are everywhere they have to be brought under one umbrella. Such functions will be done in every district. People's Party is credited with making Pakistan a nuclear power and bringing CPEC.

The purpose of the event was to create a platform from which we can fight the lies, not competing with any political party, our leadership has given the constitution and sacrifices to the country. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that it is not just a matter of Balti Wale or Baba Rehmate, they want to

cross all limits to get power. There has been a dangerous attack on Pakistan's institutions on social media, its strings are being pulled from abroad.

He said that PPP has to organize digital media for national defense and stability, all digital media teams will be formed on the basis of performance. The next election is to be fought on public relations campaign and social media, it seems from the slogans of Jiyaalas that Lahore has decided to make Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari the Prime Minister. The day is not far when Central Punjab will become the citadel of the People's Party. On this occasion, Minister of State for Azad Kashmir Gilgit and Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira has said that some people are in a hurry, 90 days are not only for Punjab, but also for KP, here people are selling lies and mirages.

The People's Party does not need to give any certificate or clarification of its leadership, even our worst opponent says that there was no leader of Pakistan greater than Shaheed Bhutto, history and our opponents are testifying.

Today, which party and media does not appreciate the wisdom of Asif Ali Zardari. Qamar Zaman Kaira said that Imran can form the government, he cannot run it, he cannot bring it down, today all the parties and the media are talking about dialogue, Invited Imran for talks to get

Pakistan out of crises. We get responsibility, we don't get government crowns, no one has such courage.

He said that our goal is not power, only Bilawal will bring the country out of crises. He said that we have historical heritage and the leadership of a young chairman, our opponents sell lies and we are not able to prove our truth. He said that dreams are shown by political parties. Those who show illusions have no destination, after Imran's new manifesto, how many hospitals and schools were built in KP during 9 years, not a single project was completed in four years, except for putting political opponents in jails, remember that since Bhutto Shaheed, Pakistan's foreign policy has had an indelible imprint of the People's Party. Qamar Zaman Kaira said that the people of Pakistan and the state of Medina came first, Zia also talked about the state of Medina, but he himself could not keep his promises.

He said that his role is nothing, today the one who is suffering from crises wants to create a big crisis. After raising a slogan, Imran starts playing a new song four days later. We are not for power, Pakistan is deep, to save him from falling into the ditch, Imran attacked the Election Commission and Pakistan Army, he wanted to bring officers and people of his choice. If his intention was successful, then Pakistan would have defaulted.



LAHORE: Elderly men playing cards to pass their time while sitting along roadside at Canal road.



# All set to mark Int’l Labour Day in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Like elsewhere in the country, the International Labour Day would also be observed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday with great enthusiasm.

The day would dawn with special prayers in mosques for progress and prosperity of Pakistan.

The political, religious parties, NGOs, labour and trade unions besides civil society organizations and humans rights activists would taken out rallies and walks to highlight significance of the day.

Seminars, workshops and symposium would also be held. TV channels, radio stations would air special programs and newspapers to publish special features, columns and articles on International Labour Day.

The political leaders and the province’s leadership reaffirmed their resolve to continue work for the labourer development.

Adviser to Prime Minister for Political, Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture Engr. Amir Muqam has felicitated the entire labour community on the occasion of Labour Day.

In a statement on the eve of Labour Day, he reiterated the government’s resolve to protect the rights of labour community and to

work for their collective wellbeing.

He said that today, we pay tribute to the valiant workers of Pakistan and around the world, and reaffirm our commitment to the dignity of labour.

Engr Amir Muqam said that every year, the first day of May provides us the opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of workers to the development and prosperity of their nations across the globe.

He assured the workers that the Federal Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was fully committed to taking all measures, in cooperation with the provincial governments, to enhance the welfare of workers and their families as well as to raise their standards of living.

Engr Amir Muqam who is also president Pakistan Muslim League N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said “We understand very well that only a healthy, happy, well-educated workforce will enable Pakistan to attain its full social and economic potential, and this is what we are working towards with complete sincerity of purpose.

Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan

said that the dream of development and prosperity cannot be realized without the protection and dignity of the working class.

In message on the eve of Labour Day, he said the role of the working class carried vital importance in national development and prosperity.

“We can achieve development goals only by ensuring the welfare of labourers and protection of their rights.”

The Chief Minister said that the International Labor Day highlighted the greatness of labourers and their significant role in development. The welfare and protection of workers is one of the main priorities of the caretaker government, he maintained.

He said labourers deserved special attention not only from the government level but also from all the powerful sections of society.

The stronger and more prosperous labourer class would result in a developed and prosperous nation.

The Chief Minister paid rich tributes to the working class for their important role in the country’s development and assured that the caretaker provincial government will take all possible measures for their welfare.

## CS directs for summary of renaming hospita

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Sunday took notice of PML-N leader Arbab Khizr Hayat’s statement and issued directives for a summary of renaming ‘Nawaz Sharif Kidney Hospital’ established in Swat.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government had changed the name of the hospital from ‘Nawaz Sharif Kidney Hospital’ to ‘Mian Gul Abdul Haq Kidney Hospital’.

Chief Secretary issued orders to Secretary Health to prepare a summary in this regard.

The summary will be sent to the provincial cabinet for final approval after which the name of the hospital will be changed.

Arbab Khizr Hayat says that the kidney hospital in Swat was built by Nawaz Sharif at his personal expense.



PESHAWAR: Provincial president PPP Women Wing Senator Robina Khalid presiding over a party meeting. — F.P. photo by Ghualm Murtaza

# 140 cases of violence against journalists reported

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: As many as 140 cases of threats and attacks against journalists, media professionals and media organizations were reported in Pakistan between May 2022 and March 2023, according to Freedom Network’s annual Pakistan Press Freedom Report.

The report, which is released in connection with the World Press Freedom Day marked globally on May 3 every year, notes that the country’s media environment became riskier and more violent in recent months. The data shows that press freedom violations jumped to 140 in 2022-23 from 86 in 2021-22, indicating an annual increase of around 63%.

“The escalation in violence against journalists is disturbing and demands urgent attention,” said Iqbal Khattak, the Executive Director of Freedom Network, the media rights organization that tracks press freedom violations around the year and publishes the annual report, which also documents the killings of at least five journalists in Pakistan in the period under review.

“Attacks on independent journalism block access to essential information, which is especially damaging during the ongoing political and economic crises when the public needs reliable news to understand the issues and respond to them,” Khattak said.

“It is ironic that Pakistan in 2021 became the first country in Asia to legislate on safety of journalists but one and a half years later the federal and Sindh journalists’ safety laws have not helped a single journalist resulting in the increasing violence against them,” Khattak said.

He said Freedom Network urges Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif to urgently fulfill his promise made at an international conference in Islamabad on November 2, 2022, marking the international day to combat impunity of crimes against journalists, to notify the safety commission required under the federal Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act 2021 so the law passed with bipartisan support by national parliament can start helping journalists. The commission’s absence continues to promote impunity of crimes against journalists.

He also urged the Sindh government of Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah to equip its notified provincial safety commission under the Sindh Protection of Journalists and Other Media Practitioners Act 2021 with resources so that under the chairmanship of distinguished jurist Rashed Rizvi it can help journalists and thereby empower them to combat the impunity of crimes against journalists in the province.

The key findings of the report are: One press freedom violation every third day: At least 140 cases of threats and attacks against journalists, other media professionals and media institutions were documented in the 11 months between May 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023, across all territories of Pakistan. This is an average of around 13 cases a month or at least one violation every three days compared to one every five days in 2021-22.

Assault, threats and physical attacks form majority of violations: The main types of violations against the journalists were 51 cases (36%) of assault, 21 cases (15%) of attacks that resulted in damage to equipment, homes of journalists or offices of news organizations, and 14 cases (10%) of offline or online threats, including seven death threats. Together these three types of violations accounted for nearly 60 per cent of the total 140 cases.

Islamabad most dangerous region for journalists: Overall, Islamabad emerged as the riskiest place to practice journalism in Pakistan with 40 per cent of the violations (56 out of total 140 cases) recorded there. Punjab was second worst with 25 per cent of the violations (35 cases) and Sindh a close third at 23 per cent (32 cases).

TV journalists most frequently targeted: TV was the largest victim medium with at least 97 (69 per cent) of the 140 cases against its practitioners. The second most targeted medium was print with 26 journalists targeted (19 per cent) while digital journalists were attacked or threatened in 15 cases (11%).

Political parties among leading threat actors: Allegedly the biggest single-source threat actor targeting media was political parties, which were suspected by victim journalists or their families in 21 per cent of the 140 cases. Equally troublingly, state functionaries were a close second, with suspected involvement in 19 per cent of the total cases. The remaining two significant threat actors were multi-source categories. These were the miscellaneous ‘Others’ (including private individuals etc.) with 27 per cent cases attributed to them and the multisource ‘Unknown’ with 24 per cent cases.

Violence against women journalists: Women media professionals, including one transgender woman journalist, were targeted in at least eight cases. One woman journalist was killed during the coverage of a political rally.

Other forms of violence reported against women journalists included assault leading to injury, digital threats and offline threats of physical harm.

## Kaghan-Naran road closes after glacier melted

PESHAWAR (APP): The Kaghan-Naran road is closed for all types of traffic following the melting of a huge glacier, an official of the National Highway Authority (NHA) told here Sunday.

The NHA official also told that work on removing glaciers and cleaning the road is going on rapidly at Chitta Katha on Naran Road. He said that the route was also blocked from another big glacier at

Guriya Chinch Naran. The work will be started after the cleaning of this glacier on Guriya Chinch, he informed.

The spokesman of Tourism Authority Muhammad Saad advised the tourists to take good care during the tour to Kaghan and Naran valleys. Tourists should avoid traveling to Naran, he said and added, to ensure the safety of tourists, the district administration, NHA, Khyber Pakhtun-

khwa Tourism Department, Tourism Authority and Kaghan Development Authority are jointly working on a priority basis to clear the road from the melted glacier blocked the road.

He said the tourists can contact Tourism Helpline 1422 for any information or emergency. Tourism awareness information is being published regularly on social media platforms, the spokesman of Tourism Authority added.



PESHAWAR: Old age labours working at a vegetable market on eve of International Labour Day.

## Combating illiteracy in merged areas through education, development; a way forward

PESHAWAR (APP): Remained underprivileged throughout the known history before the independence of Pakistan, and even after for the last seven decades, the people of merged areas (erstwhile Fata) were deprived of quality education, health and development as no worthwhile effort was made to bring them into national mainstream.

This long negligence bred poverty, socio economic imbalances, unemployment and illiteracy, which led to dearth of economical and educational stakes and downfall of social values in merged areas.

The persistent unconvincive environment, lackluster development work and poor investment in the education sector strengthened the roots of militancy and deteriorated the law and order situation in the area in past.

The two-decade long militancy in erstwhile Fata had caused huge loss to the education sector and many students, especially females left schools and colleges due to repeated attacks by terrorists and militants.

Sighting education as the main hurdle in way of completion of their nefarious agenda, the anti state-elements blown up scores of

educational institutions in the newly merged areas resulting in rise of students drop out ratio especially of girls in Khyber, Bajaur, Kurram, North Waziristan, South Waziristan and Mohmand, taking the number of out of school children to around one million in 2021.

“The anti-state elements tried to deprive the tribal children of their basic right of education but the successful military operations against terrorists followed by merger of FATA into KP in 2018 under the 25th constitutional amendment by the PMLN government and other pragmatic development measures foiled the bid and secured future of tribal youngsters,” said Ikhtair Wali Khan, Pakistan Muslim League-N spokesman and former member provincial assembly while talking to APP.

To rebuild the destroyed educational infrastructure including schools and colleges in merged areas, he said a multifaceted development program had been launched under accelerated implementation program (AIP) with special focus on building of educational infrastructure, provision of stipends to tribal students, transport and establishment of campuses of top educa-

tional colleges and universities at South Waziristan.

Syed Zainullah Shah, Chief Planning Officer/ Special Secretary, Higher Education Department told APP that work on Education City at Barwan South Waziristan had been started, which would be completed with an estimated cost of around Rs2,772 million.

“The consultants have submitted their proposals for establishment of different campuses of top educational institutions and universities including agriculture, engineering, IT and vocational studies at South Waziristan, while a project management unit (PMU) has also been created for quick implementation of the mega project,” he said.

“The proposed Education City would be established on 7,000 kanal and additional land would also be procured for its expansion in future,” he added.

The UET Peshawar, Agriculture University of Science and Technology Peshawar, Swat University of Science and Technology, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University Peshawar and other top private sector universities had showed their willingness to establish their campuses at South Waziristan’s Education City, he underlined.

## Police foil an attempt girl’s kidnapping

PESHAWAR (APP): The Police of the Bhana Mari Police Station Sunday foiled an attempt of kidnapping young girls and arrested the alleged kidnapper red-handedly.

According to detail, the team of Bhana Mari Police Station in a rapid response took immediate action and arrested an alleged kidnapper red-handed while thwarting the attempt to kidnap a young minor girl from Mushtaqaqabad area.

The arrested alleged accused Kamran son of Murad belongs to Landi Arbab Peshawar. The accused tried to kidnap the young minor girl as soon as he got the opportunity. The local police and local residents immediately reached the spot and arrested the accused who was involved in his nefarious intentions.

For further legal action, the accused Kamran has been transferred to Bhana Mari Police Station where further investigation has been started.

## SHO honored with certificate

PESHAWAR (APP): The Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan Ghandapur on Sunday honored SHO Police Station of Crime Terrorism Department Swat who set up an example of dutifulness and honesty.

According to detail, the SHO Police Station of Crime and Terrorism Ikramullah Khan while setting up an example of dutifulness and honesty and returned a packet worth Rs. 2.5 million to the authorities on which the IGP KP announced top police award and honor for SHO for setting an example of honesty.

The SHO honestly made KP Police proud, the IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said in his official remarks.

## Ishaq nominated Member BOAs

PESHAWAR (APP): President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Mohammad Ishaq has been nominated as Member Board of Administrators (BOAs) Export Development Fund (EDF).

According to a notification issued by Ministry of Commerce on Sunday, Mohammad Ishaq is among 17 businessmen of the country who have been nominated as members of EDF BOAs.

The Board of Administrators is headed by Federal Minister for Commerce while the Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Chief Executive Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) are its Vice Chairmen.

Ishaq’s nomination has been termed as a great achievement and recognition of the SCCI’s contributions in promotion of commerce and trade in the region. The businessmen are expressing the hope that the nomination of SCCI President would help strengthen export-oriented industry and exports from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## 83% of Pakistanis do not have access to any library

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Around 83 percent of Pakistanis do not have access to any library & 60% of Pakistanis have no playground access, revealed in a latest research study of Pakistan’s Institute of Development Economic (PIDE) titled: “Shaping Minds and Bodies: Do We Have the Facilities?” which is the fifth BASICS Note of the Series, here on Sunday.

According to a press release issued by the PIDE, Dr. Durre Nayab, Pro Vice-chancellor of National Think Tank, in her latest research, showed a very low level of social and civic engagement among the people of Pakistan.

The study suggested If people are rarely engaged socially, how are they keeping themselves mentally and physically alive? Are there enough libraries and playgrounds available to do so? Not that other ages do not need these, but with the number of youth present in the country, the importance of having facilities where the young can shape and nourish their minds and bodies become all the more important.

According to the research study, the libraries provide not just information but also contribute to building communities. Public libraries can be a great equalizer by providing information and education to those who otherwise cannot afford it.

The study furthermore said that a vast majority of Pakistanis (83%) do not have access to any library, with only a tiny proportion (4.5%) being very happy with the one they can access. Access remains low for both sexes, but females have more inadequate access than their male counterparts for all age groups.

Dr. Nayab further elaborated in the report that it is worth mentioning here that this is reported access. A facility might exist but still remain inaccessible for a variety of reasons.

How many Pakistanis have access to playgrounds? It may be clarified here that this question asks if the respondent can access a playground, not if they actually do it.

The research shows that 60% of Pakistanis have no playground access. While one-third of the urban population lacks access to a playground, the proportion is three-fourths for their rural counterparts. Along with low accessibility, satisfaction too is much lower in the rural areas, expressed in the unhappy/very unhappy responses.

Punjab fares the best among the four provinces, followed by Balochistan and Sindh. KP shows the highest proportion of those not having access to a playground (67.8%). GB continues to show better trends than other territories, having the lowest proportion of those not having access to a playground (46.3%).

AJK lags behind other territories, with 62.3% needing more access to a playground.



PESHAWAR: Abdali Squad Policemen patrolling on Ring Road.

## Mubashir obtains SCP license



**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Chairman Executive Committee Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Syed Mubashir Shah obtained license for legal practice at Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The chairman is expert in constitutional and criminal cases. He belong Islamia area Swabi district.

He is actively participating in lawyer politics while member KPBC from Swabi while elected as chairman Executive Committee of the bar council.

## Thunderstorm forecast

PESHAWAR (APP): The Regional Meteorological Department on Sunday predicted partly cloudy weather for most districts of the province for next 24 hours.

Scattered thunderstorm-rain with wind-dust storm and (hailstorm at a few places) is likely to occur over Chitral, Lower and Upper Dir, Swat, Buner, Shangla, Kohistan, Torg-har, Battagram, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Hangu, Orakzai, Karak, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Bannu, North and South Waziristan districts.





## In brief

### Two gangsters arrested

FAISALABAD (INP): Lundianwala police have arrested two gangsters and recovered looted money and weapons from them. A spokesman said here on Sunday that SHO Lundianwala police station Riaz Athawal conducted a raid and arrested ring-leader Waqar alias Waqari and his accomplice Muazzam Ali, both residents of Chak No 378-GB. The police recovered cash, mobile phones, weapons and other items from them. The arrested accused were wanted to police in a number of cases.

### Nine injured in road accident

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): At least nine people including women and children were injured when an over speeding car hit a motorcycle and a rickshaw here on Saturday. Police said that a Faisalabad bound reckless driven car coming from Lahore rammed into a bike and a rickshaw near Jeevanpura town of Sheikhupura. Nine people including Matloob 35, Farooq 35, Wishal 22, Shahzeb 22, Sahil 17, Sawaira 16, Yuel Riasat 15, Abdullah 08, and three year old Noor Fatima were injured in the accident.

### LHWs to hold rally today

HYDERABAD (APP): All Sindh Lady Health Workers and Employees Union (ASLHWEU) will organize a rally on Monday in connection with "Labour Day". According to the statement issued here by Haleema Leghari, Shama Golani of ASLHWEU and Mir Zulfikar Ali of Workers Education and Research Organization, the rally will start from Sindh Museum to the office of Sindh Language Authority at an out 11 pm and a public meeting will also be held to pay tribute to labourers who sacrificed their lives in Chicago for their labour rights. The rally and general body meeting will be held to mark "Labour Day" is observed on May 1 every year.

### Two gangsters arrested

FAISALABAD (APP): Lundianwala police have arrested two gangsters and recovered looted money and weapons from them. A spokesman said here on Sunday that SHO Lundianwala police station Riaz Athawal conducted a raid and arrested ring-leader Waqar alias Waqari and his accomplice Muazzam Ali, both residents of Chak No 378-GB. The police recovered cash, mobile phones, weapons and other items from them. The arrested accused were wanted to police in a number of cases.

### Man's body found

FAISALABAD (APP): The body of a man was found at a deserted place in the area of City Jarawala police station. Rescue-1122 spokesman said here on Sunday that some passers-by spotted the body of a man in his forties lying near the hide market Jarawalwa and informed the Emergency Service. The Rescue-1122 officials handed over the body to the area police. The deceased appeared to be an addict, who might have died due to overdose of drugs.

### Mobile phone sets seized

SARGODHA (APP): A team of Factory Area and City police stations, along with Muhafiz squad, conducted a crackdown on illegal, unregistered mobile-phone sellers at Trust Plaza here on Sunday and seized a large number of phone sets.

# FC continues enhancement capabilities of police

F.P. Report

MINGORA: In order to enhance the capabilities of Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Swat, Dir & Chitral police, Frontier Corps North initiated the security audit of police installations. The audit focused on identifying loopholes and recommending measures to prevent such incidents.

It included stocktaking of manpower, weapons, equipment & infrastructure of the police, Frontier Constabulary & Levies. On the special instructions of Corps Commander Peshawar and Inspector General Frontier Corps North, visits and interactions by the security officials with police were conducted to reduce communication gaps and boost the morale. Joint visits were

carried out with police officials to posts, checkpoints and nakkas to identify loopholes.

Trainings are given to the police including wearing helmets during duty, checking procedures at checkpoints and conducting day & night firing practices to enhance police performance.

A plan was formulated to establish self-sustainable, fire and rocket-proof police posts with CCTV cameras for continuous surveillance, featuring shell and bullet-proof RCC buildings, bullet-proof doors, solar panels, electricity facility, TV screens and other basic facilities.

Provision of equipment to police and CTD is continue including helmets, bullet-proof jackets, CCTV cameras, metal detectors &

alarm systems. Rupees 33.7 million were allocated for the uplift and repair of police posts, police stations, checkpoints and CTD buildings, as well as provision of jammers, surveillance cameras, and quadcopters in various districts.

In 2023, Rupees 1690 million are being spent to enhance surveillance, night fighting capabilities and force protection of police in Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Swat, Dir and Chitral.

Under a comprehensive plan, uplifting of posts, provision of cameras, other equipment & training of police personnel is continue.

So far, 6367 police personnel have been trained in Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Swat, Dir & Chitral with 46 posts/checkposts uplifted and 16 in progress.

## Steps being taken for DIK uplift with special focus

D.I.KHAN (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperative Department, Abdul Haleem Khan Qasuria has said the practical steps were being taken for the development of Dera Ismail Khan with a special focus on Agriculture sector.

He expressed these views as a chief guest at the inauguration ceremony of the laser land-leveling machine, drones for spraying and other modern agricultural equipments worth crores of rupees by the government for local farmers here at Model Farm.

He said the farmers would be made able to grow more crops in minimum time by providing them modern machinery, adding, the provision of new drones for spraying and machinery was a link of that chain.

On this occasion, the minister distributed new modern lasers among a large number of landowners. In the ceremony, Director Model Farm

Muhammad Imran, District Director of Water Management Firm Habibur Rehman, Assistant Director Bilal Khan Baloch, SDO Malik Safdar Majoka, Syed Hashmat Zaidi, Sardar Imtiaz Khan Baloch, Malik Mushtaq Dar, Haji Bashir of Haji Morah and others were also present.

Qasuria said that the prosperity of Dera Ismail Khan linked with the country's prosperity, adding, those who speak against the national institutions were not well-wishers of the country. All citizens should play their role in strengthening the country's institutions. He said that a modern machine for olive harvest has been delivered to Wana, South Waziristan which would help promotion of olive production in the area.

**AC makes surprise visits to BHUs, checks attendance of staff, availability of medicines:** Assistant Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan Farhan Ahmad on Sunday paid a surprise visit to different Basic Health

Units (BHUs) and checked the attendance of staff, availability of medicines and cleanliness condition.

Following the directions of the Deputy Commissioner, the Assistant Commissioner visited different BHUs on Bannu road where he checked in detail the OPD, attendance of staff and doctors besides stock registers and cleanliness situation.

He also met with the visitors to get their feedback, over which the majority showed satisfaction over the service delivery.

The AC directed the staff to ensure the provision of best medical facilities in time as it has been the top most priority of the government. He directed the on-duty staff to focus on the provision of best treatment facilities to the patients and warned that no laxity would be tolerated in this regard.

He said the representatives of district administration would continue to pay visits to BHUs in order to ensure best health facilities to the citizens.

## Police arrest 5 suspects and recovered liquor

BAHAWALPUR (APP): The district police have arrested five drug pushers from different areas of the district and recovered 135 liters liquor from their possession.

A spokesman for Bahawalpur police said here that acting on a tip-off, the police teams of police stations including PS Chani Goth, PS Anaitiyi and PS Hasilpur conducted raids at dens lying within their jurisdiction and took five drug peddlers into custody.

The police recovered 135 liters liquor from the possession of the accused.

The police have registered separate cases against the accused.

**Health Screening Camp set up at Bahawalpur Police Lines**

On the directions of the Inspector General Police, Punjab, a health screening camp has been established at the Police Lines in Bahawalpur.

According to a spokesman for Bahawalpur police, IGP Punjab had directed to establish health screening camps at police lines across the province to conduct blood screening of the police officials and personnel.

"Following the directives of IGP Punjab, a

health screening camp had been established at Bahawalpur Police Lines under the supervision of District Police Officer, Bahawalpur, Syed Muhammad Abbas," he said.

He further said that blood screening tests of the police officials would be conducted at the health screening camp that would be included CBC, LFT, RFT, Uric Acid, Sugar Fasting, HBA1C, Hepatitis ABC, Lipid Profile, HIV and others.

**Man injured in firing in Bahawalpur**

Unidentified armed men opened fire at a person, leaving him critically injured in Tahli Mahala area lying within the jurisdiction of Kotwali police station.

The police sources said that armed men opened indiscriminate firing at a man recognized as Ansari in Tahli Mahala area, leaving him wounded.

The assailants managed to escape from the scene.

The rescuers of Punjab Emergency Service Department and the police rushed to the scene.

The injured was transported to Bahawal Victoria Hospital where he was given emergency medical aid.

According to doctors,

the injured received a bullet in his kidney and a few other bullets in the lower parts of the body. However, his condition was told to be out of danger.

Kotwali police have registered a case against the accused.

According to the preliminary investigation, old enmity was the cause behind the attack.

**Drug smuggler arrested in Bahawalpur**

The district police have arrested a drug smuggler and recovered over two kilograms hashish from his possession in Ahmadpur East area.

The police sources said that Ahmadpur East police received information that a drug smuggler had been smuggling huge quantity of hashish.

"Following the tip-off, a police team of PS Ahmadpur East conducted a raid and arrested the suspect red-handed," they said, adding that the police recovered over two kilograms hashish from the possession of the accused. The drug smuggler was identified as Arsalan.

The police have registered a case against the suspect under Anti-Narcotics Act and launched an investigation into the case.



SIALKOT: Federal Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif addressing a press conference.

## Three killed in Mansehra firing incidents

MANSEHRA (INP): At least three people were killed in separate incidents of firing in different localities of Mansehra, police said on Sunday.

The first incident took place in Basti Chakriali Ganda Kassi, city police station jurisdiction, where accused Hasrat s/o Bahadur after exchange of hot word with his brother Mohsin over domestic issues, shot his dead and fled the scene.

In second incident at Mansehra Bypass, unknown culprits shot dead Nasir Noor s/o Noor Muhammad and Masroor Shah s/o Mir Muhammad Shah, hailing from Thandi Khoi.

It should be mentioned here that five people have been killed in various incidents of violence in Mansehra in 48 hours. The bodies were shifted to hospital for postmortem and police after registering separate cases in both incidents have started investigations.

## Khanewal teacher rapes student

KHANEWAL (INP): An 8-year-old boy was raped by his student along with his accomplice in Khanewal, police said on Sunday.

According to police, the incident was reported in the nearby village of Khanewal. The rape-victim kid has been moved to the hospital after he fell unconscious. Meanwhile, the police have arrested the teacher and his friend over the rape charges.

Earlier this month, a minor girl was allegedly raped and murdered in Karachi, Surjani Town area.

Police said the body was found in a manhole near the Surjani Town area.

According to details, a six-year-old girl was missing from Karachi's Surjani area on Tuesday [March 04], and a day later her body was found in the manhole near her house.

The police officials declared the death as an 'accident' after which the girl's body was shifted to the hospital for a medico-legal process. The police surgeon confirmed that the girl was sexually assaulted before she was killed.

## PHP recovers illegal weapons

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Punjab Highways Patrol (PHP) arrested three criminals and recovered illegal weapons from their possession during a crackdown on Sunday.

The PHP police under the supervision of Sub-Inspector Zahid Hussain, launched a crackdown against outlaws and arrested three criminals. They also recovered seven repeaters, seven pistols and rounds from their possession.

The criminals were handed over to Sadar Police Station and separate cases were registered against them, police sources added.

Speaking on the occasion, Sub-Inspector Zahid Hussain said that as per directives of the provincial government, all possible efforts were being made to ensure safe traveling to masses on highways. He said that the PHP was not only offering help to road users but also taking strict action against criminals.

## Govts taking steps for workers' welfare

QUETTA (APP): Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar said the current federal and provincial governments were taking steps for the welfare of all workers and farmers to give them a respectable position in society so that their economic condition could be improved.

He expressed these views in his message on the occasion of the International Labor Day of the workers. The Governor said that we were well aware of the difficult conditions and difficulties faced by the workers due to the recent severe poverty, inflation and unemployment which has had a direct impact on the working class, especially after the heavy rains and floods in Balochistan, the life of labourers has become miserable.

However, we are personally taking practical steps through unique income support programs, utility stores in the province, Pakistan Red Crescent Society and many national and international organizations to end the economic hardship of the poor and needy people can create some ease in their lives, he underlined.

He said that apart from this, conscious efforts were being made to promote economic and commercial activities across the province and to provide necessary facilities to the poor farmers at their doorsteps.

Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar said that it was a recognized fact that the working class was the backbone of the industrial and economic development of the country saying that it was the laborers and farmers who work day and night to increase the national production.

He said that the religion of Islam has also recog-

nized the greatness and dignity of the laborer and ordered that the laborer's wages should be paid before his sweat dries up.

He said that in view of the special importance of workers and farmers, the current federal and provincial governments were taking steps for the welfare of all workers and farmers and to give them a respectable position in the society so that their economic condition could be improved.

Addressing all the workers of the country, Governor Balochistan asked them to work with hard work, dedication and honesty and play their full role in the development and prosperity of the country and the nation, because without your hard work and sweat, the dream of real construction and development of any country could not be interpreted as shameful.

## Gang involved in robberies, crimes busted

WAH CANTT (APP): Wah Cantt police busted a local notorious gang involved in robberies and street crimes and arrested its three members including the ring leader besides recovery of looted booty and arms utilized during various criminal activities.

Talking to newsmen on Sunday, SP Potohar division Waqas Khan disclosed that the gang known as 'Ishaqa gang' was most wanted and notorious gang was involved in a number of street crimes including snatching, robbery in the

area. He said that a team of Station House Officer Sarmad Ilyas raided at their hideout and arrested the members of the gang including its ring leader identified as Ishaq alias Ishaqa, Ikram and Muslim.

He said that snatched booty, three snatched motorcycles and arms utilized in the various crimes were also recovered from their possession. During the preliminary interrogation, the gang has confessed of committing various robberies, snatching and street crimes activities in the twin

cities of Taxila and Wah.

**Three arrested in murder case:** Taxila Police on Sunday arrested three persons allegedly involved in killing of a man and injuring two others over a petty dispute.

According to the police spokesman, the suspected identified as Qurban, Ihtiaque and Mustafa shot dead Ijaz and two others while storming into a mosque and later fled away. He said that police raided at their hideouts and arrested all the three nominated accused.

## Commissioner reviews work on hospital project

MULTAN (APP): Commissioner Multan division, Aamir Khattak, paid a visit to under construction Nishtar-II hospital to review the pace of work on the project on Sunday.

The Commissioner said that the caretaker Punjab Chief Minister has given deadline for completion of civil work of the project by May 30 and added that the early completion of the project would benefit the citizens of South Punjab.

The fruits of the government policies would reach the people by completing the uplift projects on time, he added.

He directed the officials concerned to speed up the electricity connection process for the hospital and took detailed briefings on the completion and progress of Nishtar-II hospital.

On this occasion, Additional Commissioner Arshad Gopang, Director Development Robina Kausar, Ac Sadar Amir Iftikhar and other officials were present.

**Food dept achieves over 66pc wheat procurement target in Multan division:** Food department has achieved over 66 per cent wheat procurement target by purchasing over 435148.1 metric tons of wheat so far as over six lac metric tons of wheat procurement target was set for the Multan division this year.

Deputy Director Food, Shahid Khokhar expressed these views while talking to APP here on Sunday.

He said that the wheat procurement drive was in full swing as 48 centres were established across the

division for the procurement of wheat.

He said that maximum facilities were being extended to the wheat growers at the centres while timely payment to farmers through banks was also being ensured.

DD Food further informed that the gunny bags distribution process was also underway and 97.96 per cent of bags had been disbursed among the growers so far.

Mr Khokhar said that strict monitoring was also being made to curb the wheat smuggling mafia and many tons of wheat have been confiscated during raids.

He said that the wheat procurement drive would continue till achieving the set target across the division.

## DC visits Jam Sahib, inspects sanitation situation

NAWABSHAH (APP): Deputy Commissioner Shehryar Gul Memon on Sunday inspected the sanitation, disposal of water and drainage disposal system during a visit to Jamsahib Town.

DC expressed his annoyance over the poor situation of sanitation and instructed the Town officer directing him to bring improvement in the sanitation condition of the town by cleaning

drainage nullahs so that rainwater disposal could be made possible.

He also directed them to take steps to supply of clean drinking water to citizens. DC instructed to endure disposal of rainwater from graveyards and initiate a killing campaign of pye dogs.

On the occasion, Town Officer Noor Ahmed Zardari briefed DC about problems surfacing in

cleaning and water draining and also informed about ongoing development schemes.

He also ensured cooperation in cleaning drainage nullahs. On the other hand, DC also visited Bandhi Town and viewed the water disposal and sanitation situation. DC instructed the Town Officer to improve in sanitation situation and to initiate a pye dog-killing campaign.





# Opposition roadmap for undoing Erdogan's legacy

ISTANBUL (AFP/APP): Turkey's multi-faceted opposition alliance wants to undo President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's two-decade legacy of highly centralised and religiously conservative rule.

Here is a look at its plan of action should it win the May 14 parliamentary and presidential vote.

Opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu has portrayed his six-party alliance, which includes liberals, nationalists and religious conservatives, as a force for democratic change. The 74-year-old former civil servant has pledged to "bring democracy to this country by changing the one-man regime".

In its 240-page programme, the alliance vows to abandon the presidential system Erdogan introduced after winning a hard-fought constitutional referendum in 2017.

The opposition wants to restore a parliamentary system under which lawmakers elect a prime minister and have oversight over ministries.

The president would be limited to a single seven-year term.

"Changing the political system will not be easy," said Bertil Oder, a professor of constitutional law at Istanbul's Koc University.

Such changes require a three-fifth majority in parliament, which the opposition will struggle to win on May 14, he pointed out.

Kilicdaroglu says his first order of business will be to issue a decree releasing some of the most high-profile opposition figures jailed under Erdogan.

These include the philanthropist Osman Kavala and the Kurdish leader Selahattin Demirtas, whose freedom has been long-sought by

the West.

The opposition pledges to restore "independent and impartial" courts, which Erdogan stacked with allies after surviving a bloody coup attempt in 2016.

But the alliance, which includes the nationalist Good Party, has said little about Kurds, whose elected mayors in Turkey's southeast have all been either stripped of their jobs or jailed.

It also wants to revive freedom of expression and give independence to the media, which fell under the near-total control of the government and its business allies.

"You will be able to criticise me very easily," Kilicdaroglu once quipped, pledging to abolish the criminal offence of "insulting the president". Representing the traditionally secular CHP party of Turkey's founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Kilicdaroglu has worked hard to gain the trust of religiously conservative women who wear the headscarf.

Kilicdaroglu has pledged to make the right to stay veiled in public guaranteed by law, to show he has no intention of reversing religious freedoms introduced by Erdogan.

"We will defend the rights of all women," Kilicdaroglu said, vowing to "respect everyone's beliefs, lifestyles and identities", including those of Turkey's LGBTQ community. Erdogan, by contrast, calls LGBTQ people "perverse".

Kilicdaroglu also wants to rejoin the Istanbul Convention, a European treaty aimed at combating gender-based violence from which Turkey withdrew under Erdogan's orders in 2021. The opposition vows an imme-

diate return to economic orthodoxy and a break with Erdogan's "Turkish economy model".

Erdogan's refusal to fight inflation by raising interest rates -- linked in part to his belief in Islamic rules against usury -- has sparked the worst economic crisis of his rule.

The official annual inflation rate touched 85 percent last year. Independent economists believe the real rate could have been twice as high, erasing most of the gains of a new middle class created during Erdogan's first decade in power.

But a return to prosperity might take time, requiring the resuscitation of a state institution that became emasculated during Erdogan's era of centralised control.

"Whoever wins the election, Turkey's economy is unlikely to experience a quick recovery," said Erdal Alcin, a professor of international economics at Germany's Konstanz University.

The opposition is aware that Turkey has irritated its NATO allies by forging a privileged relationship with Russia since 2016. It wants to restore trust with the West while maintaining a "balanced dialogue" with Moscow to end the war in Ukraine.

Ahmet Unal Cevikoz, the head of international relations in Kilicdaroglu's party, is also pushing for "full membership of the European Union", which has long remained on hold. But the priority, said Cevikoz, is on reconciling with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad -- an essential condition for the "voluntary" return of 3.7 million Syrian refugees living in Turkey.

# Small reactor startups vie to push US into new nuclear era

HOUSTON (AFP/APP): Several American startups are working on building a new generation of small reactors that could push nuclear energy into a new phase, with support from the US government.

During a recent hearing before the House Appropriations Committee, US Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm restated the "importance of nuclear energy" for the current administration regarding America's power supply. But despite the Biden administration's stated support for nuclear power, there are no new projects underway for any traditional nuclear reactors.

In fact, today's 93 remaining legacy reactors -- which provide around 18 percent of the country's electricity -- are ageing fast; six reactors have already been decommissioned since 2017. The future of the industry will likely rely on small modular reactors -- or SMRs -- similar to the ones currently powering submarines.

SMRs have been promoted as a cheaper option than legacy reactors, with shortened construction time and less fuel needed to power them, which translates into less nuclear waste. "I've spoken to many utility CEOs and many of them simply stated that they plan to build SMRs and

not large reactors," says William Freebairn, Senior Managing Editor at S&P Global.

Many SMRs will replace coal plants in remote locations where "the ability to place a really large unit is very limited," he added.

Although SMR technology has been under development for decades, momentum is picking up due in no small part to the push from the government, and the recent adoption of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which will provide tax credits of up to 30 percent of investments.

Several US companies are currently working on their own SMR or AMR (Advanced Modular Reactor) designs. But only one, from Portland's NuScale, has been fully certified by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Approval was only granted in January this year, six years after the company filed its application.

"Other countries around the world that are interested in this technology really watch what's happening in the United States very carefully, and they kind of follow suit in terms of what's been approved by the NRC," said Bahram Nassersharif, Nuclear Engineering Program Director at the University of Rhode Island.

"That's kind of the stamp of approval that they accept," he said.

NuScale initially expected its pilot six-module plant to be fully operational by 2026 in Idaho Falls, Idaho, but delays have already pushed the deadline to 2030.

Time is of the essence, with 28 percent of America's coal-fired electric-generating capacity to be retired by 2035, according to an Energy Information Agency (EIA) estimate.

US designs also face increasing competition abroad; some 70 to 80 SMR designs have already emerged in countries including South Korea, France and Russia.

Although it's currently leading the pack, NuScale's costs are mounting. The expected bill for its Idaho plant is projected to be \$9.3 billion, up 75 percent from initial estimates. Almost half of this money will be provided by government subsidies.

10 of the 36 public utilities that had signed on to help build the plant have dropped out of the group. "We are aggressively pursuing not only new participants, but also working to incentivize current participants to increase their subscription levels", explains Stephen Handy, spokesman for Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems.

# Gunman on the run after five people shot dead in Texas

HOUSTON (AFP/APP): Police in Texas said they were searching Saturday for a man believed to have shot dead five neighbors after they asked him to stop firing his rifle in his yard late at night.

The victims, who were all from Honduras, included an eight-year-old child, the local sheriff said.

The drunken gunman apparently stormed into the crowded house and opened fire, reportedly infuriated by the request to stop shooting his semi-automatic weapon in his yard because the noise was keeping a baby awake.

Sheriff Greg Capers of San Jacinto County, which is north of Houston, described a horrifying scene when authorities arrived at the residence after receiving a call about "harassment" around 11:30 pm Friday.

The victims, aged from eight to 40 years old, were strewn from the front door through the house to an inside bedroom, where two women were found lying on top of two traumatized children who survived the massacre.

"In my opinion, they were actually trying to take care of the babies and keep them babies alive," Capers told ABC's Houston station KTRK. All the victims had been shot "from the neck up, almost execution style, basically in the head," he added. Deputies found "several others in critical condition from multiple gunshot wounds," the sheriff's office said in a Facebook post. Three were hospitalized. The suspect "had been drinking, and he says, 'I'll do what I want to in my front yard,'" the sheriff told KTRK.

"All the victims were from Honduras," Capers told reporters, adding that 10 people had been in the house at the time. The Honduran foreign minister, Enrique Reina, called for the gunman to face "the full weight of the law." He said officials would follow the case closely.

Texas authorities said an arrest warrant had been issued for Francisco Oropeza, a 39-year-old Mexican national, charging him with five counts of murder. "We've got his Mexican consulate card," Capers said, adding that a security system at the victims' house "captured him coming up to the front door with a weapon."

The shooter is believed to have left the county, but the sheriff's office has urged nearby residents were to stay home. The FBI also launched a search for the suspect,

requesting information on his whereabouts but warning people not to approach him.

The Texas killings appeared to be the latest in a series of shootings spawned by normally banal interactions: a man mistakenly knocking on the wrong door, a cheerleader accidentally stepping into the wrong car, someone mistakenly driving into the wrong driveway, a ball rolling into a neighbor's yard. There have been more than 170 mass shootings -- defined as four or more people wounded or killed -- so far this year in the United States, according to the Gun Violence Archive.

With more firearms than inhabitants, the United States has the highest rate of gun deaths of any developed country -- 49,000 in 2021, up from 45,000 the year before.

# Uzbeks vote on reforms to strengthen president

TASHKENT (AFP/APP): Polls opened early Sunday in Uzbekistan's constitutional referendum, which could allow President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to remain in power until 2040.

Authorities say the overhaul of the constitution will improve governance and quality of life in the Central Asian country of 35 million people, whose rights have long been heavily restricted. But it is Mirziyoyev who is expected to benefit most in the majority-Muslim country, say political observers.

Polling stations opened at 8:00 am (0300 GMT), according to the Uzbek Election Commission. They will close at 8:00 pm.

One of the main reforms is expected to be extending presidential terms from five to seven years; and allow the 65-year-old Mirziyoyev to serve two more terms and extend his time in power until 2040.

There is little doubt the amendments will be adopted, in a country where the media is heavily controlled.

Two journalists working for Uzbek state media told AFP on condition of anonymity that they had

been "ordered to cover Uzbekistan, the referendum and the president in a positive way".

Both said censorship had grown during the referendum campaign.

The government has gone to some lengths to give the vote a veneer of legitimacy, enrolling local celebrities at large rallies and concerts to praise both the proposals and the president. Billboards around the capital Tashkent, the biggest city in Central Asia, carry imaginary message chats between voters.

"Dad, shall we go to the park?" reads the first message. "No, we have to vote first," comes the reply.

The campaigning appears to be working.

Agay Danilov, an 18-year-old student, told AFP the referendum was "a good idea".

"We can choose the future of our country," Danilov added.

Since coming to power in 2016 in the wake of the death of hardline predecessor Islam Karimov, Mirziyoyev has spearheaded a series of reforms in Uzbekistan, including a clampdown on forced

labour in the cotton fields.

But activists say rights abuses persist, and authorities have shown no sign of allowing a political opposition to emerge.

In 2022, at least 21 people died during demonstrations in the autonomous region Karakalpakstan. Rights activists accused the authorities of having used lethal force against the protesters. Olivier Ferrando, a researcher at the Catholic University of Lyon in France, said the reform was a "flagship measure" for Mirziyoyev in his attempt at "emancipation" from the legacy of his predecessor.

Karimov died in 2016 after a quarter-century of brutal rule.

Mirziyoyev was his loyal prime minister for 13 years but now presents himself as a much more progressive figure.

"Many analysts see, understandably, an effort by Mirziyoyev to stay in power but it would be a shame to dismiss this text as just an authoritarian turn," Ferrando told AFP, referring to the amendments.

Among the proposals are a ban on capital punishment

and the protection of human rights for what Mirziyoyev calls a "new Uzbekistan".

"We will have to see, of course, if this constitutional reform, one of whose aims is to give guarantees to the international community of democratic development in the new Uzbekistan, will be able to go beyond a simple cosmetic effect and be fully implemented in people's daily lives," Ferrando said.

Uzbekistan's population is emerging from a particularly harsh winter marked by shortages of fuel, and is faced with enduring poverty and endemic corruption.

Despite some economic progress and social improvements, such as the criminalisation of domestic violence, the government brooks no dissent.

During the July 2022 unrest, demonstrations against a constitutional amendment in Karakalpakstan, which would have reduced the autonomy of the vast territory, were put down in a bloody crackdown. Dozens of people were jailed. The controversial amendment has since been withdrawn.

# Harry in the spotlight for coronation return

LONDON (AFP/APP): Prince Harry will be heavily scrutinised at his father King Charles III's coronation, as he rejoins other royals for the first time since airing a barrage of criticism about them.

Harry, 38, will take his seat at the May 6 ceremony in Westminster Abbey without wife Meghan or either of their two children, Prince Archie and Princess Lilibet. The American former television actress will be at their California home, celebrating Archie's fourth birthday, sparing her potentially awkward interactions with her increasingly estranged in-laws.

The couple have repeatedly castigated the monarchy since relocating in 2020, stepping up the attacks in recent months through a series of television interviews and in Harry's memoir.

In the explosive autobiography, "Spare", published in January, the prince laid bare years of family feuding, including alleging that elder brother Prince William physically attacked him during an argument about Meghan.

In early March, Harry told developmental expert Gabor Mate he came from a "broken home" and was trying not to pass "trauma" on to his children.

Buckingham Palace only confirmed Harry's atten-

dance earlier this month, following lengthy speculation about whether he would be there.

"A lot of eyes will be on him," said Pauline Maclaran, from Royal Holloway University of London, who has written a book about Meghan's impact on the monarchy.

"People will be fascinated to see the interaction between him and other royals," she told AFP.

Harry has been in Britain sporadically this year for court hearings as he pursues legal action against UK newspapers over alleged phone hacking.

Even court filings have become an avenue for the family rancour.

In witness statements made public this week, the prince claimed his father's household blocked his bids to launch the lawsuits a decade ago due to a "long-term strategy" to keep the media supportive of his stepmother, Camilla, becoming queen consort.

The revelation follows Harry writing in his memoir that he and William had begged their father not to marry Camilla before their eventual nuptials in 2005.

Ahead of their grand-mother Queen Elizabeth II's funeral in September, the warring brothers tried to showcase family unity by jointly greeting well-wish-

ers alongside their wives in Windsor.

But tensions were evident, and the subsequent accusations by Harry and Meghan are seen as only worsening the rift.

"Everybody will be looking for the interaction between Harry and William, but I gather they're going to be kept far apart so there probably won't be any interaction," Maclaran said.

She predicted Harry "will be kept in the background" and "come and go pretty quickly, trying not to cause any fuss."

"I don't think that there's any reconciliation possible at the moment," Maclaran added. "It does seem that there is an unwillingness on both sides really to repair."

The breakdown in relations between the Duke and Duchess of Sussex -- as they are formally known -- and other royals is seen by some as damaging to the monarchy. The centuries-old institution is grappling with the loss of Elizabeth II, a widely respected figure credited with maintaining the monarchy's popularity during her record-breaking reign -- and keeping any latent republican sentiment at bay.

With Charles now king, the family feud and sexual abuse allegations against his brother Prince Andrew

are sowing public "doubts around who these people are", said Graham Smith, of the pressure group Republic, which wants an elected head of state.

"They see him (Charles) as part of this questionable family," he told reporters at a recent briefing. Harry "continues to cause him problems", he added.

But others argue Harry and Meghan have made themselves deeply unpopular in Britain by quitting royal duties and giving so many incendiary interviews. "Duty is what people want from the royal family and Harry does not provide it," said Sean Lang, a history lecturer at Anglia Ruskin University.

Charles was right to invite them to the coronation, he argued, because "not to have done so would have looked petty".

But it was "wise" of Meghan to stay away, given the state of relations and the considerable risk of crowds booing them. "It is possible that the spectacle of the coronation... might emphasise the extent to which Prince Harry has excluded himself from the monarchy, and that might make it a difficult day for him," Lang added. "But I think many people in Britain will simply take the view that he brought this difficulty on himself."

# Taiwan ties in balance as Paraguay votes

ASUNCION (AFP/APP): Future ties with Taiwan are in play as Paraguayans go to the polls Sunday to pick a president they hope will tackle endemic corruption, rising crime and economic inequality.

A center-left coalition is aiming to end the almost unbroken, seven-decade hegemony of the ruling conservative Colorado Party in the closest race in many years.

Some 4.8 million of the South American country's 7.5 million inhabitants are eligible to vote in the election for president and legislature that will be determined in a single round.

Lawyer Efraim Alegre, 60, of the Concertacion center-left coalition is leading narrowly in opinion polls amid a recent anti-incumbency trend in Latin American elections.

His main challenger is Santiago Pena, a 44-year-old economist and former finance minister hoping to continue the rule of the Colorado Party that has governed almost continually since 1947 -- through a dictatorship and since the return of democracy in

1989. Though they differ on economic and international policy, the two front-runners are both socially conservative, defending strong anti-abortion and anti-gay marriage stances in an overwhelmingly Catholic nation.

The outcome could have important consequences for Paraguay's international relations. It is among only 13 countries to recognize Taipei over Beijing.

But Alegre has vowed to reconsider this if he wins, telling AFP: "Relations with Taiwan mean the loss of one of the largest markets, which is China."

He added: "Paraguay makes a very big effort, a very big sacrifice to have relations with Taiwan, but we are not seeing from Taiwan the same effort."

Latin America has been a key diplomatic battleground.

China considers self-ruled, democratic Taiwan part of its territory to be retaken one day, and does not allow other countries to recognize both Beijing and Taipei.

Nicaragua shifted its allegiance to Beijing in

2021, as did El Salvador in 2018, Panama in 2017 and Costa Rica in 2007.

Pena has said he would retain ties with Taiwan but move Paraguay's embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Moving an embassy to Jerusalem is highly contentious. Israel claims all of Jerusalem as its capital while Palestinians view east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state.

Paraguay had previously moved its embassy in 2018, but reversed its decision within months.

"Yes, I would go back to Jerusalem," Pena told AFP days ahead of the vote.

"The State of Israel recognizes Jerusalem as its capital. The seat of the Congress is in Jerusalem, the president is in Jerusalem. So who are we to question where they establish their own capital?" Alegre repeatedly pointed to corruption in the Colorado Party, which has seen two of its top members recently hit with US sanctions over alleged graft.

They include Pena's political mentor, ex-president Horacio Cartes.

Paraguay is ranked 137 out of 180 countries on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.

Apart from the shadow of top-level graft, which has angered voters, other election issues include poverty, social inequality and an escalating crime problem.

Paraguay's GDP is expected to grow 4.8 percent in 2023, according to the central bank, and 4.5 percent according to the IMF -- one of the highest rates in Latin America.

But poverty plagues about a quarter of the population.

"The country is full of privileged people. People earn 100 million guaranis (about \$14,000) a month while others are dying of hunger," said Alegre, running his third presidential race.

"The great problem of Paraguay is not having achieved greater balance in the distribution of income to achieve greater equity," economist Ruben Ramirez of the Trade and Investment Paraguay consultancy in Asuncion told AFP.

# Germany's climate activists find sanctuary in churches

BERLIN (AFP/APP): Copies of a climate change petition along with photos of the signatories lay at the foot of the altar. Metres away, a dozen activists were undergoing street protest training.

Other members of the Letzte Generation (Last Generation) group were having a vegan brunch buffet in the pews, minutes before they were to march out through the imposing doors of Berlin's St. Thomas Church for their latest demonstration to press the government to do more for the climate.

The Protestant church has become the unlikely

staging point for the climate activists in their latest two-week campaign to bring Berlin's traffic to a standstill by glueing themselves onto the asphalt.

In northeastern Berlin, Gethsemane Church -- a key site in the peaceful revolution that brought down the Berlin Wall -- is hosting an open discussion on climate change every evening this week, before handing the baton to another church next week.

Although politicians including leading members of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government have blasted Letzte Generation's road blockade protests, the

churches have thrown open their doors to the activists.

"We want to contribute to allowing the participants to remain in peace," said the St. Thomas Church's council in a statement.

"The radicalisation of the climate movement is the expression of the despair that too little is being done for the protection of the climate and thereby for the preservation of Creation. We're taking this despair seriously and confronting it," they added.

The churches' action is not without controversy, as surveys suggest a majority of the public frown on Letzte

Generation's protests.

In a recent poll by national broadcaster ZDF, 82 percent of respondents felt the street blockades went too far.

Scholz's government, including the Greens, have also spoken out against the protests. Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck of the Greens has said the street blockades were "not a helpful contribution to climate protection" because they don't win consensus, rather they "irritate people".

"The supposed saviours of the world in a church - what hypocrisy," charged Focus magazine in a column.



The Frontier Post

JALIL AFRIDI  
Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at  
Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,  
Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001  
Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 415-3704551

## Pak-US ties, reality, and vaingloriousness

Pakistan’s Ambassador to the United States, Masood Khan, has observed that there was no misunderstanding between the United States and Pakistan over Islamabad’s move to buy discounted Russian oil amid severe economic and energy challenges. While addressing a think tank event on Pakistan-US relations, Ambassador Khan noted that Pakistan has placed the first order for Russian oil, and this has been done in consultation with the United States government. Meanwhile, Pakistan’s deal with Russia going well in the price cap range set by the G7 and European countries on Russian oil to help prevent Moscow’s financing of its war against Ukraine. According to the Pakistani envoy, Pakistan’s ties with the United States went through a brief period of uncertainty after the US-led foreign troops withdrew from Afghanistan and the Taliban seized control of the country. Masood Khan claimed that the reset Islamabad-Washington relationship is transcending the past.

Pakistan and the United States have a long history of bilateral relations that witnessed multiple ups and downs and went through several phases of impressive cooperation and severe diplomatic split-ups over the past seven and a half decades. Both nations had enjoyed historic cordial relations in the 1950s when the newly liberated state of Pakistan opted to join the Western bloc during the initial years of the cold war. Multiple defense and security pacts and Pakistan’s important role in the furtherance of American interests cemented Pakistan-US ties. Later, Pakistan’s role as a front-line state in the Afghan jihad against the former Soviet Union placed Pakistan on the list of most favorite nations of the United States, however, Pakistan’s quest for nuclear deterrence and progress in the nuclear field always remained a bitter truth for American Strategists who offered resistance and instated barriers on US economic and military assistance to Islamabad that seriously undermined Pak-US relations and bilateral cooperation throughout history. After the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan again decided to join US-led War on Terror (WoT) because the American nation was under attack at that time and the US government demanded crucial help from Islamabad. As a result, Pakistan paid a heavy price for supporting the US war against terrorism but the world’s sole power leveled baseless accusations against Pakistan for all its failures and defeat in Afghanistan.

As Ambassador Khan highlighted that Pak-US relations suffered a brief period of uncertainty after the US-led foreign military withdrawal from Afghanistan despite the fact Pakistan played a pivotal role in the commencement of the US-Taliban dialogue and the conclusion of the historic Doha agreement, while the country also facilitated the evacuation of the US troops, civilians and western diplomats from Afghanistan. In fact, Pakistan’s decision to apart itself from the so-called democracy summit, an anti-China gathering hosted by the United States has been viewed by the US government with concern and Washington categorically expressed its displeasure through manipulation of Pakistan’s long-awaited deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Meanwhile, US’s military and economic assistance to Pakistan had been reduced significantly while foreign military sales and training are suspended since 2017. Apparently, Ambassador Khan has expressed optimism because of the sensitivities attached to his ambassadorial assignment, otherwise, Pak-US relations had always been of a transactional nature and currently, their bond only could be forged on terrorism and China.

Realistically, the foreign policy of all sovereign nations revolves around their national interests which they pursue through collaboration with friendly nations, partners, and allies. Washington first abandoned its long-standing South Asian ally by forging a multi-prong strategic partnership with New Delhi and currently coaxing Islamabad to scarify its relationship with Beijing and join Washington’s alliance against its neighbor. Both nations are currently engaged in multiple domains but the pace of their engagement is minimal. Islamabad is endeavoring hard to create balance and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with both powers but facing hurdles from both sides. In fact, enhanced Pak-US ties are not only important for both countries but very crucial for regional peace and stability, therefore both nations must work to preserve and augment this relationship in the future.

# Gulf nations can play a key role in restoring stability in Sudan

Hafed Al-Ghwell

The outbreak of hostilities and subsequent rapid developments in Sudan over the past two weeks appear to have blindsided external observers. Many, including impatient diplomats, had initially enthusiastically touted a declaration by Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan of the military’s intent to withdraw from politics altogether, hopefully in favor of a civilian-only interim authority.

Among most Sudanese, however, the writing had been on the wall since late last year that the marriage of convenience between the Sudanese Armed Forces, under Al-Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, led by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, was on its last legs.

Having seized power in 2021, two years after former President Omar Bashir was overthrown in a military coup, the two military leaders busied themselves with manipulating the political transition process to safeguard their own interests, which had nothing whatsoever to do with stay-

ing out of politics.

Prior to tensions building early this year that this month spilled over and led to sporadic clashes in Khartoum, the two military factions had shared power in a loose coalition that was responsible for the “soft” coup in late 2021, during which civilians were ejected from the temporary transitional government.

Despite the subsequent public protests against the military junta, it was clear to most Sudanese that there would be no miracle — in a country on the brink, suffering from soaring inflation, crumbling infrastructure and now a crippled democratic transition — to resuscitate the hard-fought revolution that had ousted Bashir.

Now, Sudan is on the verge of a full-blown civil war and the focus for the global community appears to be getting as many of their citizens out of the country as quickly as possible, rather than taking effective steps to preempt a conflict in a very fragile part of the world.

Should Sudan descend into all-out war, the

spillovers to other states would be catastrophic. This alone should motivate Gulf nations to take a more active interest in efforts to deescalate the conflict, facilitate dialogue, and galvanize support to shore up the vulnerabilities in Sudan that only make armed conflict inevitable.

But, why Gulf nations? Well, Sudan has long maintained strong, albeit complex, relationships with a number of Gulf states, particularly due to its strategic location and historical ties with the Arabian Peninsula. For decades, the Gulf Cooperation Council, comprising Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman, has been involved in Sudan’s political and economic affairs, thus incentivizing the organization to take a more proactive role in preventing Sudan becoming more unstable.

Firstly, as the war in Yemen winds down, GCC countries are seeking to consolidate their regional influence and maintain stability in their near-neigh-

borhood. But this is now threatened by the prospect of a war in Sudan that could spawn a massive humanitarian crisis, resulting in a flood of refugees that would put additional pressure on the resources and stability of neighboring countries, including Egypt. GCC countries also hold significant investments in Sudan, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure and energy. A stable Sudan would help protect those investments and ensure the continuing flow of economic benefits, while also underwriting the influence of the GCC on the other side of the Red Sea.

Additionally, Sudan’s strategic location on the Red Sea coast and its proximity to the Arabian Peninsula mean it is a vital area of interest for Gulf states in terms of regional security, including efforts to counter militancy, extremism, and safeguarding the high volume of maritime traffic that traverses the waters between the Suez Canal and Bab El-

Mandeb Strait.

Regional insecurity is a primary concern, given the reported presence in Sudan of destabilizing elements such as the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group, which has entrenched itself in Libya and parts of the Sahel.

Gulf states have previously expressed concerns about the growing influence of Russia in the region and might perceive Wagner Group’s support for the Rapid Support Forces as a progressive threat to the GCC’s interests that could metastasize farther into an already fragile Horn of Africa.

Of course, given the nature of contemporary geopolitics, most countries would rather avoid messy external interventions, especially when a potential hotspot attracts the attention of malign or mercenary actors.

However, the GCC can still rely on the convening power it possesses to at least initiate a deescalation process. Although this convening power is not on par with that of the UN Security Council’s five permanent members (the US,

Russia, the UK, France and China), the GCC has nonetheless demonstrated its ability to influence affairs in its near-neighborhood, and farther afield, through, for instance, diplomatic pressure, economic assistance, and outright military intervention.

The effective utilization of this convening power will largely depend on the unity and shared interests of GCC member states. They possess significant leverage individually, particularly in the cases of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, due to their economic and military resources.

Besides, if collective action fails and unilateral interventions are inadvisable, the GCC could also cooperate with the UN, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (an eight-country African trade bloc), and the wider international community in an effort to prevent hostilities escalating in Sudan.

The GCC, and others, can more effectively push for and support a ceasefire

(Continued Page-7)

## Israel cannot be a democracy and an occupying force

Yossi Mekelberg

On two consecutive Saturday nights this month I had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the protests against the anti-democratic measures the Israeli government is attempting to inflict on its political system and society.

The protests have proved to be an authentic celebration, by ordinary Israelis from all walks of life, of their desire for their country to remain a true liberal, democratic state. The protesters displayed the gravity and determination this crisis requires — but there was also a real sense of carnival and a huge age range of people on the street, from young children to those who witnessed Israel’s birth as an independent state 75 years ago in the hope that their new country would be able to square the complex circle of being both Jewish and democratic.

The speakers at these massive rallies are selected carefully to represent a wide range of citizens, from the more liberal/left-leaning progressives to the democratic elements on the right, and to reflect the country’s diversity of age, social status and gender. They have included politicians, academics and senior representatives of security forces and civil society. You name it, it is represented here, and it is all impressively overseen by the towering figure of Shikma Bressler, a physicist by trade but a leader by nature.

Nevertheless, there continues to be something that is disturbingly missing from these protests, and it is something that is crucial for any discussion of the Jewish and democratic nature of the state: The issue of Israel’s relations with the Palestinians, especially those who live under Israeli occupation and

blockade in the West Bank and Gaza, but also, to a large extent, the Palestinian minority within Israel proper.

Granted there are some banners to be seen here and there, and someone might be spotted wearing a T-shirt with a slogan that asserts there can be “No Democracy With Occupation.” But such things are few and far between and the issue is entirely absent from the speeches.

I keep being told how wrong it is to make the connection between the con-

ditional erosion of Israeli democratic rights and the actions of the state in depriving its next-door neighbors of those very same rights.

This must either be because, somehow, there are those who suffer from a total eclipse of judgment and are incapable of seeing this direct connection with the occupation and the institutional discrimination against the Palestinian minority inside Israel; or for tactical reasons, to avoid weakening the protest movement by deterring those who might oppose the government’s

judicial coup but are no fans of a two-state solution — or any other solution that would grant equal rights to Palestinians.

To be fair, as much as I am at a loss to understand those who fail to comprehend the obvious link between brutally depriving millions of people of their most basic political, civil and human rights — people they can see every day with their naked eyes from their windows and backyards — and the constant erosion of

their own affairs and only then, by their grace, will they, perhaps, apply themselves to solving that conflict. In the meantime, Palestinians are expected to carry on enduring their dire and unjust conditions.

Instead of progress toward peace, all Palestinians see is the constant expansion of Jewish settlements as their land is taken over, harsh living conditions, and daily brutality by the occupying force.

So what exactly is the

***Instead of progress toward peace, all Palestinians see is the constant expansion of Jewish settlements as their land is taken over, harsh living conditions, and daily brutality by the occupying force. So what exactly is the prognosis here? How much longer are Palestinians supposed to wait until Israelis find the time to afford them similar rights to those they themselves have enjoyed since 1948? The sense of urgency and the threat to the very foundations of the democratic system in Israel that the proposed legislation has engendered needs very little explanation. It would self-evidently hand most of the power to politicians, over and above the rule of law, and is a sure path to a corrupt, populist and authoritarian system of governance. This makes paramount the need for a wider, values-based discussion, one that is courageous enough to also examine the impact that decades of violently depriving another people of their rights has had on Israeli society.***

prognosis here? How much longer are Palestinians supposed to wait until Israelis find the time to afford them similar rights to those they themselves have enjoyed since 1948?

The sense of urgency and the threat to the very foundations of the democratic system in Israel that the proposed legislation has engendered needs very little explanation. It would self-evidently hand most of the power to politicians, over and above the rule of law, and is a sure path to a corrupt, populist and authoritarian system of governance.

tion and effective realization of human rights.”

None of these principles is currently applicable to the lives of Palestinians, whether they are governed by Israel, by the Palestinian Authority or by Hamas.

The institutions and individuals who are in charge of ensuring democracy on the Israeli side of the Green Line are those same institutions and individuals who continue to sanction the violation of the same rights on the other side of the line, where Palestinians live. The sanctity of preserving and promoting the dignity of all, of respecting free-

dom of opinion and expression, and of freedom of association, access to power and exercising it within the rule of law, is not being bestowed on Palestinians, who live under occupation. Israel’s government and courts hold the two populations to completely different legal and moral standards.

There is a long litany of issues in which Israelis, on either side of the Green Line, are treated completely differently from Palestinians living under occupation. Such issues can range from the very basic rights of freedom of movement and speech, to the seizure and demolition of houses belonging to the blameless families of Palestinian terrorists, but not the houses of the families of Jewish terrorists. Just to be clear and ensure I do not give the wrong impression, such measures should not be taken in either case.

The occupation has normalized and legitimized violence as a tool to resolve political differences and contaminated the public discourse with utter toxicity. And while the deterioration of Israel’s democracy has been a gradual one, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and far-right politicians, with the support of the ultra-orthodox, have been waiting all along for the opportunity to introduce the spirit of the occupation into the way they govern within Israel proper, and to strip the Supreme Court of all its powers.

The current widespread protests might well halt, or even reverse this plot, but without ending both the occupation and practice of controlling by completely different rules millions of Palestinians, these anti-democratic tendencies will only continue to haunt Israelis.

## Energy production priorities in the era of climate change

Dr. Theodore Karasik

Wind power is a major part of the current energy picture. Its generation — whether on land or at sea — is growing in scope, and necessity, around the world. It is a good news story and one that offers some hope in the battle to ease the effects of climate change in the decades ahead.

The history of wind power is extensive and includes research into the comparative challenges and benefits of onshore and offshore generation. It is the largest and fastest growing source of renewable power globally, generating nearly 8 percent of all energy last year. When combined with solar power, this figure increases to 12 percent.

Wind power projects now dot the globe. In studies, researchers have found offshore wind farms to be an effective option for achieving a low-carbon energy transition. Consequently, efforts to address the challenges associated with the imple-

mentation of offshore wind farms are important.

Authorities in European countries are already taking action. Last week, nine nations pledged to expand the capacity of their offshore wind farms in the North Sea by a factor of eight — compared with current levels — by 2050.

Wind power generation is already increasing; last year it supplied nearly a fifth of all electricity used in the EU area, according to Energy think tank Ember.

European nations want to develop more wind farms, and other green-energy projects, on land and at sea. For example, the Netherlands and the UK have announced plans for Europe’s biggest cross-border electricity connection to an offshore wind farm, and the EU and Norway have agreed to develop infrastructure to capture and store carbon dioxide from depleted North Sea gas fields.

The UK already has 45 offshore wind farms, pro-

ducing 14 gigawatts of power, with plans to expand capacity to 50 gigawatts by 2030. Germany has 30 wind farms producing 8 gigawatts, while the Netherlands generates 2.8 gigawatts, and Denmark and Belgium 2.3 gigawatts each. These European numbers are impressive and illustrate the potential results of effective policies.

Elsewhere, sea-based wind farms connected to land-based food production in the Baltics are being expanded. The 62.7 megawatt Jurbarkas II wind farm will be built near the town of the same name in Lithuania, off the coast of an agricultural region in the southwest of the country, and should be operational by 2024. Other countries around the Baltic Sea are also expanding their wind power networks, while remaining mindful of the security requirements for protecting such infrastructure from state and non-

state threats.

In East Asia, wind power is taking off in leaps and bounds as Asia-Pacific states race to harness its inexhaustible potential. Wind farms are popping up on land and — more crucially — offshore, providing energy to millions of households. These Asian states are a bigger market for wind power, given the geographical area, compared with Europe, and so Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are looking to boost offshore generation.

China is also a major driver of wind power projects. It boasts the largest offshore wind turbine, which stands more than 250 meters tall. In fact, Chinese turbines are the largest in the industry, with 128 meter-long blades that can sweep an area equivalent to the size of about seven football pitches.

Interestingly, Chinese authorities are looking at a hybrid wind and hydrogen

power generation system that can effectively reduce potential power loss caused by lack of wind, and further improve the ability of the energy system to accommodate renewable energy.

But there are issues with existing offshore wind power generation models. One problem lies within the supply chain: Giant offshore wind farms are complicated to install and maintain. They require very specialized and expensive ships for maintenance, as part of a complex layer of operational support. High demand for repair ships can therefore hamper maintenance and reduce capacity.

A recent study of stakeholders in the wind energy sector in Europe found that this type of green energy does still cause pollution. There are also six issues that are emerging as points of contention or as concerns about the environmental impact of wind power: Nature preservation; distributional injustice; property and conven-

ience; proportions; health concerns; and landscape values and functions.

Significantly, therefore, as new modes of energy generation are increasingly introduced, the pollution they create, and any other contentious issues, have to be assessed, managed and resolved.

Overall, wind power generation in both the West and East must be scaled up by a factor of four this decade to help meet the target of restricting the global average temperature rise to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Wind power must account for more than 20 percent of global electricity production by 2030 if net-zero emissions goals are to be achieved. Wind generation equipment is required now to increase its production rate to meet the growing demand for larger and better blades using high technology solutions to capture nature’s breath.



# Global health institutions need input from Africa

Public health policy has adopted an increasingly expansive perspective in recent years, reflecting a growing awareness of the many factors influencing human well-being, including the health of ecosystems and animals, and the need to facilitate global collaboration.

By bridging disciplines and transcending borders, we can better address emerging threats and improve health outcomes for all.

Global pandemic preparedness, for example, requires international alignment on how to modify health infrastructure and tailor responses. The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, of which I am acting director, has participated in several global discussions on the subject, ensuring that Africa's interests — and the Global South's perspective more generally — are represented in venues where they have been historically sidelined. Genuine inclusion of African voices in policy deliberations, especially early in the process, is the only way to establish common positions that do not leave low-income and middle-income countries to fend for themselves.

As the public health arm of the African Union, the Africa CDC collaborates with member states on numerous regional programs. The next step is to increase the continent's participation in global decision-making, especially when policies have greater implications for places where disease outbreaks and health emergencies are more frequent — like most countries in Africa.

Currently, voices from the Global South are rarely heard on the international stage, and African participants at global health forums and conferences are often isolated or else included further downstream only after decisions have already been made. Thoughtful, deliberate action is therefore required to bring these stakeholders to the table early on.

The Africa CDC and similar organizations must take the lead in conceptualizing and developing new platforms that give voice to

the countries most affected by global inequality. In parallel, existing institutions and working groups must consult with African governments in a genuine and serious way.

The ongoing review of the World Health Organization's International Health Regulations is a good

Ahmed Ogwell Ouma

provides grants or concessional loans to developing countries, which often lack the funding to prepare for future health crises.

By contrast, suboptimal representation of Africa in the World Bank's Pandemic Fund represents a missed opportunity. Considering

proposes granting single votes to states at the Conference of the Parties. It also recognizes the potential for regional bodies to exercise the full number of their members' votes (if none of the member states exercises its right).

This system would better reflect the majority view of the Global South in the

enable access to safe and effective vaccines against new pathogens within 100 days of an epidemic or pandemic threat being identified. The Africa CDC will closely monitor the initiative and related projects, which should guarantee, rather than merely enable, equitable access and distribution.

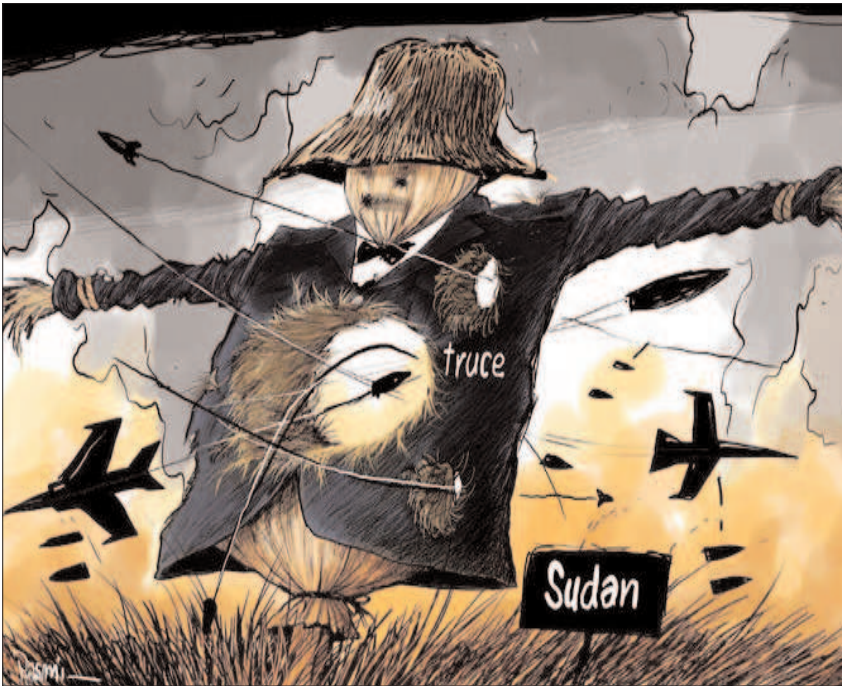
The recent announcement of a vaccine-manufacturing partnership between the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and Institut Pasteur de Dakar, for example, should boost domestic drug supplies.

The Africa CDC recognizes that promoting the influence of African countries on global health policy must be combined with efforts to shape priorities and policies on the continent. This includes leading discussions and creating platforms such as the Conference on Public Health in Africa.

Two areas ripe for partnership and investment are the regional manufacturing of medicines and medical supplies, and the implementation of a "One Health" approach — balancing the health of people, animals and ecosystems — to reduce the threat of zoonotic diseases and prevent future public health emergencies.

While COVID-19 demonstrated the Africa CDC's ability to marshal a well-coordinated response, it also revealed that promises and pledges from foreign partners do not always translate into meaningful support. Guided by the new Public Health Order, the Africa CDC's latest health-security agenda, and the need to correct imbalances and make our public health systems more self-sufficient, we will continue to amplify voices from the continent and champion partnerships between African institutions and like-minded global actors.

We are committed to playing our role in ensuring that Africa is part of an inclusive global health system and is represented at forums that impact global health security. The next serious disease outbreak is just around the corner and it is up to us to be ready.



## Why Turkmenistan is emerging from the shadows

Luke Coffey

The normally reclusive Central Asian state of Turkmenistan has been having an unusually busy time on the international stage. First, Eli Cohen became the first Israeli Foreign Minister to visit since 1994 when he opened a new Israeli embassy in the capital, Ashgabat.

The following week, Turkmenistan's Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov was in Washington for talks with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. At the same time, the head of US Central Command in the Middle East, Gen. Michael Kurilla, was in Ashgabat meeting high level Turkmen officials to discuss regional security issues.

Turkmenistan leans toward isolationism and pursues a policy of self-described "permanent neutrality." However, this cau-

While it is not discussed publicly, it is thought that the two countries have a close intelligence sharing and counter terrorism relationship. In this context both have one country in mind: Iran.

Israel sees an opportunity to build relations in Central Asia and Turkmenistan as a natural choice for energy and security reasons. During his visit, Cohen described Turkmenistan as an "energy superpower" in Central Asia. "I came to open an Israeli embassy 17 kilometers from the border with Iran, and to hold a series of meetings with the president and other officials," he said. The specific mention of the exact distance between the new Israeli embassy and the Iranian

forces and the Taliban. The security situation in Afghanistan has always made Turkmen officials nervous. At one point the authorities in Turkmenistan even attempted to seal its border with Afghanistan using fences, ditches, and various means of surveillance. But since the Taliban's takeover, Turkmenistan has pursued a pragmatic and open-minded approach to engagement with Kabul. As with other Central Asian states, it remains to be seen if this approach will yield benefits.

The two biggest challenges that CENTCOM faces in the region are the reemergence of transnational terrorist groups in Afghanistan and the ongoing malign activities of Iran. Turkmenistan straddles both these problems

**Cohen's visit to Ashgabat was the logical next step in Israel's deeper engagement in the Caspian region. Before arriving, Cohen visited Azerbaijan across the Caspian Sea. Israel and Azerbaijan have had close relations over the years. Baku provides Israel with almost 40 percent of its crude oil. Israel provides Azerbaijan with advanced weapons such as drones. While it is not discussed publicly, it is thought that the two countries have a close intelligence sharing and counter terrorism relationship. In this context both have one country in mind: Iran. Israel sees an opportunity to build relations in Central Asia and Turkmenistan as a natural choice for energy and security reasons. During his visit, Cohen described Turkmenistan as an "energy superpower" in Central Asia. "I came to open an Israeli embassy 17 kilometers from the border with Iran, and to hold a series of meetings with the president and other officials," he said. The specific mention of the exact distance between the new Israeli embassy and the Iranian border was a clue to the real purpose of his trip. Although the Turks would be cautious about admitting it publicly, there's little doubt that Iran was a top discussion item when the two foreign ministers met. After all, relations between Turkmenistan and Iran have had their fair share of problems in recent years — including a dispute over gas payments of \$1.8 billion that Tehran owes Ashgabat but refuses to pay.**

tious approach does not diminish Ashgabat's importance in the region. Turkmenistan sits in the heart of the Eurasian landmass, has the world's fourth largest natural gas reserves and shares a 1,150 km border with Iran and an 800 km border with Afghanistan.

Turkmenistan maintains great relations with Turkey, mainly due to cultural and linguistic ties but also growing energy cooperation. Turkmenistan was once part of the Soviet Union, and Moscow's presence is never far away. Meanwhile China is showing more interest in Turkmenistan's energy resources. Consequently, Ashgabat probably welcomes more attention from the US and the Middle East. This is why recent Israeli and American engagement is noteworthy.

Cohen's visit to Ashgabat was the logical next step in Israel's deeper engagement in the Caspian region. Before arriving, Cohen visited Azerbaijan across the Caspian Sea. Israel and Azerbaijan have had close relations over the years. Baku provides Israel with almost 40 percent of its crude oil. Israel provides Azerbaijan with advanced weapons such as drones.

border was a clue to the real purpose of his trip. Although the Turks would be cautious about admitting it publicly, there's little doubt that Iran was a top discussion item when the two foreign ministers met. After all, relations between Turkmenistan and Iran have had their fair share of problems in recent years — including a dispute over gas payments of \$1.8 billion that Tehran owes Ashgabat but refuses to pay.

Turkmenistan has recently sought to improve relations with the Gulf states too. Last month President Serdar Berdimuhamedov paid a visit to Qatar. Last November he visited the UAE. Both visits were a first for Berdimuhamedov since he replaced his father last year. Considering the geopolitical situation with Iran, and the momentum from the Abraham Accords, it's only natural that Turkmenistan and Israel would elevate relations.

Just as with Israel, the increase in US engagement has a lot to do with Iran. But US has concerns about Afghanistan too. In the years before the Taliban took over in August 2021, there had been skirmishes between Turkmen security

and is therefore an important interlocutor for the US. Considering Turkmenistan's location, US policymakers and military leaders could learn a lot from Ashgabat's view and opinions of the region. Where there is a possibility of deepened cooperation with Turkmenistan, the US will probably take advantage of the opportunity.

However, nobody should expect a major shift in Turkmenistan's foreign policy approach under the new president, at least in public. Caution, balance, and reclusiveness will continue to drive Ashgabat's relations with its neighbors and on the international stage.

However, the Turkmen leadership is fully aware of the geopolitical challenges that its Iranian and Afghan neighbors present to regional stability. With Russian influence in the region waning because of Moscow's focus on Ukraine, Turkmenistan will probably look to other regions and partners as a balancing act for cooperation.

The recent engagement between Turkmenistan, Israel, the US and even the Gulf states is an example of this. For regional stability and security this is a good thing.

## How the Ukraine war is impacting Russian security

Russia this week discovered a "Ukrainian" drone close to Moscow and local authorities promptly canceled their May 9 Victory Day parade for security reasons. To what extent, so far, has the Ukraine war challenged Russia's own security? And what is the particular symbolism of the security threat prior to Victory Day?

On Monday, a drone filled with explosives was found in a forest in the Bogorodsky district of the Moscow region. According to preliminary data, as reported by the Kommersant newspaper, it was a Ukrainian-made UJ-22 Airborne drone that was carrying 30 briquettes of C-4 explosive weighing 570 g each, for a total of 17 kg of explosives. The head of the Bogorodsky city district, Igor Sukhin, reportedly said: "This is not the first drone that has appeared in the Moscow region."

A day later, three crashed drones equipped with cameras were found in different areas in the Moscow region, TASS Russian News Agency reported. According to a security forces source, all the drones were unmarked. These are not the only

examples of drones being retrieved inside Russia. On Feb. 28, the city of St. Petersburg imposed a 200 km no-fly zone around its airports amid reports of an unidentified flying object. In the south of Russia, there was an explosion at an oil yard in Krasnodar, while drones also reached the Bryansk and Belgorod regions, which share a border with Ukraine. Furthermore, another drone was identified in Kolomna, just 100 km away from Moscow. So, this week's discovery was not the first time a Ukrainian drone had evaded Russian security, but it may have been the first to suggest a concerted effort to launch an attack, rather than just being for surveillance.

This month has already proved challenging for Russian security. On April 2, an explosion in St. Petersburg, Russia's so-called cultural capital, killed the famous pro-war military blogger Vladimir Tatarsky. Dozens of others were wounded in the blast. Public opinion immediately pointed to Ukraine as the culprit and compared the bombing to last August's killing of Darya Dugina, a nationalist TV commentator and the

Dr. Diana Galeeva

daughter of Aleksandr Dugin, a political philosopher who had long called for Russia to annex Ukraine. Darya was killed by the explosion of her Toyota Land Cruiser while she was driving near Moscow after a conservative festival. Meanwhile, Russian forces accidentally dropped a bomb on their own city of Belgorod this month. About 3,000 people had to be evacuated while the explosive was disposed of.

A day after President Vladimir Putin's 70th birthday in October 2022, the Kerch bridge, which connects Crimea and Russia, was blown up. Ukraine did not directly claim responsibility for the attack, but President Volodymyr Zelensky's party linked it to Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea. The bridge was a symbolic target, as the Russian media in 2018 called it "the construction of the century," and it made a visible claim to Crimea being part of Russian territory. Satellite images showed that the explosion caused parts of the two-lane westbound carriageway to fall into the sea. The damaged section of the bridge

was 274 meters long.

All these examples demonstrate how explosions have a symbolic as well as a material meaning. For this reason, the cancellation of certain Victory Day parades appears logical and understandable. The day itself has symbolic meaning, as the Ukrainian authorities have been depicted as "Nazis" and the parade marks the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in the Second World War. Prior to the drones being found this week, Russia had already canceled celebrations in the Kursk and Belgorod oblasts, which border Ukraine. Victory Day celebrations have also been canceled in Crimea.

Perhaps the best Victory Day for both parties would be the beginnings of a mediated deal, but the prospects of this, which initially seemed so promising, have again been ruined. After the unexpected Iran-Saudi Arabia deal, arranged by China, there were some promising signs regarding the possibility of mediation in the Ukraine war.

However, recent European fury about comments made by the Chinese ambassador to France seems to have smashed any

possibility of Europe considering China to be a neutral party in the conflict. The furor occurred after ambassador Lu Shaye questioned the sovereignty of former Soviet countries in a media interview. While Ukraine called Lu's statement "absurd," France, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia all expressed their dismay.

Furthermore, the recent proposal by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to form a union of neutral nations to come together and mediate between Russia and Ukraine was criticized by Kyiv for offering equal weight to "the victim and the aggressor." With such developments, the further escalation of the Ukraine war is only more likely. As it is, global military spending reached more than \$2.24 trillion last year, up 3.7 percent on 2021, suggesting the widespread heightening of security concerns. As one leading think tank, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, put it, we are facing an "increasingly insecure world." Clearly this includes and adds to Russia's security challenges and concerns.

## Gulf nations can play a key role in restoring stability in Sudan

(Continued from Page-6)

agreement between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, to buy time for an intensive mediation process that includes security sector reforms in Sudan based on a more manageable timetable than previously proposed.

This will also create an opportunity for the international community to support Sudan's recovery by targeting the country's underlying fragilities. This

might involve states and organizations leveraging their diplomatic and economic influence to put pressure on the rival factions to halt hostilities and engage in constructive dialogue.

The GCC could also help facilitate the involvement of regional and international powers in these talks, ensuring a more inclusive and comprehensive process. This collaborative approach could include joint efforts to promote dialogue between the

warring factions, the provision of humanitarian assistance, and support for peacekeeping operations.

Such cooperation would not only enhance the credibility of the GCC and its efforts, but also ensure a more coordinated and effective response to the crisis.

In addition, if after concerted cross-regional and international efforts to establish a ceasefire an all-out war becomes inevitable, Gulf states could still intervene, indi-

rectly, by lending generous support to Egypt. Given Egypt's strong ties with Sudan and its interest in maintaining stability along its southern border, the GCC could provide Cairo with financial, diplomatic and military assistance, enabling it to play a more assertive role in resolving the crisis.

In conclusion, Gulf states have a vested interest in the efforts to prevent a civil war in Sudan and can play a crucial role in helping to achieve this

objective. While direct intervention might be risky, the GCC has several options at its disposal, including indirect intervention through Egypt and cooperation with international organizations.

By promoting the merits of a ceasefire and dialogue between the rival Sudanese factions, the GCC can help create the conditions required for a peaceful resolution to the crisis, and contribute to the long-term stability and development of Sudan.

### Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



I have lost my attested photocopies of Mehran Alto Car U-7438 Peshawar on 21-04-2023 in University Town Peshawar. If anyone finds should contact this number 0302 5947437.





In brief

Haaland equals goal record

LONDON (Agencies): Erling Haaland equalled the Premier League's single-season goal record as the Manchester City striker netted for the 34th time this term in Sunday's clash with Fulham. Haaland converted a third minute penalty at Craven Cottage to move level with Alan Shearer and Andy Cole's single-season Premier League record total. Shearer scored 34 for Blackburn in 1995 and Cole hit the same tally for Newcastle in 1994. It was also the Norway striker's 50th City goal in all competitions since he signed from Borussia Dortmund last year. Haaland has reached 34 Premier League goals in just 30 appearances in the competition, scoring more than 21 top-flight teams have managed in total in their first 30 games this season.

Taekwondo Championship

PESHAWAR (APP): Inter-Regional Taekwondo Championship will be held from 5 May at Peshawar under the auspices of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Taekwondo Association for the purpose to select players for the 34th National Games Quetta, in which a large number of men and women from across the province will participate. Chairman of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Taekwondo Association Ilyas Afridi said that the purpose of holding Inter-Regional Taekwondo Championship was to select a strong team for the 34th National Games which will be held in Quetta so that by showing the best game, medals for the province can be won. In order to win, he added that the Inter-Regional Taekwondo Championship will be played at Qayyum Stadium, Peshawar, in which male and female athletes from all districts will participate.

Cycling, Judo competitions

PESHAWAR (APP): The Pakistan Olympic Association has decided to shift the 34th National Games Quetta Cycling and Judo competition from Quetta to Lahore due to some administrative reasons here on Sunday. According to the Pakistan Olympic Association, the Cycling and Judo competitions will be held in Lahore, the capital of Punjab. Similarly, the Judo event will continue from May 15-18, while the manager's meeting will be held on May 14.

PSA Satellite Series 2023 gets underway

KARACHI (APP): The coveted 2nd Torsam Khan Jahangir Khan PSA Satellite Series 2023 sponsored by XtremeLabs got underway here at Pakistan Navy's Roshan Khan Jahangir Khan Squash Complex Karachi. According to a communique on Sunday, the chief guest for the opening ceremony of the championship, General Manager of Combaxx Sports, Zubair Macha, said that the organization of the squash championship attributed to the past players including Torsam Khan is an exemplary act, sports and sponsorship go hand in hand, that is why our organization, apart from producing international quality equipment, also lays special emphasis on the patronage of sports to provide ample opportunities for the youth to play and hone their skills to shine into world class players and represent the country in future.

# Pakistan Shaheens departs for Zimbabwe



LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Imran Butt-led Pakistan Shaheens departed for Zimbabwe in the wee hours of Sunday to feature in a series consisting of two four-dayers and six 50-over matches. The series will be played from 3 to 27 May in Harare, Kwekwe and Mutare. Pakistan Shaheens had gone through an 11-day camp at the Hanif Muhammad High Performance Centre in Karachi and later took part in an additional two-day camp at the National Cricket Academy in Lahore on 28 and 29 April prior to their departure to Zimbabwe.

The squad includes 16 players and four reserve players. Six players apart from the captain and Test cricketer Imran Butt have already represented Pakistan in international cricket. These include Hussain Talat (1 ODI, 18 T20Is), Kamran Ghulam (1 ODI), Mir Hamza (3 Tests), Mohammad Ali (2 Tests), Shah Nawaz Dahani (2 ODIs, 11 T20Is) and Saim Ayub (8 T20Is).

Captain Imran Butt said:

"We have had a rigorous training camp for the Pakistan Shaheens team ahead of our tour to Zimbabwe. The players have put in a lot of hard work and effort to prepare for this important series.

"The side consists of experienced and young players. We have some very talented individuals in the side who are eager to showcase their skills on the international stage.

"The team is in good spirits and looking forward to the challenge of playing in Zimbabwe. We are confident that we have the right mix of players to put up a strong performance."

Pakistan Shaheens: Imran Butt (captain) (Lahore), Hussain Talat (vice-captain) (Lahore), Aamir Jamal (Islamabad), Abdul Wahid Bangalzai (Quetta), Haseebullah (Quetta), Kamran Ghulam (Peshawar), Mehram Mumtaz (Rawalpindi), Mir Hamza (Karachi), Mohammad Ali (Sialkot), Mohammad Huraibra (Sialkot), Mubasir Khan (Islamabad), Omair Bin Yousuf (Karachi), Qasim

Akram (Lahore), Rohail Nazir (wicketkeeper) (Islamabad) and Shahnawaz Dahani (Larkana). Saim Ayub (Karachi, 50-over matches only). Asif Mehmood (Hyderabad), Athar Mehmood (Gujranwala), Saad Khan (Hyderabad) and Waqar Ahmad (Peshawar) (all reserves)

Player Support Personnel – Aizaz Cheema (coach), Imran Abbas (manager), Saboor Ahmed (trainer), Muhammad Asad (physiotherapist) and Faisal Rai (team analyst). Abdul Rehman (Team Consultant, for 50-over matches only)

Tour schedule: 3-6 May – 1st Four-day match; KSC, Kwekwe 10- 13 May – 2nd Four-day match; MSC, Mutare 17 May – 1st 50-over match; TSC, Harare 19 May – 2nd 50-over match; HSC, Harare 21 May – 3rd 50-over match; HSC, Harare 23 May – 4th 50-over match; OH, Harare 25 May – 5th 50-over match; HSC, Harare 27 May – 6th 50-over match; HSC, Harare.

# Pérez beats Verstappen to win Azerbaijan Grand Prix

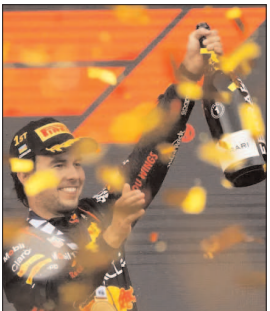
BAKU (AP): After a dominant win, with a dose of luck, Sergio Pérez seems increasingly like a Formula One title contender.

Red Bull's status as the leading team isn't in doubt but now it's 2-2 on wins between Pérez and his teammate Max Verstappen and the Dutchman's lead is down to six points. "Well done guys, we dominated this weekend," Pérez told his team over the radio. "We are in the fight, guys."

Pérez took advantage of a fortunately timed safety car to beat Verstappen to the victory in the Azerbaijan Grand Prix on Sunday, adding it to the sprint he secured the day before, as Red Bull kept up its winning start to 2023.

Pérez took the lead when he managed to save time pitting during a safety car period after Verstappen had come in a lap earlier. The two didn't fight for position after that, but Pérez said they "pushed to the maximum" as he fought to keep the lead. Both Pérez and Verstappen clipped the track wall at different times.

Verstappen started second behind Ferrari's Charles Leclerc but swept past him on the long start-finish straight at the end of lap 3, the first lap on which drivers were allowed to



use the DRS overtake assist system on the rear wing. It was a copy of the pass Pérez made on Leclerc on his way to winning the sprint race Saturday. After Verstappen took the lead Sunday, Pérez needed only two more laps for his own similar pass on Leclerc to seize second. It was a powerful illustration of Red Bull's unbeatable race setup after Leclerc had signaled a minor resurgence for Ferrari by taking pole position for both the sprint and main race.

Pérez benefited when an accident by Nyck de Vries brought out the safety car after the AlphaTauri slid off the track with a broken suspension, just after Verstappen had pitted from the lead. The safety car meant Pérez and Leclerc a lost little time on their stops and came out ahead of Verstappen. The Dutch driver said he wanted Red

Bull to review "if there was anything we could have done different" on the call to pit, since de Vries had already stopped before Verstappen came in.

After that, the two Red Bull drivers pulled away from the pack in a straight-forward win. Red Bull has won all four Grands Prix this season and the sprint in Baku on Saturday. Leclerc was third to continue his recovery after a poor start to the year and said the Red Bulls had been "in another league" for race pace.

Pérez is the only driver to win in Baku more than once and has four podium finishes in his last five races there. The Mexican driver joked he had won "two and a half" times in Azerbaijan including Saturday's sprint.

Verstappen accepted it just hadn't been his day and was a calmer figure than on Saturday, when he confronted George Russell over a first-lap collision in the sprint. "Checo (Pérez) and I, we're having a good time," Verstappen said. "You need to acknowledge and also appreciate when somebody has done a great job." Pérez added there is a "very high level of respect" between the two as they fight for the championship lead.

# More matches decided in PM Youth Men, Women Volleyball League

PESHAWAR (APP) : More matches decided in the ongoing Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Women and Men Volleyball League being played at GM Khattak Indoor Hall of the Agriculture University Peshawar on Sunday.

Former National team skipper and national selector Abdur Rahim, international volleyball player Ismail Khan, former Director sports Raham Bibi, Director Sports Hazara University and Organizing Secretary of the Female event Khalid Jalal Shah, Director Distance education Project Dr. Noor Zada, players and spectators were also present during the

women and men matches played on rattling pace.

Under the Prime Minister's Youth Talent Hunt program, the decision of several matches in the Inter-Region Volleyball League, the teams of Mardan and Swat in men recorded victory against Bannu and Peshawar region.

According to the Men's event, the team of Mardan won the match by defeating the team of Hazara region in a tough battle 3-2 in a tough battle, the score 21-25, 23-25, 25-22, 27-25 and 15-13. Both Mardan and Hazara have services of young players with good heights who excel very well against each other by exhibiting some

classic spiking and forceful smashes.

Hazara is a good team but Mardan players played well against strong Hazara and recorded a vital victory in the League round.

In the other match of the Men category Swat beat Peshawar 3-2, the score was 25-22, 23-25, 27-29, 25-21 and 15-11. The match lasted for one hour and 35 minute wherein both Swat and Peshawar players played well and showed excellent volleyball.

In the female matches Bannu beat Hazara 3-2, the score was 25-20, 25-19, 21-25, 23-25 and 15-12 while Peshawar defeated Swat 3-1, the score was 23-25, 25-

21, 25-20 and 25-21.

It should be clear that the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Program continued across Pakistan with five teams each of the Men and Women taking part in KP Inter-Regional League. The best teams will be selected from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inter-Region competitions that will represent the province at the national level league in the next round to be held in Karachi. The players of Bannu, Hazara, Mardan, Swat and Peshawar are participating. In the Championship matches, the duties of scorer are being performed by Yekhi Jan while umpiring by Muazullah and Anwarullah.

# Fernandes fires Man United toward the Champions League

MANCHESTER (AP): Protests at the start but celebrations at the end as Manchester United edged toward a return to the Champions League on Sunday.

A 1-0 win against Aston Villa strengthened United's hold on a top-four place in the Premier League, which was the primary target for manager Erik ten Hag in his first season in charge.

Bruno Fernandes struck in the 39th minute after Marcus Rashford's shot was pushed away by Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez. Both teams had more chances to score, with United surviving a late push by the visitors, but Fernandes' goal proved the difference. With third-place Newcastle also winning, United remains two points

behind in fourth, with a game in hand.

Victory came after supporters staged a latest protest against United's American owners, the Glazer family, which came two days after a third round of bidding for the club.

On Friday, Qatari banker Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani and British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe submitted latest offers, but fans are concerned the Glazers will retain a majority or minority stake in the 20-time English champion.

Supporters held up a huge banner outside Old Trafford which read "Full Sale Only," while there were chants of "We want Glazers out" inside the stadium. On the field, Ten Hag's encouraging first year at the club continued with a potentially vital win against a Villa team that

had sparked hopes of a top-four push itself after a run of 10 games unbeaten before Sunday.

And Emery's team threatened to extend that run by mounting a late push, which saw Victor Lindelof clear off the line from Douglas Luis in the last 10 minutes. Loud cheers rang around Old Trafford as the final whistle blew.

Fernandes' goal was his 11th of the season and came after United saw earlier chances go by, with Rashford denied by Martinez and Casemiro hitting the bar. Ten Hag has already led United to a first trophy in six years — winning the League Cup in February — and looks set to secure qualification to the Champions League after the club missed out on a place in European soccer's elite

competition last season.

## Wilson scores twice as Newcastle beat Southampton

LONDON: Callum Wilson took his Premier League tally to 15 goals for the season as Newcastle fought back to beat bottom club Southampton at St James' Park and strengthen their place in the top four.

Saints, who started the day six points adrift of safety, took a surprise lead in the first half when Stuart Armstrong turned in Kamaldeen Sulemana's low ball following a swift counter. Newcastle sent on Wilson, who scored twice in the 4-1 win at Everton last Thursday, at half-time and he made an almost immediate impact when he poked in from close range following a free-kick nine minutes after the break.

Wilson then saw a header tipped over before a second was ruled out by the Video Assistant Referee for offside. But Newcastle completed the turnaround when Theo Walcott deflected a corner into his own net and Wilson finally got his second when he showed great composure to round the goalkeeper and slot in.

Wilson came close to his third in the final few seconds when he hit the bar, but the victory means Newcastle are third, 11 points clear of Tottenham with five games remaining.

Southampton, meanwhile, remain six points adrift at the bottom of the table and staring relegation to the Championship in the face.



MANCHESTER: Bruno Fernandes of Manchester United scores their first goal during the Premier League match between Manchester United and Aston Villa.

## Pakistan U19 dominate first day's play

CHATTOGRAM (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan U19 fast bowlers Amir Hassan and Mohammad Ismail shared seven wickets between them as Bangladesh U19 were dismissed for 149 in 59 overs. In return, Pakistan U19 were 76 for no loss in 26 overs when stumps were drawn on day one at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram on Sunday. After being put into bat by Saad Baig, the bowlers made sure they extract the best from the pitch which offered assistance to fast bowlers in the morning session. The home side top-order batters had no clue to face Amir and Ismail as their five batters were back to the pavillion inside 10 overs with 21 runs on the board. That Bangladesh U19 were able to score 149 was due to an 81-run partnership for the sixth wicket between captain Sharear Sakib and Sheikh Parvaiz Jibon. Parvaiz top-scored for his side with a 111-ball 56, hitting eight fours. Sharear scored 48 off 98, which included six fours.

For Pakistan U19, Amir bagged four wickets for 29 from 16 overs, while Ismail took three for 41 from 13 overs. Vice-captain Ali Asfand grabbed two for 37 from 14 overs. In reply, the opening pair of Azan Awais and Shahzaib Khan provided a solid start to the innings and returned undefeated on 36 and 39 runs, respectively. Left-handed Azan innings included six fours, while Shahzaib struck eight fours off 72 balls faced.

# Ukraine set to boycott judo worlds after Russians allowed

BUDAPEST (AP): Ukraine is set to boycott the world judo championships next week after the International Judo Federation signaled it will allow Russian and Belarusian competitors to enter the event, a key Olympic qualifier.

Ukraine has a policy of boycotting any international sports events that allow athletes from Russia and its ally Belarus following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Ukrainian public broadcaster Suspilne reported Sunday that a boycott was planned, citing national team judo coach Vitaliy Dubrova, though he added lobbying efforts would also continue.

The IJF said Saturday that it plans to allow Russians and Belarusians to compete as neutral athletes without national symbols. They would undergo background checks, including an examination of their social media for "war propaganda," the IJF said.

"With the World Championships - Doha 2023 being held from 7th to 14th May, with significant

points to be awarded, this decision allows the possibility for fair participation and equal chances to all judo athletes who are pursuing their Olympic dreams," the IJF added.

Twenty Russians and Belarusians were on the entry list as of Sunday, including five who were listed as part of the Central Sports Club of the Army in a statement on the Russian Defense Ministry website after they won medals at a competition last year. Four were listed as holding the rank of staff sergeant. Their current military status could not immediately be verified.

The International Olympic Committee recommends allowing Russians and Belarusians to compete as neutrals in events like Olympic qualifiers, but it has urged sports bodies to exclude any athletes and coaches employed by the military or security forces. The IJF statement made no mention of that. The IJF did not immediately respond to a

question about whether it was following the IOC position on military competitors, or how background checks would be completed in time for the world championships.

"I think that it is unacceptable to allow military personnel of a terrorist country who every day kill Ukrainians to participate in international competitions," Daria Bilodid, a two-time world champion from Ukraine who is one of judo's biggest names, wrote on Instagram.

The Ukrainian team already boycotted an Olympic judo qualifier in Mongolia in June 2022 after the IJF allowed Russians to compete as neutrals. Following that, the IJF reversed course and excluded Russia and Belarus until the end of 2022. They had not entered any IJF competitions since.

The Ukrainian government also requires national sports teams to boycott international competitions where they would compete against Russians and Belarusians.

# Ding Liren becomes China's first world chess champion

ASTANA (Agencies): Ding Liren became China's first world chess champion on Sunday after a rapid-play tie-break victory over Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi in Kazakhstan.

Ding, 30, takes over as winner of the World Chess Championship from Norway's Magnus Carlsen, who chose not to defend his title after a 10-year reign.

He and Nepomniachtchi had finished on seven points each after the 14 first-stage games played in the Kazakh capital Astana. Each won three, while the other eight ended in a draw.

For the tie-break stage of the match, also in Astana., The contenders then played a tie-break round, in which they had only 25 minutes to make their moves, plus an additional 10 seconds for each move played.

Ding is rated higher than Nepomniachtchi in the faster formats of the game but had played very little such chess in official competitions since January 2020.

- Breaking the deadlock - Carlsen, considered one



of the greatest players of all time, had held the World Chess Championship title since 2013 and will remain the world's top-rated player. The two-million-euro (\$2.2-million) prize would have been split 60-40 between the winner and the runner-up if the match had been decided in the initial 14-game series.

Because it reached the tiebreak stage, the prize money will be split 55-45.

No Chinese player had ever previously won the competition, in which men and women can compete.

But China has dominated women's tournaments since the 1990s. Ju Wenjun is the reigning world champion in

women's chess and will face compatriot Lei Tingjie in July to defend her title.

Saturday's game between Ding and Nepomniachtchi demonstrated once again that at this level chess is as much a question of nerves as it is a battle of minds.

Both players seemed to be feeling the pressure, making uncharacteristic mistakes in their play, while failing to take full advantage of the other's errors. Although Nepomniachtchi pushed hard to convert a slight advantage into a win, he finally had to settle for a draw in what was the longest game of the tournament: 90 moves played over more than six and a half hours.





## In brief

### Section 144 imposed

RAWALPINDI (PPI): Punjab home ministry has imposed section 144 in Nala Lai and its surrounding areas in Rawalpindi, it emerged Sunday. According to details, the Punjab home ministry has enacted section 144 for the upcoming 30 days in light of possible urban flooding? As per the notification issued by the provincial government, dumping of any type of garbage into big and small drains will be prohibited, the violation of which will result in immediate arrest and registration of case? 144 has been implemented in view of the concerns of Urban flooding shown by the P a k i s t a n Meteorological Department due to heavy rains. Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) had recommended to Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi to implement Section 144? The Deputy Commissioner later requested the Punjab home ministry for the implementation according to the request. Rain with wind and thunderstorm is expected in northeast Balochistan, Sindh, south Punjab, upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir and adjoining hilly areas during the next the twelve hours. Temperature of some major cities recorded this morning:

### IRSA releases 139,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 139,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 135,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1441.71 feet and was 43.71 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 31,100 cusecs while outflow as 45,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1121.35 feet, which was 71.35 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 55,300 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 53,700, 44,900, 36,800 and 8,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 26,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 14,700 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### 'Early elections a dream of Imran'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leader Uzma Bukhari Sunday said that there was no possibility to conduct early elections in the country and it was a dream of Pakistan Tehreek-Insaf chairman Imran Khan. Talking to a private news channel, she highlighted that PTI chairman Imran Khan's main objective was to come back in power by holding early elections which was not possible. Imran should respect the institutions of the country and he must abide by the rule of law of honorable courts, she said. Commenting on the behavior of PTI chief, she said that Imran Khan had always used abusive language about others so he should have looked first at what he himself and his party members had done in their tenure. Replying to a question, Uzma said PTI made the country economically disabled and created a financial crisis whereas the govt always supports dialogues to resolve important state matters. She said that the former PTI government made false cases against PML-N and now, Imran Khan was always misguiding the public in his so-called public gatherings.



ISLAMABAD: A worker watering on under construction Club Road during development work in Federal Capital.

## PM's energy conservation plan saving national resources

ISLAMABAD (APP): The country's energy conservation plan is witnessing the successful implementation of energy-efficient measures that aim at judicious utilization of national resources. Launched by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif this January, the multi-pronged plan focuses on steps including austerity in the usage of electricity and fuel besides utilization of alternative modes such as solar technology and electric vehicles.

Through the plan, the government is encouraging the nation to amend its behavioural patterns by shunning the culture of wasting national resources.

The departments of the federal government have started implementing the official notification of avoiding unnecessary usage of electricity. The step will help ensure a 30 percent reduction in the usage of energy.

According to official estimates, the country consumed 29,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity last summer and 12,000 MW in the winter. Further 17,000 MW was used in summer including 5,300 MW due to air-conditioners and 12,000 MW by fans.

To cut power consumption, the government has chalked out a programme which introduces the use of energy-efficient fans. An additional duty will be imposed on inefficient electric fans and their production will halt from July 1, 2023.

The use of energy-efficient fans will help save Rs 15 billion annual-

ly as they consume 40 to 60 watts of electricity compared to the ones with dated technology that consume 120 to 130 watts. After February 1st, the production of incandescent bulbs has also been stopped with a duty imposed on them. The step will save Rs 23 billion annually. Also, reforms have been introduced in the by-laws of housing societies and building codes to ensure energy-efficient infrastructure. The installation of conical baffles in geysers within a period of one year has been made mandatory. The baffle provides cost-intensive heating for warm water as it traps heat using less energy. The step is expected to save Rs 92 billion per year.

Reducing the illumination of street lights by 50 percent of their capacity will save Rs 4 billion per year.

The government has started importing electric bikes and is in negotiation with motorcycle manufacturing companies for the local production of e-bikes. The motorcycles that run on petrol will slowly be phased out. This will save Rs 86 billion from the national exchequer.

PM Sharif's 10,000 megawatts solar energy project aims at reducing the import bill of costly diesel and furnace oil. Under the project, the electricity is being supplied to government buildings, tube wells operating on electricity and diesel, and domestic consumers with low consumption. As per official data, the

solarisation of 671 buildings is in progress. Another 600 buildings under the Education Ministry are also in the process of solarisation.

Over 150,000 industrial and commercial consumers are being shifted to Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) System by June to control power pilferage by ensuring round-the-clock monitoring of metres.

The bidding process for installing 1-4MW solar micro-grid stations in rural areas is also on the cards as the government has already waived sales tax and duties on the purchase of solar panels.

This March, the government launched the Planet Champs application to protect mother earth by raising awareness among the children on climate, water, and energy conservation as well as on proper disposal of waste. In line with the vision of PM Shehbaz Sharif, the application aims at creating awareness among the young generation about global issues like climate change, water scarcity, and energy shortage.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is running a campaign on electronic and print media as well as social media to create awareness among the public about the measures being taken under the austerity plan. The ongoing comprehensive campaign is creating awareness among consumers on energy conservation and advises them to save energy resources.

## People throng recreational spots in twin cities to enjoy weather

ISLAMABAD (APP): A large number of people from the twin cities are visiting the recreational spots in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) to enjoy weather as rainy spells turned the scorching weather into ideal for visitors.

Talking to APP, Anna Ali, a resident of G-11, said she along with her family visited the Pakistan Monument which is a major source of attraction due to its architectural beauty located at a west viewpoint of the Shakarparian hills.

She enjoyed a lot by visiting the Pakistan Monument's museum which reflects and represents the magnificent and rich cultural heritage and history of the country. Pakistan Monument had designed and constructed in a very unique style, she said adding that the architectural marvel commemorates the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the country and symbolizes the patriotism of the Pakistani people.

"The Monument's cleanliness and location besides Shakarparian hills is a source of inspiration for visitors and they love to visit the historical site to refresh their memories regarding Pakistan history and historical perspective," she said.

Anna Ali said the lovely weather and peaceful atmosphere was also a

key factor for our trip to enjoy the day. She apprised that security arrangement was laudable and commendable.

Zulfiqar Ali, a resident of G-9, who offered prayer in the Faisal Mosque, said its magnificent architecture left him spell bounded, as it was designed in a very unique style.

He said the security arrangements, book and food stalls made their day so pleasant and marvelous, adding the people were visiting and feeling relieved after hearing Azaan and by offering prayers there, as the practice made them feel spiritual and refreshed.

Sarfraz Ahmed, a resident of G-10, visited along with family and said that eye keeping view of Islamabad from Daman-e-Koh make our visit wonderful and enjoyable.

He further said the natural and peaceful atmosphere at Daman-e-Koh, Margalla Hills make the weekend a pleasant and entertained.

"It is a wonderful place to hang out with families where cool breeze is blowing across all the time and natural environment with fresh air fills my lungs."

Huma Ali Malik, a resident of Rawalpindi, apprised that people

were observing the nature and natural beauty at lush green and mountain with fresh air.

She urged the Capital Development Authority to make arrangements to ensure cleanliness and security arrangements to facilitate the tourists.

Car parking facility was provided close to the Northern Spot where a cafe and some small tuck shops cater for the needs of guests, she added.

Meanwhile, he said the country is blessed with iconic hilly areas that experience rain and snowfall every year. Pakistan had rich and natural tourism potential that attracts millions of tourists, including locals and people from across the world, he added.

The PTDC after taking numerous measures to promote tourism in Pakistan by projecting and marketing the country's history, culture, arts, and tourism, was hoping to achieve a boom in the tourism sector.

After realizing the growth potential of the tourism sector in the country, the PTDC initiated devising policies, strategies and frameworks to attract tourists coming from various parts of the country and the world.

## Hajj flights schedule remains in doldrums due to govt's indecisiveness

ISLAMABAD (PPI) Airlines including PIA are facing difficulty in planning Hajj flight operations as the Ministry of Religious Affairs failed to decide on the quota of the intending Hajj pilgrims.

Reportedly, the government has received fewer applications from intending Hajj pilgrims than the country's quota allocated by the Saudi government for the first time in Pakistan's history.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs has not yet informed the airlines about the number of expected pilgrims because it has received less applications, the sources claimed.

The airlines are facing difficulties in preparing the final plan for the Hajj flight operation due to the non-receipt

of data. These airlines including national airline PIA are awaiting details from the ministry regarding Hajj flight operations. Fewer pilgrims than the quota are likely to leave Pakistan this year.

The Saudi government had given a quota of 179,000 pilgrims to Pakistan this year, but fewer applications have been received due to an extraordinary increase in Hajj expenses. As a result of which, the government is going to surrender 10 percent quota to Saudi Arabia.

This year 72,869 people submitted applications under the regular scheme while 28,679 more applications were submitted against the additional quota of 44,190. Besides, 8,000 people submitted applications under the sponsorship scheme, the sources added.

## Zardari's message on International Labour Day

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Pakistan and President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Asif Ali Zardari has said that the Pakistan Peoples Party is a party of the workers and it will continue to protect the rights of labourers.

President Asif Ali Zardari in his message on the occasion of International Labour Day said that the founding chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed

Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto always stood by the workers in their struggle for labour rights and rectified the injustices meted out to them through labour reforms. Asif Ali Zardari said that today due to the worst inflation, the working class is suffering from economic constraints.

He said that the government of the PPP had made the labourers partners in the government-owned industrial enterprises under the Benazir Employees' Stock Option Scheme.

President Zardari expressed the Party's

resolve to continue solving the problems of the working class on a priority basis after returning to power. He said that the PPP is adhered to the manifesto of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

President Zardari said that Chairman PPP, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari following the footsteps of his grandfather and mother will support the workers' rights. Asif Ali Zardari asked the labour force of the country to support Bilawal Bhutto Zardari so that their problems could be solved and they achieve their rights.

## Message from Amir Muqam on the occasion of Labour Day

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister for Political, Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture Engr. Amir Muqam has conveyed his heartfelt felicitations and earnest wishes to Pakistan's entire labour community on the occasion of Labour Day. In a message, Adviser to PM reiterated the government's resolve to protect the rights of labour community and to work for their collective wellbeing.

He said that today, we pay tribute to the valiant workers of Pakistan and around the world, and reaffirm our commitment to the dignity of labour.

Engr Amir Muqam said that every year, the first day of May provides us the opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of workers to

the development and prosperity of their nations across the globe.

Adviser to PM Engr Amir Muqam assured Pakistan's workers that the Federal Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is fully committed to taking all measures, in cooperation with the provincial governments, to enhance the welfare of workers and their families as well as to raise their standards of living.

Engr Amir Muqam who is also president Pakistan Muslim League N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said "We understand very well that only a healthy, happy, well-educated workforce will enable Pakistan to attain its full social and economic potential, and this is what we are working towards with complete sincerity of purpose.

## APHC-AJK urges G-20 countries to boycott upcoming event in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (INP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter has urged the member countries of the G20 to boycott the proposed meeting of the forum in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir and play their role in resolving the Kashmir dispute.

According to Kashmir Media Service, APHC-AJK leaders, Imtiaz Wani, Syed Aijaz Rehmani, Shaikh Yaqoob, Shameem Shawl, Zahid Ashraf, Syed Manzoor Shah and Mushtaq Ahmed Butt in their separate statements in Islamabad said that the G20 member countries should realize that development and prosperity are not possible without resolving the lingering Kashmir dispute.

Describing lasting peace as the key to achieving economic stability and sustainable development, they said the dream of economic prosperity cannot be fulfilled in the absence of peace. They said peace in South Asia will be possible only if long-pending disputes like the Kashmir dispute are resolved in a fair and peaceful manner.

The APHC-AJK leaders said India has usurped the fundamental political and human rights of the Kashmiris and is holding the G20 meeting in an internationally recognized disputed territory to divert the world's attention from the Kashmir dispute and

legitimize the illegal actions taken since 5 August 2019.

They said the Kashmiri people hope that the G20 member countries, which are champions of human rights and civil liberties, will boycott the proposed meeting in IIOJK, keeping in mind its disputed status and realizing India's nefarious intentions.

They said by holding a G20 meeting in Srinagar, the Modi government wants to give an impression to the international community that the situation in IIOJK is perfectly fine while the fact is that India has turned it into a killing ground where it is committing crimes against humanity.

## Politics is now hostility, will have serious consequences: Sh Rashid

RAWALPINDI (NNI): Awami Muslim League (AML) chief and former federal interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said on Sunday that politics had now become enmity, the consequences of which would be dire.

In his tweet on the social networking site Twitter, Sheikh Rashid said the negotiations were an excuse to deceive the Supreme Court and government was just passing the time. By May 10, there would be a final outcome of the whole episode. Pakistan is not on the agenda in the IMF Executive Board meeting

on May 10. He said the rulers were in relief and the people were in grief.

Mr Rashid said the next target of the government was his 4-marla red mansion, but they should be prepared for its consequences.

"I have won the case in the high court, I live alone, if I am killed, I have written the names of eight people to the relevant institutions and I have a receipt of that as well," said the AML chief. Mr Rashid added that Khaqan Abbasi had blamed the government for committing corruption of Rs20 billion in

flour distribution.

At least 20 people died seeking free flour in lines. According to Khaqan Abbasi government had earned Rs20 billion in a day.

The former interior minister further said that what happened at Parvez Elahi's house, what done at the behest of the caretaker chief minister? Visit to Saudi Arabia was an excuse, actually Parvez was the target under the direction of Asif Ali Zardari.

"When the gates are broken by armored vehicles, the votes will also go into the oven."



ISLAMABAD: Gypsy girls eating watermelon after collecting from garbage at Lehtrar Road, Khanapul.



Child freed from abductors

KABUL (Agencies): The police of Kabul rescued a child from grip of abductor, today, Sunday, said Kabul Police head-quarter. The abductora had kidnapped “Yusuf” from the 10th police district of Kabul city, and a series of investigation the Kabul police was able to free the child from the grip of abductors, a statement said. On-charge the Kabul police arrested three people said the statement released by Kabul police.

Afghan issues should be sought

KABUL (Agencies): The Iranian ambassador in Kabul, Hassan Kazemi Qomi asked the participants of the Doha meeting to address the problems in Afghanistan, which can be called the legacy of the occupation of this country by USA. The Doha meeting will be held on May 1, hosted by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and with the participation of the representatives of those countries that have a special representative for Afghanistan.

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

Afghan govt rejects Russia’s claims

KABUL (Agencies): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) on Sunday rejected claims made Friday by the Russian defense minister that armed groups from Afghanistan pose a threat to the security of Central Asia.

According to a statement, the IEA said there was no truth in Sergei Shoigu’s comments made during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization’s meeting of defense ministers on Friday.

“The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan not only maintains security and stability in Afghanistan after years of war, but also considers security and stability in the region as a helper with its economy-oriented foreign policy and does not want security threats to exist in any way,” the IEA’s statement read.

The statement added that Russia’s authorities should be aware that, in the last two years, not only has Afghanistan not threatened the security of any country in the region or the world, but “the security forces of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan have been able

to fully and resolutely dispose of the remnants of the terrorist group of Daesh in Afghanistan.”

“The Islamic Emirate, as a responsible government, does not allow anyone to use the territory of Afghanistan against other countries and expects other countries, especially regional countries, to stop their citizens who try to go to Afghanistan for destructive events,” the statement read.

The IEA claimed that some recent attacks were in fact carried out by foreign nationals from regional countries.

“Unfortunately, we have to say that some of the recent incidents of insecurity in Afghanistan have been committed by the citizens of some countries in the region,” the statement said.

The statement comes after Shoigu said at the meeting in New Delhi that the existence of some terrorist groups in Afghanistan are the main threat to neighboring countries, especially Central Asia.

Speaking at the meeting, Shoigu noted that the topic of Afghanistan must be

kept on the SCO’s agenda.

“At the same time, numerous radical extremist groups entrenched in the territory of Afghanistan pose the main threat, promoting their ideas and efforts in neighboring republics. To our mind, the topic of Afghanistan must be kept on the agenda of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Only comprehensive international and regional assistance can facilitate measures to overcome challenges Afghanistan faces alone,” Shoigu said.

India, which hosted the meeting, asked the members of the SCO to jointly fight against terrorism in the region.

At the end of the meeting, the SCO’s member nations signed a resolution reaffirming their common commitment to promoting regional security, peace, and prosperity.

SCO Defense Ministers’ Meeting was held in New Delhi and was attended by defense ministers of China, Russia, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and a number of observer members.

MoTCA set fixed price tickets for int’l flights

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation announced the determination on some International flight ticket rates.

“The Kabul-Jeddah, Kabul” “Kabul-Dubai, Kabul” “Kabul-Istanbul, Kabul” “Kabul-Riyadh-Kabul” was determined in a short period of time, the Ministry in a statement said. The next rate will be determined by a meeting of representatives of airlines and the technical team of the Ministry of Transportation and Aviation, taking into account all operational costs, the Ministry added

In meantime the ticket price of the sectors (Kabul-Jeddah-Kabul) has decreased from 940 dollars to 780 dollars and from (Kabul-Riyadh-Kabul) from 1010 dollars to 820 dollars, Kabul-Dubai Kabul from 672 dollars to 600 dollars and the price of a ticket to Istanbul from Kabul has decreased from 900 dollars to 880 dollars

Lately, the Ministry of Transportation and Aviation had met with the representatives of some airlines to share the complaints of the people regarding the flight ticket rates.

Khalilzad welcomes UNSC resolution

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Former US special envoy for Afghanistan reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, welcomed the UN Security Council resolution condemning the ban on Afghan women and girls in Afghanistan.

Khalilzad said the resolution “Reflects the global aspiration for Afghanistan, especially for Afghan women and girls.”

He also said that based on the international and Islamic edicts, women have the right to education and work.

Khalilzad recommended for the international community produce a road map for engagement with the Taliban.

“It is also vital that the international community work to produce a road map for engagement with Afghanistan. The UN meeting in Doha next week is an opportunity to do so after the passage of this resolution,” he tweeted.

On Thursday, the UN Security Council unanimously condemned the Taliban administration’s ban on Afghan women working for the UN in Afghanistan. It urged the leaders of the Taliban to “swiftly reverse” the restrictions against women’s and girls’ rights.

On Thursday, the UN Security Council members voted to accept the resolution, which Japan and the United Arab Emirates drafted.

General elections provide solution to current Afghan crisis: NRC



KABUL (Khaama Press): The National Resistance Council for the Salvation of Afghanistan has welcomed the UN Security Council’s resolution condemning the ban on women’s employment and has called for a solution to the current crisis in Afghanistan through national elections.

The grand council comprises renowned former Afghan politicians currently in exile, including former vice president Yunus Qanuni, former Balkh governor Ata Mohammad Noor, and Mohammad Mohaqeq

and others, who formed the union after the overthrow of the previous government of Afghanistan.

In the announcement published by the council, it is stated that underestimating the massive crisis in Afghanistan does not help the Afghan people escape the current violent situation, but requires significant changes.

The National Resistance Council for the Salvation of Afghanistan prior to the Doha meeting to be chaired by the United Nations Secretary-General on

Monday, May 1st, in an announcement said that the way forward to reach a comprehensive solution is not to ignore the Afghan crisis and recognize the Taliban regime as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan.

The two-day meeting to be chaired by António Guterres, the UN Secretary General will be held in the capital city of Doha, where representatives from around the world will participate to discuss Afghanistan.

This meeting has received the attention of the media and people’s criticism from various aspects

due to the statements of Amina Jane Mohammed, the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, which she made about two weeks ago at Princeton University.

Mohammad highlighted that pathways to the legitimacy of the Taliban-run administration will be discussed in the upcoming meeting. Her remarks raised speculations that the UN is trying to convince the international community to recognize Afghanistan’s de facto regime formally.

Afghan farmers: Helmand should receive water first

HELMAND (TOLONews): Some farmers and residents of the province of Helmand urged the current government to avoid bringing up the topic of water rights with Iran at this time.

According to them, the whole country, especially Helmand, is facing a severe drought and giving water to the neighbors puts farmers in a very difficult situation.

The topic of negotiations between Iranian officials and the current Afghan government about Iran’s water rights from the Helmand River.

“It appears that Iran does not desire to get water in accordance with the Helmand treaty. As an

alternative, they want unaccounted for water flow into their nation. Afghanistan hasn’t kept any water in storage since the start of this year, not even at the Kamal Khan dam. The water always goes downstream to Iran,” said Najibullah Sadeed, a water expert.

However, the department of Information and Culture of Helmand acknowledged the challenges caused by a lack of water in the province, but added that this year’s increase in the Helmand River’s water level will greatly alleviate water

shortage issues. “Farmers were facing the challenge of a water shortage, but the water level has increased due to the rain,” said Mohammad Qasim Riaz, deputy of the department of information and culture of Helmand.

This comes as the Iran Vice-President and Head of the Department of Environment Ali Salajegheh announced two days ago that he would lead a delegation to Afghanistan in one to two weeks to talk with officials in the country’s current government about the right to water from the Helmand River.

Afghanistan’s saffron exports

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan exported 69 tons of saffron worth \$22 million during the previous solar year (March 2022 to March 2023), according to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

According to a statement from the Ministry, China, India, and the United Arab Emirates, received most of the saffron exports.

Afghanistan’s saffron is regarded as the best in the world and has received a three-star distinction from the European International Organization in Taste.

For the eighth year in a row, saffron grown and manufactured in Afghanistan has been deemed the highest-quality saffron in the world, according to a member of the Saffron Producers Union in Kabul.

Herat Province produces most of Afghanistan’s saffron; in most areas, saffron cultivation has replaced opium. Saffron is uniquely placed to be a viable alternative in Afghanistan.

One kg of saffron may be purchased for up to \$4,500 worldwide, costing at least \$1,400 to 1,800 in Afghanistan.

Girls can get forms for Kankor test, says official

JALALABAD CITY (TOLONews): The Nangarhar Department of Education’s spokesman, Farhad Ahmad Stanekzai, said that the distribution of Kankor test forms to graduates of the 1401 (solar year) who passed the 12th grade test has started.

Stanekzai told TOLONews that female students who have passed the 12th grade test can also obtain these forms from their schools.

“Those of our sisters who are living in the warm areas of Nangarhar and have passed their 12th grade exam but were deprived of the entrance

exam due to some problems, and those girls who went to their respective schools, have received Kankor exam forms,” the spokesperson told TOLONews.

Girls who graduated from school welcomed the process of distributing exam forms for girls.

Mina, a graduate of the 12th grade, said her hopes for the reopening of the universities has been reignited since learning about the release of the Kankor test forms for girls.

“This is hopeful for all the girls that we can continue our lessons,” she said.

“It is too difficult for a

girl who has not studied for three years and has to go pass the test,” said Asma, a student.

Some girls asked the Islamic Emirate to reopen schools and universities for girls.

“Access to education is our right, which we are deprived of now,” said Fatema, a student.

“We ask the Islamic Emirate to reopen schools for us the same as it is open for boys,” said Arezo, another student.

Nearly 590 days have passed since the schools were closed to female students, and there has been no word on their reopening.

Minister visits Maidan Wardak



KABUL (Agencies): Acting Mines and Petroleum Minister, Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar visited Maidan Wardak province and said that the province is rich in many natural resources.

The Mines and Petroleum Minister, Delawar, traveled to Maidan Wardak to assess the situation of

mines in that province, said a statement by the Ministry.

The provincial head of mines in Maidan Wardak, Mawlawi Nematullah Shahid, sharing details on the mines in that province said that the department of mines of Maidan Wardak was able to have mining agreements with 28 different companies and collect-

ed about 60 million afghanis in revenue in the past year.

Minister Delawar, said that Maidan Wardak is rich in many natural resources, adding that it is the responsibility of all of us to properly protect these resources and prevent illegal and self-imposed smuggling and extraction.

13 people killed, 11 injured in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Different statements were made about the agenda of next month’s meeting on Afghanistan in Doha last week, when the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the Islamic Emirate’s decision to ban women from working with the world’s body.

Casualties Thirteen people were killed and 11 others were injured in various incidents of violence across the country last week.

Two people were killed and nine others were injured in clashes over land disputes in Badghis and Uruzgan provinces. Unidentified gunmen shot dead a school principal in Baghlan, a young man in Uruzgan and a person was stabbed to death in Faryab. A young man was poisoned and then killed in eastern Nangarhar province.

According to reports, five children were killed

and two others sustained injuries when an unexploded ordnance went off in central Maidan Wardak province.

In the previous week, 11 people were killed and three others were injured in various incidents across the country.

Before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and government forces would be killed and wounded every week.

UNSC meeting The United Nations Security Council Thursday unanimously passed a resolution that condemned the ban on education and work of Afghan women and girls and asked the caretaker government to swiftly reverse its policies and practices restricting women and girls from their human rights.

US envoy to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said in a statement following the unanimous adoption of the resolution that the

Council sent a clear message to the Taliban condemning their repression of Afghan women and girls.

“The international community will not remain on the sidelines while the women and girls of Afghanistan are deprived of their human rights and fundamental freedoms,” she said.

In response, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan defended the ban as an internal matter of Afghanistan that did not impact operations by the UN or other countries.

A statement from the ministry said: “This is an internal social matter of Afghanistan that does not impact outside states.”

The ministry reminded the UN member states of their commitments to respect the sovereign choices of Afghanistan under international law.

It said: “We remain committed to ensuring the rights of Afghan women while emphasising that

diversity must be respected and not politicized.”

The ministry called for the unconditional removal of UN, multilateral and unilateral sanctions on the country, in addition to the provision of humanitarian and development assistance.

Vienna meeting

Last week, a number of opposition figures held a meeting in Vienna, the capital of Austria and emphasized on negotiations and peaceful political solutions as the best way forward.

They asked the international community to recognize ‘all forms of resistance of Afghans’ because the international community did not support armed resistance in Afghanistan.

Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in response that the figures who met in Vienna could not heal the pain of Afghans and they would not be given a chance to create headache to Afghanistan.

He said the Afghans knew these figures very well and they had a direct hand in the misfortunes the Afghans suffered during the past few decades.

Doha meeting

Last week, UN deputy head Amina Mohammed implied the Doha meeting “could find those baby steps to put us back on the pathway to recognition.”

However, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Friday: “The Secretary-General has not extended an invitation to the de facto (Afghan) authorities.”

He explained the meeting would discuss the international engagement around common objectives for a durable way forward on Afghanistan.

His deputy Farhan Haq said the Doha meeting would not discuss the recognition of the caretaker government and would focus on creating a consensus to solve the problems in Afghanistan.

Vedant Patel, principal deputy spokesperson at the US State Department, said that the issue of recognizing the caretaker government of Afghanistan was not on the agenda of the Doha meeting.

Russia’s special representative for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov had said he would attend in the meeting on Afghanistan next week in Doha.

Deputy prime minister for administrative affairs Maulvi Abdul Salam Hanafi during a meeting with UN special representative for Afghanistan Markuz Potzel hoped the Doha meeting would consider the Islamic Emirate’s achievements in fighting drugs, corruption and other areas.

Zalmay Khalilzad, former special representative of the United States for peace of Afghanistan, had said that the Doha meeting should produce a roadmap for global engagement with the caretaker government

of Afghanistan.

However, the UN says it has not invited the caretaker government in Kabul to the UN-convened meeting in Qatar on the situation in Afghanistan.

Special representatives on Afghanistan from a number of countries are scheduled to attend the conference in Doha on May 1-2. UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Friday: “The Secretary-General has not extended an invitation to the de facto (Afghan) authorities.”

Terror center claims

The Washington Post reported Afghanistan had emerged as a significant coordination site for Daesh, which planned attacks across Europe and Asia.

The newspaper cited a classified Pentagon assessment that called the Daesh threat a growing security concern.

In December last year, according to the assessment, Pentagon officials were aware of nine plots

coordinated by ISIS leaders in Afghanistan.

But IEA spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid spurned the classified Pentagon assessment as part of an ongoing propaganda campaign against the caretaker Afghan government.

The incumbent government would not allow anyone to use Afghanistan’s territory for attacks against other countries, Mujahid said in a statement.

The IEA has enforced security across Afghanistan, he claimed. “Such reports show some people in America have not forgotten their enmity with the people of Afghanistan.”

Khalilzad also termed the Pentagon assessment “an exaggeration that provokes emotions and is unjustified.”

Continuity of aid

Japan has donated 19 million US dollars to provide vaccines to mothers and children in Afghanistan and to prevent infectious diseases.



# PTVFlix to reconnect viewers with PTV's golden era: Marriyum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday expressed her delight at the launch #PTVFlix today which would connect the viewers with a national treasure including the golden era of the PTV.

In a tweet, she said the project was initiated in July 2022, a new video streaming OTT platform on which users globally can access PTV's vast library of content, including TV shows, dramas, documentaries, sports, and other programs.

The minister said that over the years, PTV has produced content that has become a national treasure.

"Popular dramas and PTV shows like Dhoop Kangar, and Aynakwala Jin have become a part of our collective memory", she maintained.

PTV Flix has a rich library of current and old content that users can easily access, she said.

Marritum Aurangzeb said that this initiative will reconnect youth and seniors with the PTV content that has left an indelible impact on countless lives.

The PTV Flix application can be downloaded on both Android and iOS platforms. (Tweet contains links)

She expressed her gratitude to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the team of PTV for the successful launch of PTV Flix. She congratulated them for their hard work in making this idea a reality.

She said she was also grateful to Bushra Ansari, Javed Shaikh and Khalid Abbas Dar for their special participation in the inaugural ceremony.

**Free flour distributed with transparency:** Marriyum Aurangzeb: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb lauded efforts of the government officials for ensuring transparency in the distribution of free flour among the poor during the holy month of Ramadan. Taking to Twitter today, she said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif personally monitored execution of free flour scheme which was "historic".

"Amid inflation, free flour was distributed among hundreds of thousands of poor people in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Islamabad during Ramadan with full honesty and transparency.

"The administrative officers and staff worked day and night to make the landmark scheme successful which is laudable," she added. Her statement comes hours after PML-N senior leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi alleged Rs20 billion in Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's free flour scheme launched during Ramadan. Speaking at an event in Lahore, former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi questioned the incumbent government's capability, saying that the political leadership's failure was the reason behind current crisis. He maintained that incompetent leadership will only cause harm to the country instead of resolving the issues.

## SC to hear petitions on May 2

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Supreme Court would hear the petitions filed against the bill reducing the powers of the chief justice of Pakistan on May 2.

An eight-member bench of the SC - CJP Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Sayyad Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Ayesha Malik, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Shahid Waheed - would take the petitions.

Advocate Muhammad Shafay Munir, Raja Amer Khan and Chaudhry Ghulam Hussain filed the petitions under the article 184(3). The petitions argued that the Supreme Court was an independent body and all judges, including the CJP, should exercise their powers without any interference from the other institution.

According to the petitions, the Supreme Court and its corpus as defined in Article 176 consist of CJP and so many other judges as may be determined by the parliament or, until so determined, as may be fixed by the president. It is clear that the CJP is the centrifugal force and the entire fabric of the apex court is webbed around it. The independence of the judiciary and of each of the judges and its CJP is declared as an aim enunciated in the preamble to the Constitution; the same is a part of the objective resolution and thus a substantive part of the constitution, the petitions emphasized.

The SC, led by CJP with its judges, must be independent of all executive or legislative transgress so as to perform their constitutional obligations in providing justice to the people of Pakistan. The same cannot be allowed to be compromised with regards to the function of the judicial organ of the state, the judges or CJP or their independence as provided in the constitution, it was added in the petition.

## Sugar mills dismiss prices fixed by govt

LAHORE (PPI): Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) on Sunday rejected the ex-mill and retail price of sugar fixed by the federal government.

The sugar mill owners have challenged the government decision regarding the prices of the commodity in the Appellate Committee.

As per the sources, the mill owners were of the view that they cannot sell sugar - which cost them at Rs115 to Rs120 per kg - for less than Rs100. They warned of moving courts if Appellate Committee rejects their appeal. It is pertinent to mention here that the government, in response to the unprecedented 30 percent surge in retail sugar prices within a matter of weeks, set the retail price of sweetener at Rs98.82/kg.

The price of sugar includes Sales Tax at Rs14.58 per kg, a profit margin of Rs5.30, and a distributor's margin of 25 paisa per kg. The transport cost is calculated at Rs2 per kg, and the retailer's profit is Re1 per kg. A government notification said after reviewing the data provided by the provinces and information reported by other government agencies, the Controller General of Prices has set the maximum retail price of locally produced "white crystalline sugar at Rs98.82/kg, at which it shall be made available to the general public".



KARACHI: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman addressing the protest gathering against the census at Shahr-e-Faisal Road.

# Turkey nears referendum on Erdogan's two-decade rule

ISTANBUL (AFP/APP): Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan dives Sunday into the final two-week stretch before a momentous election that has turned into a referendum on his two decades of divisive but transformative rule.

The 69-year-old leader looked fighting fit as he strutted back on stage after a three-day illness and tossed flowers to rapturous crowds at an Istanbul aviation fest on Saturday.

It was the perfect venue for reminding Turks of all they had gained since his Islamic-rooted party ended years of secular rule and launched an era of economic revival and military might. He was flanked by the president of Azerbaijan and the Ankara-backed premier of Libya -- two countries where drones built by his son-in-law's company helped swing the outcome of wars.

Istanbul itself has become a modern and chaotic megalopolis that has nearly doubled in size since Erdogan came to power in 2003.

But hiding beneath the surface are a more recent economic crisis and fierce social divisions that have given the May 14 parliamentary and presidential polls a powder keg feel.

The nation of 85 million appears as splintered as ever about whether Erdogan has done more harm than good in the only Muslim-majority country of the NATO defence bloc.

Polls show him running neck-and-neck against secular opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu and his alliance of six disparate parties.

The entry of two minor candidates means that Erdogan and Kilicdaroglu will likely face each other again in a runoff on May 28.

But some of Erdogan's more hawkish ministers are sounding

warnings about Washington leading Western efforts to undermine Turkey's might through the polls.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu referred Friday to US President Joe Biden's 2019 suggestion that Washington should embolden the opposition "to take on and defeat Erdogan". "July 15 was their actual coup attempt," Soylu said of a failed 2016 military putsch that Erdogan blamed on a US-based Muslim preacher. "And May 14 is their political coup attempt."

Erdogan continues to be lionised across more conservative swathes of Turkey for unshackling religious restrictions and bringing modern homes and jobs to millions of people through construction and state investment. Turkey is now filled with hospitals and interconnected with airports and highways that stimulate trade and give the vast country a more inclusive feel. He empowered conservative women by enabling them to stay veiled in school and in civil service -- a right that did not exist in the secular state created from the Ottoman Empire's ashes in 1923.

And he won early support from Turkey's long-repressed Kurdish minority by seeking a political solution to their armed struggle for an independent state that has claimed tens of thousands of lives.

But his equally passionate detractors point to a more authoritarian streak that emerged with the violent clampdown on protests in 2013 -- and became even more apparent with sweeping purges he unleashed after the failed 2016 coup attempt.

Erdogan turned against the Kurds and jailed or stripped tens of thousands of people of their state jobs on oblique "terror" charges that sent

chills through Turkish society.

His penchant for campaigning and gift for public speaking enabled him to keep winning at the polls.

But the current vote is turning into his toughest because of a huge economic crisis that erupted in late 2021.

Erdogan's biggest problems started when he decided to defy the rules of economics by slashing interest rates to fight inflation.

The lira lost more than half its value and inflation hit an eye-popping 85 percent since his experiment began. Millions lost their savings and fell into deep debt.

Polls show the economy worrying Turks more than any other issue -- a point not lost on Kilicdaroglu.

The 74-year-old former civil servant pledges to restore economic order and bring in vast sums from Western investors who fled the chaos of Erdogan's more recent rule.

Kilicdaroglu's party will send out 300,000 monitors to Turkey's 50,000 polling stations to guarantee a fair outcome on election day.

Opposition security pointman Oguz Kaan Salici sounded certain about a smooth transition should Erdogan lose.

"Power will change hands the way it did in 2002," he said of the year Erdogan's party first won.

A Western diplomatic source pointed to Turkey's strong tradition of respecting election results.

Erdogan's own supporters turned against him when the Turkish leader tried to annul the opposition's victory in 2019 mayoral elections in Istanbul.

But the source observed a note of worry among Erdogan's rank and file. "For the first time, (ruling party) deputies are openly evoking the possibility of defeat," the source said.

## Locals rally for peace after terror attacks in Lakki Marwat

LAKKI MARWAT (PPI) A peace rally was held in response to the recent terror attacks on Pakistan Army installations in Lakki Marwat city on Saturday.

Organized by the Olasi Pasoon Tehreek, the rally aimed to protest lawlessness and militancy on the Pakhtun's land. Many people from diverse backgrounds, including Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement leader Manzoor Pashteen and ANP's provincial vice-president Shahi Khan Sherani, attended the rally.

Banners and black and white flags were raised, and slogans were chanted

against lawlessness and in support of peace and harmony. Speakers at the rally condemned the recent wave of terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, emphasizing that local residents would not tolerate terrorism or allow anyone to take away their rights.

The speakers urged law enforcement agencies to focus on intelligence-based actions against militants. They also asked the government to take notice of broken roads and the lack of basic amenities in the region. They linked the recent violence to an international conspiracy and

warned that Pakhtuns would protest in front of the homes of rulers if terrorism on their soil did not cease.

There were multiple attacks, suspected to be terror incidents, reported from different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) on Thursday night. In Lakki Marwat city, a powerful explosion occurred near the Government Postgraduate College which houses security forces and a military camp. After the first explosion, several other blasts and heavy gunfire followed, partially damaging houses in the settled area, said locals.

# Anticipating no headway in talks, PTI again decides to start long march

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf has again announced to start a long march from tomorrow keeping in view the slow-paced negotiations between the PTI and the government teams as both sides have refused to budge from their respective stances, making chances of the success of the talks even slimmer.

The PTI long march announcement was made by senior party leader and former information minister Fawad Chaudhry in his tweet posted on Sunday.

Fawad is a part of three-member PTI team which is currently holding parleys with the government team over the issue of elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In his tweet, Fawad wrote: "Tehreek-i-Insaf wants the success of the negotiations, but it has formulated a strategy in case of failure. It cannot be possible that the constitution is considered as a piece of garbage and the people as insects and the Tehreek-i-Insaf sits silently.

People, get ready for a big movement in case the talks falter. The movement

is starting from tomorrow with rallies in Lahore, Islamabad and Peshawar, and the movement will be culminated in a historic long march."

The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government and the opposition party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are set to hold the "final" round of talks on May 2 (Tuesday) after the former ruled out the possibility of a deadlock between the sides.

Following the second round of talks -- which was held Friday in Senate's Committee Room -- the sides decided to consult with their top leadership and allies over the proposals presented during the meeting. Both delegations were hopeful of concluding the talks on Tuesday, but PTI warned that the talks could "derail" at any point if the law enforcers kept arresting its workers. However, the police and Anti-Corruption Establishment' raid on former Punjab chief minister and PTI President Ch Pervaiz Elahi on Friday night has further dimmed

the prospects of the success of talks.

Though the PTI in its meeting on Saturday chaired by Chairman Imran Khan decided to continue talks with the Pakistan Democratic Movement's government despite all odds, but there seems a remote chance that the parleys would bear fruit.

"The PTI's negotiating team will meet the government's team for the third round on Tuesday (May 2) and present its demand to dissolve the National Assembly before May 14, otherwise [PTI] will go ahead with the Punjab general elections as per Supreme Court's order," Khan said and added the PTI would also approach the apex court for earliest general elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as the constitutional time frame of 90 days had already passed.

But in a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at Model Town, the senior leadership of the PML-N decided it would not back down from its demand for simultaneous polls across the country.

# Sudan fighting enters third week as UN says country collapsing

KHARTOUM (AFP/APP): Warplanes on bombing raids drew heavy fire over Khartoum as fighting between Sudan's army and paramilitaries entered a third week with the UN chief warning the country was falling apart.

More than 500 people have been killed since battles erupted on April 15 between the forces of army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former number two Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

They have agreed to multiple truces but none has taken hold as the number of dead civilians continues to rise and chaos and lawlessness grip Khartoum, a city of five million people where many have been cloistered in their homes lacking food, water, and electricity.

Tens of thousands have been uprooted within Sudan or

embarked on arduous trips to neighbouring Chad, Egypt, South Sudan or Ethiopia to flee the battles. "There is no right to go on fighting for power when the country is falling apart," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told Saudi-owned Al Arabiya television. The latest three-day ceasefire -- due to expire at midnight (2200 GMT) Sunday -- was agreed Thursday after mediation led by the United States, Saudi Arabia, the African Union and the United Nations. "We woke up once again to the sound of fighter jets and anti-aircraft weapons blasting all over our neighbourhood," a witness in southern Khartoum told AFP.

Another said fighting had continued since the early morning, especially around the state broadcaster's headquarters in the capital's twin city of Omdurman.

Other witnesses reported

exchanges of machine gun fire across the Blue Nile in Khartoum North, while the sound of gunfire rang out in Burri in the east of the city. Smoke drifted over the area around Khartoum airport.

As battles raged, the rival generals -- who seized power in a 2021 coup -- took aim at each other in the media, with Burhan branding the RSF a militia that aims "to destroy Sudan" and Daglo calling the army chief "a traitor".

Guterres threw his support behind African-led mediation efforts. "My appeal is for everything to be done to support an African-led initiative for peace in Sudan," he told Al Arabiya.

The violence has killed at least 528 people and wounded 4,599, the health ministry said Saturday, but those figures are likely to be incomplete. About 75,000 have been displaced by the fighting in

Khartoum and the states of Blue Nile, North Kordofan, as well as the western region of Darfur, the UN said. The fighting has also triggered a mass exodus of foreigners and international staff. On Saturday, a ferry with around 1,900 evacuees arrived at a Saudi naval base in Jeddah, after crossing the Red Sea from Port Sudan in the latest evacuation to the kingdom by sea. They were among almost 4,880 people who have been brought to safety in the kingdom, the Saudi foreign ministry said.

A US-organised convoy carrying American citizens, local staff, and nationals from allied countries arrived in Port Sudan Saturday to join the exodus across the Red Sea, the State Department said. And the UK Foreign Office said just under 1,900 Britons have been taken out on 21 flights, including a final one which was due to depart on Saturday.

# PTI govt with stopped work on CPEC projects: Khawaja Asif

SIALKOT (APP): Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif said on Sunday that during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, Pakistan was deliberately pushed towards economic instability, and work on the game-changer project, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), was stopped by the government.

Talking to the media here at his residence, he said had work on CPEC projects, launched by Mian Nawaz Sharif, been continued with the usual pace, the country would have been included in the list of developing countries today.

Kh Asif regretted that former premier Nawaz Sharif and his family were

subjected to maltreatment and cruelty, and the characters involved in the process were getting exposed one by one now. He said Imran Khan and his facilitators had together committed injustice with Nawaz Sharif. During the PTI government, Nawaz Sharif and his family were maltreated and suppressed continuously for four years and false cases were registered against the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaders. He said the PTI victimised the PML-N leadership politically also. Kh Asif said that the nexus of Imran Khan and former chief justice Saqib Nisar had launched a cruel campaign

against Nawaz Sharif. He said the country was pushed into political and economic instability under a well-thought-out plan.

The federal minister said Saqib Nisar's son was selling the PTI tickets for 12 million rupees each, which everyone saw and heard on television and social media sites. He said even Saqib Nisar himself admitted that the voice in the audio-leak was of his son. Kh Asif said that involvement of Saqib Nisar's son in such issues was regrettable.

He said the PTI selling its tickets was highly regrettable. The federal minister said that there had always been a contradiction in Imran Khan's words and actions.