







People of Kafoor Dheri demand resolve of land dispute, maintaining peace

PESHAWAR (APP): The elders of Kafoor Dheri, Sufaid Sung here on Sunday demanded Deputy Commissioner and Capital City Police Officer to take necessary steps against the aggressive behavior of Esa Khel tribe which has been destroying law and order situation in the area for the past 45 days.

The Khanans (elders) which included Sher Azam, Saeed, Angraz Khan, Khan Mohammad, Engr Mehran Khan, Ali Haider, Ghafar Khan Lalal and others staged a protest camp at Warsak Road. The protesters chanted slogans against indiscriminate firing by Esa Khel tribe forcing the residents to flee their hometown.

Speaking on the occasion, Sher Azam informed media men that Esa Khel tribe had rejected the decision of a local jirga which had settled the land dispute according to Sharia law and later Supreme Court of Pakistan also upheld the ownership of the land.

He said that the Isa Khel tribe, however, remained stubborn and attacked the area several times with heavy weapons and ammunition. He said that a few people were also injured in the last attack during Ramadan and demanded concerned authorities to play their role for maintaining peace in the area.

## Drizzle forecast for Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Meteorological Department on Sunday predicted partly cloudy weather in most districts of the Sindh province during the next 24 hours. However, chances of drizzle are predicted in a few places in southern districts of Karachi, Hyderabad, Badin, Thatta, Mirpurkhas while strong winds in coastal districts.

The minimum and maximum temperatures recorded in Karachi 36-38 degrees Centigrade, Hyderabad 35-37 degrees Centigrade, Sukkur 36-38 degrees Centigrade, Thatta 38-40 degrees Centigrade, Mohenjodaro 35-37 degrees Centigrade, Dadu 36-38 degrees Centigrade, Mitthi 40-42 degrees Centigrade, and in Nawabshah 36-38 degrees Centigrade. Mainly, partly cloudy weather with drizzle is likely to prevail in the province.

## SFA begins registration

KARACHI (APP): Director General, Sindh Food Authority (SFA), Agha Fakhar Hussain has said that SFA has decided to start the registration process of food products/brands of all pre-packed food items from May 15 to make authority fully functional.

Those, who do not get their products registered under SFA, will face legal action under SFA Act 2016, rules, laws, and regulations. This he said while visiting Pakistan Standard Quality Control Authority (PSQA) headquarters.

DC SFA had a meeting with Director Quality Control Center (QCC) Dr. Tahira Zaher and other officers. On the occasion, Director SFA Masood Bhutto, Director Technical Ahmed Ali Shaikh and Dr. Seema Ashraf were also present.

# Ready to resolve problems of people: Governor

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori on Sunday visited Kharadar area and interacted with the citizens.

He said, 'I am ready to do everything to resolve the problems of the people.'

The Governor said, 'I am grateful to the people for the title of people's Governor.' The citizens were in surprise while seeing the Governor among them.

Kamran Tessori said that the purpose of

visiting such places was to meet the people and listen to their problems.

He said that the administration should visit markets and implement official prices.

He said that the Ifthari would be held in Governor house during the whole month of Ramadan.

The Governor said that he would visit every place and met the people. He also did 18 Sehri at Kharadar.

## Pakistan should demand urgent debt write-off: Altaf

KARACHI (NNI): Pasban Democratic Party PDP Chairman Altaf Shakoor here Sunday asked that the country should demand an urgent debt write-off so as to avoid default and to divert its meager funds for rehabilitation of the millions of people affected by the worst climate change. Quoting a report of Boston University, he said strong voices are being raised for writing off loans of the poor nations, as up to \$520 billion in debt needs to be written off to help developing nations at greatest risk of default return to a sounder fiscal footing and meet climate and development goals. The haircuts on debt owed to public and private creditors by 61 of the nations that are already in or are at most risk of debt distress are essential to avoid cascading defaults. "Without ambitious debt relief, many of the poorest countries don't have a chance."

The report says that research found a correlation between debt distress and climate vulnerability; a string of debt-distressed nations, including Pakistan, Ethiopia and Malawi, have recently battled concurrent extreme weather events that intensified pressure on public finances. Altaf Shakoor wondered why the

Pakistani government is not asking for an urgent debt relief when even the research institutes of the Western world are busy in advocacy for debt write-off for the poor nations. He said our political parties and courts are battling for election dates while the country is at the brink of default. He asked that sanity must prevail and the most urgent issue of debt relief should be on the top agenda of government, political parties and other institutions.

He said Pakistan, currently tackling a major economic crisis, is grappling with high external debt, a weak local currency and dwindling foreign exchange reserves and as per a report of United States Institute of Peace (USIP) it needs to repay a whopping USD 77.5 billion in external debt from April 2023 to June 2026.

Altaf Shakoor demanded that our parliament should urgently summon a joint session to discuss the most urgent issue of debt relief and device a strategy how to fight the fit case of the country on world forums. He said the IMF, World Bank and other lenders should be persuaded to write off our loans and provide as much relief as possible to help the climate hit country to stand on its two feet.

## The Smart Schools arranged high achievers award ceremony



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Smart Schools Regional Office North has arranged High Achievers Award Ceremony at Marriott Islamabad to acknowledge the efforts and hard work of our students on their outstanding results in Matric.

Chief Guest motivated the young citizens with his motivational words. Mr. Mansoor Ali Shah - Founder & CEO The Counselor, Mr. Khurram

Mehta - Group Director Marketing TCS, Mr. Zeehan Iqbal - Chief Financial Officer TCS, Mr. Shenail - Curriculum Lead The City School, Ms. Seema Kaukab - Assistant Regional Director and all our respected Network Associates, School Heads and students were among the worthy guests.

Regional Director North- Ms. Itrat Rubab Haider addressed the audience and encouraged the students of Class 9th and 10th on their

excellent performance in board examination.

Students were awarded with the shields and certificates. Network Associates and School Heads of the campuses with outstanding results were also awarded with the shields and certificates. Parents, students, teachers and Network Associates were very happy and they were praising the academic support provided by The Smart School Academic Team.

## CM Naqvi directs to expedite ongoing road projects

LAHORE (NNI): Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi has directed to complete the ongoing road projects throughout the province on time, keeping in view the public convenience.

Chief Minister Naqvi

on Sunday chaired a meeting in Lahore held to review the road projects. He directed to complete construction of roads which connect cities with motorways on a priority basis. He also instructed to complete projects for constructing link roads

on time.

He asked the road authorities to give preference to pitch road construction and also build road shoulders.

The meeting was told that 1,819 road projects are under construction in Punjab.



LAHORE: People standing in queue to get free drink distributed by the volunteers.

## Sindh govt giving Rs 2000 to deserving families

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, while addressing a press conference at Archive Complex Clifton on Sunday extended Easter greetings to the Christian community of Pakistan and the world.

In the press conference, Sindh Information Minister said that the Sindh government is giving Rs 2000 to deserving families for purchasing 65 kilogram per flour in this tough situation. So far 29 lakh 36 thousand 355 families have taken subsidy of Rs 2000 per family, for which an amount of 5 billion, 87 crore, 27 lakh 10 thousand rupees has been paid so far.

He said that deserving

families whose monthly income is less than Rs 50000 and who are not yet registered, can get registration and facility by sending their identity card number to 8171.

Sindh Information

Minister Sharjeel Inam

Memon while sharing good

news to the people of

Karachi said that 3 new

routes of electronic buses

are being introduced in the

blessed month of Ramadan

under the leadership of

Pakistan People's Party and

the direction of Sindh Chief

Minister. First route from

April 13 from Malir al-Asif

Market to Tank Chowk.

Second route from April 14

from Bahria Town to Tank

Chowk and from Tank

Chowk to Naumaish

the no-confidence motion is



Chowrangi

While the third

route will be from North

Karachi from April 18 via

New Karachi Al-Asif

Square, Ayesha Manzil,

Gurumandir, Empress

Market, II Chandrigar Road

to Dockyard for about 30

km. Sharjeel Inam Memon

said that on the special

instructions of the Sindh

Chief Minister, the increase

in the fares of the People's

Bus Service has been

stopped twice in the cabinet

meeting, because the Sindh

government wants to provide

as much convenience as

possible to its citizens in

this era of inflation.

He said that the People's

Bus Service is making the

journey of 30 to 40 km possible

for only Rs 50 which is

less than the cost of a

motorcycle. Sharjeel Inam

Memon said that it has been

a year since an incompetent

person was removed

through the legal process of

no-confidence motion

while earlier Prime

Ministers were removed

from power by illegal

means. He said that the person

who was removed by

the no-confidence motion is

still busy trying to harm

Pakistan and due to this

person's incompetence and

mismanagement, people

and institutions are facing

problems. He said that

Imran Khan came to power

through a back door and

this person is also accused

of receiving funding from

Israel and India. He said

that Imran Khan will not

play the match until the

match is fixed. He said that

the Peshawar High Court

directed the investigation of

KPK, BRT, but the case

was further stayed. He said

that re-election was decided

on the seat of Qasim Suri,

but he also got a stay. He

said that blue-eyed's corruption

is covered up on the basis

of likes and dislikes. He

said that Imran Khan's party

resorted to dealing tactics

in the foreign funding case

as well. He said that the

question is whether it should

be understood that an investigation

cannot be done against Imran

Khan. He said that all journalists

and lawyers should hold a

great debate and see that

Imran Khan was given concessions

and certificates of

Sadiq and Amin.

He said that now there should be a decision based on facts and arguments. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Pakistan People's Party is always ready for elections. He said that unconstitutional, illegal decisions are being made. He said that the People's Party avoids the politics of confrontation. He questioned why the reference of martyr Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto is not heard. Why is the case of Shaheed Bibi not tried?

He said that People's Party wants to stabilize the country, democracy, institutions and parliament.

He said that the president is questioning the authority of the parliament by taking votes from the parliament, is this a correct practice? He said that if you have to play the role of an activist of Imran Khan's Tiger Force, please resign from your post. He said that even today Imran Khan is being given way.

He said that we do not want to see our institutions scandalized. In response to a question, he said that accepting illegal decisions is also wrong. In response to a question, he said that the Sindh government has increased the support price of wheat purchase from Rs.2200 to Rs.4000. In response to a question, he said that the Sindh government takes strict notice of accidents and there are instructions for strict legal action against those responsible.

## Three killed in road accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): Three people were killed while another for severe injuries in a traffic accident that occurred due to a collision between a car and a truck on Expressway near Khana Pul, Islamabad.

As reported by a private news channel, the horrific accident happened in the limits of Khanna Pul Police Station in Islamabad, when a rashly driven car crashed into a truck and as a result, three people were killed on the spot while another sustained severe injuries in the same accident. Police and rescue officials immediately reached the site and shifted the dead and injured to the hospital. Abbas Ahmed, Abbas Shah, and Saad Ahmed, who were reportedly neighbours, were named among the deceased.

## One killed, one injured due to old enmity

RAWALPINDI (APP): A man was shot dead while another was injured in the firing incident that occurred in Race Course area due to old enmity.

According to a police spokesman, a person namely Amreez was killed while his son Umar got injured by the indiscriminate firing of a police constable namely Ahmed who is posted in the Punjab Constabulary. According to the initial report, the deceased Amreez was the uncle of the accused Ahmed. The concerned unit has been informed about the constable's involvement in the incident, raids are being conducted to arrest the accused. SP Potohar said that the accused will be arrested and brought to justice.

## Poor case response, DC Lahore warns officers for slackness

F.P. Report

LAHORE: DC Lahore Rafia Haider is active to make successful anti-dengue campaign. DC Lahore Rafia Haider presided over a meeting to review the performance of dengue workers on Sunday. Meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner General, Assistant Commissioners, DDHOs and the representatives of other various departments.

DC Lahore Rafia Haider sternly warned the concerned authorities and staff that no negligence would be tolerated at any cost regarding the dengue campaign. She directed all Assistant Commissioners and DDHOs to remain in the field and inspect the performance of dengue workers on a daily basis in their jurisdiction. She said

that those who are playing with the lives of citizens and submitting the only paper reports would not stay in their seats. She disclosed that in the year 2023, 18 cases of dengue were reported while 1452 indoor and 36 outdoor dengue larva were reported. She said that in Spite of dengue patients being reported, in Allama Iqbal, Aziz Bhatti, Samanabad town, Shalimar, Ravi Zone and Data Ganj Bakash town zero outdoor larva were reported. She further said that in Gulberg 2, Cantt 4 while in Nishtar town only 8 outdoor larvae were reported. DC Lahore Rafia Haider strongly denied to all the concerned officers that the report of all good is not acceptable due to continuous rains in the city and reports of dengue patients, she further added.

## Tailors, designers working extra hour to cope with demands ahead of Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the month of Ramadan nears to end, many seasonal tailors and renowned designers in the country are working extra hours and are busy making dresses for ladies, gents, youths, boys and girls for delivering their dresses before Eid day.

The majority of the tailors claimed that they have been receiving approximately double orders as compared to normal days as customers have been forced to continue booking new orders even till the last few days, a report aired by a private news channel said.

A tailor said enthusiastic women don't like waiting rather, they want their clothes by yesterday, adding, we are working

overtime to meet the surge in orders ahead of Eid ul Fitr. Some of the owners of tailoring shops said that they would not like to take the order any more after 22nd or 23rd day of Ramadan.

The tailors said they are passing a busy time in taking the order and supplying delivery ahead of Eid.

The customers are coming to make their various types of dresses like shirts, pants, shalwar kameez, pajamas, three-piece, two-piece etc, they added.

A designer said our tailoring house has a speciality in making dresses for women. We also stitch clothes for men and children. We do not compromise on quality, he added.

Some customers, who were running late with their wardrobe plans said they had been turned away by a couple of tailors because they were fully booked.

A worker in a designer's house said that the charges for stitching have also been increased because of Eid as they have to put in extra effort during this time.

"The business was always good. In fact, this was the only time we make some profit compared to other months," said another tailor at his crowded shop. "I am already overburdened with Eid orders and I cannot handle any more orders, a tailor denied for taking order in his shop", he added.

## Security forces are providing basic health facilities to the locals in Bajaur, Mohmand & Khyber

F.P. Report

BAJAUR: Security Forces are taking steps to provide basic health facilities to the people of Bajaur, Mohmand and Khyber.

The construction of basic health units, community health centers and dispensaries in remote areas of the three districts is continue. Till now more than 50 community health centers and basic health units have been established in these districts, including the reconstruction of already established health centers. Additionally, the Frontier Corps North has organized more than 100 free medical camps in these remote areas, benefiting thousands of patients by providing free check-ups and medicines. Moreover,



the Frontier Corps North is also playing an essential role in the anti-polio campaign, demonstrating their commitment to providing basic health facilities in these areas. The people are pleased with the services

provided by the security forces, expressing their gratitude to FC North for building health centers in the area and said that "With the availability of treatment facilities in the areas, the people can now receive ade-

quate medical care without having to travel long distances". They said, "This is an excellent example of the dedication of the Frontier Corps North to serving the community and improving their quality of life."



## Varsities financial crisis: FAPUASA demands availability of funds

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (FAPUASA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chapter President Dr. Feroz Shah and General Secretary Dr. Zafar Hayat Khan have expressed grave concern over the financial crises being faced by universities in Pakistan, specifically in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Many universities are facing budgetary problems resulting in non-payment of salaries, pensions and regular allowances to its employees on regular basis. Consequently, many universities got on strikes in recent past. The situation in Balochistan and Sindh is also alarming where faculty and staff are on roads.

FAPUASA (KP) calls upon the federal government to enhance the annual recurring and development budget at least to 500 Billion of Rupees for universities in the federal government budget (2023-2024) and each Provincial Government should also allocate Grants in Aids to their respective universities. The current budgetary allocation for universities is insufficient, and it has become increasingly difficult for universities to meet their expenses and even to pay monthly salaries. As a result, many faculty and staff members are suffering and unable to make ends meet. The lack of funds has also led to a deterioration in the quality of education. The universities are unable to invest in research, technology and infrastructure. This has led to a decline in

the quality of education and research output, which is a cause of concern for FAPUASA. FAPUASA (KP) believes that investing in education is an investment in the future of Pakistan. Therefore, we call upon the federal government to increase the budget allocation for universities and ensure that they receive the necessary funds to continue their operations and improve the quality of education and research. FAPUASA (KP) is committed to working with the government to find an amicable solution to the financial issues faced by universities. We hope that the government will take immediate action to address these issues and ensure that the future of Pakistan's education system is secured.

## Vegetables, fruits prices increased

PESHAWAR (APP): The prices of vegetables and fruits have increased sharply during Ramadan, particularly on Sunday as on this day, a large number of people visit both the vegetables and fruits markets wherein the vendors did nothing but increase the prices of the food items. During a detailed visit to the market, the prices of the vegetables and fruits witnessed an increase, especially on Sunday because of the rush of the people in the markets. "We are most often pay a visit on Sunday to purchase vegetables and fruits," a government official told APP. He said the vendors come up with increased prices of various food items, especially on Sunday as there is no check on them from the district administration. The price of vegetables and fruits increased sharply in Ramadan, so the citizens are worried enough. One house wife said that now the prices of the vegetables and fruits were out of reach of the middle class families. "I do not know why there was no check on the vendors," she said. When there was an increase in petrol prices, the vendors raised the rates of vegetables and fruits despite their low ratings purchased by them from the main wholesalers (Aarti), she said. Usually on Sunday the prices of various food items increased from 100 to 150 or 200 because of the rush, she said.

Adrak is being sold at Rs. 700, garlic 360 and lemon at 280 per kg. However, the Peas 170, kachalu 180, zucchini 80, karela 80 and onion 90 rupees per kg are being sold and Green Chilli Rs 100, Tomato Rs 50 and Eggplant Rs 80 per kg. The prices of the fruits have also increased as Malta 440, Cano 340 and banana reached 290 rupees per dozen. Pomegranate 430, Iranian apple 410, guava 280 and grape 430 rupees per kg with strawberry 280, Melon 180 and Watermelon 70 rupees sold per kg while the price of live chicken has increased to 380 rupees per kilogram.



PESHAWAR: A large number of Christian devotees attending Easter Sunday mass service at St. John's Cathedral Church.

## Christian community celebrates Easter in KP amid tight security

PESHAWAR (INP): Like other parts of the country, the Christian community on Sunday celebrated their religious event Easter as a joyous holiday and organized different congregations to mark the day with happiness. The main procession started from St. John Church in Kohati Gate that was led by Head of the Church of Pakistan Bishop Humphery Sarfaraz Peter. The procession went through different bazaars

while the participants were holding decorated crosses, a symbol of Christian religion by singing their religious songs. The Christians extended greetings to each other and offered prayers for the sovereignty of the country. KP Caretaker Chief Minister Mohammad Azam Khan extended his greetings to all Christian community and said that all minorities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have equal rights as citizens.

He said that religion Islam teaches equal rights to minority communities by guaranteeing them to celebrate their religious worship, rituals and festivals with complete freedom. Similarly, on the directives of Capital City Police Officer Mohammad Ejaz Khan, SP Cantt. Waqas Khan inspected security arrangements in different churches. He met with security staff deployed to protect the lives and prop-

erties of Christians and directed them to keep vigilant during performing their duties. Meanwhile, the members of Christians community residing in other parts of the province including Dir Lower, Kohat, Swabi, DIKhan, Lakki Marwat, Bannu, Tank also observed Easter with religious zeal and zest. Different ceremonies and processions were taken out to mark the day with joy.

## Directorate considers youth as builders of society

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The NATIVES concludes five days NATIVES Youth Camp 6 in Baragali summer camp university of Peshawar. The camp was organized by the NATIVES in collaboration with Directorate of Youth affairs KP. The camp aimed to enhance the plight of youth for the development of society. The five days camp host 100 participants from the merged districts of KP in specific and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in general. In the five days, a number of speakers from academic, development sector and other fields broaden the mental horizons of the participants with their knowledge.

CEO of the NATIVES Khalid Mehmood added that the Youth Affairs Directorate annually support the NATIVES to conduct

camp for the youth of the province because the directorate believes that youth are the future and building blocks of society. Khalid Mehmood appraised the relentless support of Irfan Ali Khan, Director Youth Affairs KP for uplifting the youth of the province to the extent that not any other province youth avail these types of opportunities as provided by the Directorate of Youth affairs KP to its youth. It's a matter of pride and immense pleasure for the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Dr Shuja Ahmad the key speaker of the event told that the Youth of KP are so lucky to have such institutions which support them in polishing their guts and

abilities. Beside learning programs, the participants visited the tourists spots of galyat and explored them. Cleanliness drives were carried out in the tourists spots i.e. Ayubia, Nathiagali and Donga Gali. The event was well managed and organized. Cultural night was arranged for the exhibition of culture where people from different areas exhibited their culture by wearing cultural dresses and performing cultural dances. The participants thanked the NATIVES and all collaborating partners of the event for providing them the best opportunity. The NATIVES believe that youth is the future of the country and any investment on youth will never go in vain.

## Community health centers established

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Security Forces are taking steps to provide basic health facilities to the people of Bajaur, Mohmand and Khyber. The construction of basic health units, community health centers and dispensaries in remote areas of the three districts is continue. According to details, till now more than 50 community health centers and basic health units have been established in these districts, including the reconstruction of already established health centers. Additionally, the Frontier Corps North has organized more than 100 free medical camps in these remote areas, benefiting thousands of patients by providing free check-ups

and medicines. Moreover, the Frontier Corps North is also playing an essential role in the anti-polio campaign, demonstrating their commitment to providing basic health facilities in these areas. The people are pleased with the services provided by the security forces, expressing their gratitude to FC North for building health centers in the area and said that "With the availability of treatment facilities in the areas, the people can now receive adequate medical care without having to travel long distances". They said, "This is an excellent example of the dedication of the Frontier Corps North to serving the community and improving their quality of life."

## Weather likely to remain hot

PESHAWAR (APP): The weather is likely to remain hot and dry in most of the districts of the province, an official of the Meteorological Department said here Sunday. However, he said, chance of rain with strong winds and thunder at some places in Khyber and Kurram districts. He said, the lowest temperature in the province is zero in Kalam, mercury is 3 degrees Celsius and Malam Jabba recorded four degrees Celsius.

## People demands resolve of land dispute in area

PESHAWAR (APP): The elders of Kafoor Dehri, Sufaid Sung here on Sunday demanded Deputy Commissioner and Capital City Police Officer to take necessary steps against the aggressive behavior of Esa Khel tribe which has been destroying law and order situation in the area for the past 45 days. The Khanans (elders) which included Sher Azam, Saeed, Angraz Khan, Khan Mohammad, Engr Mehran

Khan, Ali Haider, Ghafar Khan Lalal and others staged a protest camp at Warsak Road. The protestors chanted slogans against indiscriminate firing by Esa Khel tribe forcing the residents to flee their hometown. Speaking on the occasion, Sher Azam informed media men that Esa Khel tribe had rejected the decision of a local jirga which had settled the land dispute according to Sharia law and

later Supreme Court of Pakistan also upheld the ownership of the land. He said that the Isa Khel tribe, however, remained stubborn and attacked the area several times with heavy weapons and ammunition. He said that a few people were also injured in the last attack during Ramadan and demanded concerned authorities to play their role for maintaining peace in the area.

## Food officials crackdown in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): The officials of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority crackdown in Peshawar District. Two bakery units have been fined for using non-food grade colors and poor sanitation, food safety officials said. The Food safety team also inspected grocery stores, ice cream shops and hotels in various markets in Lower Kurram Lower and Central Khurram district, the spokesman said.

During the inspection, expired food items and mislabeled ice cream were found, which were destroyed on the spot and fines were also imposed, the officials of the Food Authority said. He said as directives of the Director General Shah Rukh Ali Khan, the officials would not sit down till the elimination of food adulteration like canker sores during the Holy month of Ramazan.

## Govt efforts to address problems

PESHAWAR (APP): Zafar Mehmood, Adviser to the Caretaker Chief Minister on Tourism and Culture, Sunday said that the Caretaker Government is taking steps for the prosperity of the common man, which will make it possible to solve the problems of the poor people. Adviser to the Chief Minister said that the caretaker government was continuing the process of public service with the spirit of service. He said the process of distribution of free ration in the province has been made transparent and the poor people on a daily basis are getting free flour. The caretaker government was trying its best to provide basic facilities to the poor people at their doorsteps during these holy days of the fasting month. He said steps have been taken to bring back the province on the path of development. "The cooperation of the elders and the people is very important in the development process of the area, mutual unity and agreement will not only solve the problems of the people but also the dream of a prosperous society will be fulfilled, he said."

## Centuries-old tradition of storytelling with traditional Qehwa continues from Iftar to Sehri at historic Qissakhwani Bazaar

PESHAWAR (APP): The centuries-old tradition of storytelling and traditional Peshawari Qehwa (green tea) along with chappli kabab continued from Iftar to Sehri during Ramazan at the historic Qissakhwani bazaar. Being an oldest bazaar of South Asia, Qissakhwani's food shops, hotels and Qahwa Khwanas are attracting a large number of visitors, who are enjoying the mouthwatering chappli kabab, paye, mutton karahi, fried fish, kabuli rice polao and other traditional food cuisines at Iftar parties. "I came along with my family to my favourite Qissakhwani to enjoy its delicious chappli kabab and paye with its famous Qehwa at Iftar party arranged by my father for family members here on Sunday," said Engr Fahim Khan of Nowshera district while taking to APP. He said the mouthwatering fried fish, chicken roast and kulfi-falooda along with famous qehwa were adding colours to the Iftar parties. "It was my second Iftar of the current Ramazan here and would again come on 29th day of Ramazan to my favourite place for a grand Iftar party with my friends and relatives," he said. Fazl Rehman, owner of the famous Mohmand Qehwa at Shah Wali Qatal street at Qissa Khwani told APP that centuries old culture of storytelling along with famous Qehwa still continued at the historic bazaar. "The people in groups and families come for Iftar parties and enjoy the traditional delicious cuisines with qehwa here till sehri," he said. The Qissa Khwani's primitive and

archaic culture magnetize visitors' attention during their visit to its food restaurants and Qehwa shops for Iftar parties where they swap tales of ancient culture, music, art, politics and traditional norms till sehri. Located in the heart of Peshawar City near historical Chowk Yadgar, Ghanta Ghar and Balahisar fort, the Qissa Khwani Bazaar remained a key trade and cultural center where international merchants of subcontinent, Afghanistan and Central Asia stayed at nights and shared tales of love, culture, art and architecture, music and traditions before their departure to respective destinations. The bazaar starts from Kabuli Gate that takes only eight to 10 minutes to reach after disembarking from BRT station of Khyber Bazaar and takes visitors to primordial age after witnessing its centuries-old architectural buildings, artisans' shops, food restaurants and primitive Qehwa Khanas. During its peak period, the bazaar served as a campground for trade caravans of merchants from Delhi, Amritsar, Lahore, Kabul, Dushanbe, Ashgabat and Tashkent who used to enter the city's gates to unload their merchandise. The bazaar has witnessed the vigor of great warriors, invaders and kings including Alexander the Great, Mehmood Ghazni, Zaheeruddin Barani, Nadir Shah, Ahmed Shah Durrani and his grandson Shah Zaman who marched through famous Khyber Pass during their invasions of India. "Making Qehwa is my passion which I inherited from my father in 1970 and my son has also joined us,"

Fazalur Rehman said. He said majority of the visitors ask for green tea 'Qahwa' while many request for green tea with milk locally Known as 'Sheen Da Payo' a special iftar tea item of Qisakhwani. Following creation of Pakistan, he said that its tea stalls were centre of political discussion where locals exchanged views about the country's political situation, Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah-Gen Ayub Khan Presidential Election, 1965 Pak-India War, OIC Lahore Summit 1974 and number of sports and cultural events during 1960-75 besides 1992 cricket world cup wins. "Qissa Khwani's history is believed to be as old as the history of Peshawar," said Bakht Zada Khan, Research Officer Museums and Archeology Department while talking to APP. "The recent archaeology excavation at ancient Gor Khatri had established the city's historical profile declaring Peshawar as 'Oldest Living City' in South Asia with primitive history going back to about 539 BC." He said Gor Khatri excavation was the deepest and biggest in the world which revealed that the 20-layers of soil provide a complete profile of this ancient city ranging from British to pre Indo-Greek era. Thus, the unique tradition of storytelling and drinking of Qehwa became an integral part of Qissa Khwani culture, which is still continuing despite the passage of centuries. Foreign and domestic tourists can also take glimpses of ancestral houses of Bollywood super stars including Yousaf Khan alias Dalip Kumar at

Mohallah Khudadad, Haveli of Raj Kapoor's father Prithvi Raj and residence of Shah Rukh Khan's family at Shah Wali Qatal at Qissa Khwani. "Peshawar's Qissa Khwani and Dilip Kumar sahib are inseparable," Faud Ishaq, former President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and nephew of the Peshawar born India's cinema legend Dilip Kumar told APP. He said Dilip Kumar's love for Peshawar could be judged from his will in which he wished to use his ancestral house for welfare of Peshawarites. The Haveli of Raj Kapoor's father Prithvi Raj, who moved to Mumbai in 1930 where he prevailed over South Asian's film industry both as an actor and producer, thereby laying the first Bollywood dynasty spanned about four generations, were also attracting visitors at Dhaki Nalbandi near Qissa Khwani. The house of Taj Muhammad Khan, father of Bollywood legend Shah Rukh Khan was located at Shah Wali Katal Qissa Khawani where his celebrated son had good time with his family members during his teenage visit to Pakistan, Shah Rukh's house is also a source of attraction for tourists and his cinema fans. Besides, the arched white marble monument erected in the middle of the bazaar to honor all those martyred in the Qissa Khwani massacre by British troops in 1930, also remained the centre of attractions for many. British Commissioner of Peshawar, Herbert Edwards had great love for Qissa Khwani who called it the 'Piccadilly of South Asia'. During

colonial rule, Britishers used informers to know public opinion over administrative decisions by instructing them to visit city areas and bring 'Qissa Khawani Gazzatte'. "I am selling Chappli Kabab for the last 25 years at Qissa Khwani that attracts substantial buyers by taking its parcel to for their families at home for Iftar parties and many prefer to enjoy here at hotels during Iftar dinner," said Ismail Ali. He said that Qissakhwani had witnessed a sharp decrease in arrival of tourists during 2001-13 when terrorists targeted this cultural hub of Peshawar that claimed so many precious lives including Senior Minister Bashir Ahmed Bilour in 2012 and CCPO Malik Muhammad Saad Shaheed in 2007. He said the terror attacks and later corona lockdowns had an adverse effect on Qehwa and Chappli Kabab business here. "In spite of economic losses, we continued our business even in those days when people were afraid to visit this ancient market," he said. He said an increase in tourists' arrival has been witnessed at Qissakhwani with overwhelming response of domestic travelers from Punjab, Swat, Chitral, Nowshera and Dir Upper this year. "I came from Karak to enjoy Chapal Kabab along with traditional Qehwa at Qissa Khwani bazaar at iftar," said Waris Khan, an employee of federal government while talking to APP. "My visit to Peshawar remains incomplete without visiting this historic street for Chappli Kabab and

Peshawari Qehwa," he said. "Qissa Khwani is the identity of Peshawar and solid efforts are required to preserve its cultural heritage, architecture, artwork and substantial revenue could be generated by maintaining its beauty and primitive heritage," said Shaukat Ali Khan, Chairman Central Organization for Traders KP. He said about Rs 50000 per 50 KG are being spent on import of green tea mostly from Vietnam and this amount could be saved by facilitating investors and farmers to cultivate green tea in upper KP especially in Malakand and Hazara division. He urged the government to give special financial incentives to investors for purchase of machinery for tea cultivation, harvesting and face uplift of Qissakhwani. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has completed 'Cultural Heritage Trail' project in 2018 in Peshawar under which 500 meters long trail from ancient Ghanta Ghar to Gor Khatri and outlook of 85 heritage buildings including famous Sethi House at Mohalla Sethian were renovated and preserved. Starting at historical Ghanta Ghar, the trail passes through ancient Mohallah Sethian with a number of beautiful houses constructed by Sethi family back in the 1880s that were preserved. A proposal is under consideration for the face uplift of Qissakhwani to restore its centuries old outlook for apprising new generations about the historical past of bazar when it remained hub of commerce between subcontinent and central asia.





## In brief

### FC Sobedar laid to rest

DIR LOWER (APP): N-Sobedar Hazrat Gul who was martyred in a remote control bomb in Bara of district Khyber was laid to rest with official honor here on Sunday.

Colonel Sajjad's FC contingent placed floral wreaths at the martyr's grave at his native graveyard in Sarae Payen. It is worth mentioning here that two soldiers were martyred in a remote control bomb on a security forces vehicle. On this occasion, Colonel Sajjad and former provincial minister Muzaffar Syed vowed that they will not hesitate to make any sacrifice for the lasting peace of the country. Hundreds of people participated in the funeral prayer.

### Security setup ensured: CPO

MULTAN (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Mansoor-ul-Haq Rana said that foolproof security arrangements were being ensured at churches to avoid any untoward incident. During his visit to different churches here on Sunday, he said that best security arrangements have been made at churches to provide peaceful environment to Christian community to perform their religious activities. He said that walk through gates have been installed at entry points of the churches while lady police officials have also been deployed. The city police officer added that all SDPOs and SHOs were monitoring the arrangements at churches in their respective areas, however, he himself was monitoring the security arrangements. He directed police officials to remain alert while performing security duty at churches.

### Fines imposed on shopkeepers

ATTOCK (APP): On the orders of the Deputy Commissioner and the instructions of the Assistant Commissioner, actions are being taken against the wholesalers and shopkeepers in Hazro on Sunday. Naib Tehsildar Hazro Amir Mehmood imposed fines on the traders who sell food items at a rate higher than the official rate. To provide relief to the public in the month of Ramadan and to control the profiteering in the market, Naib Tehsildar along with his team raided vegetable, fruit and other food shops in Hazro city and fined the shopkeepers on the spot for selling the edibles at higher prices than the government rates. AC Hazro Kamran Ashraf said that strict legal action would be taken against traders or shopkeepers who sell items at higher prices.

### Man injured hit by train

SIALKOT (APP): A 60-year-old man suffered severe injuries after being hit by train while crossing rail track here near Lunda Phatak area of Miana Pura. According to rescue spokesperson, the victim Mushaq was shifted to the Allama Iqbal Memorial Hospital (AIMH) after providing first aid.

### 1.3m flour bags disbursed

KASUR (APP): Deputy Commissioner Kasur Muhammad Irshad Bhatti said that the district administration under the Prime Minister Ramzan Package disbursed 130,719 free flour bags so far across the Kasur district. Presiding over a meeting to review the flour distribution process here at DC room, he said that the government was making efforts to provide relief to the deserving people. "90% of set target was achieved after so far distributing 130,719 free of charge flour bags among 473,426 BISP registered families", he highlighted.

# IGP announces restoration of police posts in *Kacha* area

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Inspector General Police, Punjab, Dr Usman Anwar has announced the restoration of police check-posts in "Kacha" area in order to combat gangs of bandits and kidnappers.

He said this after his arrival at the residence of Dr. Hassan Mehmood, the former superintendent of a Tehsil Headquarters Hospital in Rahimyar Khan district whose kidnapped children were recovered by Rahimyar Khan police.

Earlier, the IGP Punjab was accorded a warm welcome by Regional Police Officer, Bahawalpur, Rai Babar Saeed and District Police Officer, Rahimyar Khan, Rizwan Umar.

The IGP met with the two sons of the doctor who recently were recovered by Rahimyar Khan police. It is

being recalled here that the kidnappers had kidnapped two sons of Dr. Hassan Mahmood, however, they were recovered by the police in swift police action by utilizing modern technological devices and expertise of the competent police officials. The IGP congratulated the doctor for safe recovery of his two kidnapped sons.

Speaking on the occasion, the IGP Punjab said that a comprehensive plan and strategy had been designed to control crimes and bring the bandits and kidnappers to justice. "The police check-posts and pickets are being restored in all relevant areas of Kacha area lying near and around the river in Rahimyar Khan district and other areas," the IGP said.

He also announced establishment of a new

police station in Khanpur city. He told that the police availed facility of modern technological devices and scientific methods to trace out the whereabouts of the kidnappers and to recover the sons of Dr. Mahmood. "Provision of security to people is duty of the police department," he said. On the occasion, he also announced one million rupees cash prize for the police team who recovered the kidnapped children.

He said that Special Branch of the Police Department and CTD had jointly been working to root out crimes, especially robberies and kidnapping for ransom in Kacha area. He said that all those police check-posts and pickets which earlier were abolished in Kacha area, now had been restored.

## 4.23 million flour bags distributed in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD (APP): Divisional Commissioner Silwat Saeed has said that 4.23 million [4,233,883] flour bags have so far been distributed in Faisalabad division during the last 21 days.

Addressing a meeting, she said on Sunday that 10-kilogram flour bags were being provided to eligible people under the Ramazan free flour package. She said that 1,760,443 flour bags had been distributed in Faisalabad district, 692,005 bags in Toba Tek Singh, 1,212,555 bags in Jhang and 568,880 bags in Chiniot district.

The commissioner said that the local administration had made the best arrangements at flour distribution centres to facilitate beneficiaries of free flour.

Officers of the district and divisional administration conduct surprise visits and keep a check to ensure flour distribution in a fair and transparent manner, she added.

**246 shopkeepers fined, 12 arrested**

The price control magistrates have imposed Rs 398,000 fine collectively on 246 shopkeepers in addition to arresting 12 of them and sealing 16 shops

in Faisalabad during the last two days on the charge of profiteering and overcharging.

A spokesman for the city district government said here on Sunday that the magistrates conducted surprise visits in various markets, eatery shops, hotels and restaurants in Faisalabad and found dozens of shopkeepers involved in overcharging and profiteering.

Therefore, fine was imposed on them and shops were sealed besides arrest of the accused over sheer violation of the Price Control Act, he added.

## Benazir scholarship cheque distributed

SIALKOT (APP): Benazir Scholarship Cheque Distribution ceremony was held in Govt College Women University Sialkot (GCWUS). Chief guest Vice Chancellor GCWUS Prof. Dr. Ruksana Kausar distributed cheques of Rs. 29,208,044/- among 364 students.

VC GCWUS appreciated the initiative of Federal Government for giving handsome scholarship to the needy students.

She further mentioned that students should serve the community and support their families after completing their education.

Dr. Zarin Fatima Rizvi, Dr. Muhammad Afzal Butt, Dr. Muhammad Ilyas, Dr. Yasin Munir, Ijaz Ahmad, Sadia Jamil and Departmental focal persons were

also present in the ceremony.

**Six held with narcotics**  
District police arrested six drug peddlers and illegal weapon holders and recovered narcotics, liquor and weapons from their possession.

Police said here on Sunday, the teams of different police stations raided and detained Ashiq Hussain, Awas Mehmood, Adil Maseeh, Ghafoor Ali, Luqman, Ali Raza and recovered 3.84kg hashish, 10 liters liquor and weapons.

Police sent the accused behind the bars after registering separate cases in this regard.

**USKT hosts Iftar dinner**  
University of Sialkot hosted an iftar dinner in honor of all academic leaders here at DHA RAYA

Golf Club Lahore.

The dinner was hosted by Faisal Manzoor (Chairman, Board of Governors, University of Sialkot) and Muhammad Rehan Younas (President, IISAT University Gujranwala) and attended by esteemed guests including the owners, Rectors, and Vice Chancellors across the country.

The guests shared various ideas to strengthen ties between universities during the event.

The Iftar dinner was a testament to the University of Sialkot's commitment to excellence and its leadership role in the education sector. It was an evening of warmth, camaraderie, and goodwill, reflecting the spirit of Ramadan, said spokesperson.

## 2 dacoits killed in separate encounters with police

BUREWALA (APP): Two notorious dacoits were shot killed during an exchange of fire with police teams in separate incidents, reported in the district on Sunday.

According to police sources, receiving information through police emergency helpline 15 about a motorcycle robbery by three armed outlaws near Village 557/EB,

Machiwaal, police set up a picket near Village 4/WB.

The criminals started firing on the police team when police stopped them at the picket. The police also retaliated in which one outlaw was shot injured by

the firing of his own accomplices while the other two managed to escape from the scene.

The injured outlaw succumbed to injuries when he was being taken to hospital, however, the body was identified as Ali Sher Dhudi s/o Shakeel Dhudi resident of Village 19/WB. He was wanted to police in different cases of murder, attempt to murder, dacoity, robbery and other heinous crimes, police sources added.

In another incident, Danawal police arrested a notorious criminal Nafees resident of Faisalabad who was involved in a dacoity

case at GOR Chowk. The police was taking him to a place for recovery when three unidentified armed outlaws started firing on the police party to get their fellow released.

During the exchange of fire, the arrested criminal was killed by the firing of his fellows while the attackers managed to escape from the scene. The criminal was wanted to police in various cases of dacoity, robbery, murder, attempt to murder and other crimes.

Raids were being conducted to arrest the escaped criminals, police sources added.

## Eid special discount on handicrafts items opened

SUKKUR (APP): A Consultant of World Bank, Dr Seema along with Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO), Muhammad Dital Kalhoro inaugurated eid special discount offer upto 60% off on all stock variety of hand made products of Sartoon Sang Crafts at the premises of the SRSO main complex Sukkur on Sunday.

Dr Seema, visited over all the range of products

overall and appreciated the efforts of SRSO to work with women rural artisans of Sindh.

She said that this will not only promote traditional handicrafts but also empower rural women artisans.

On the occasion, CEO Kalhoro said that the handicrafts were purely made by village women who would receive the entire proceeds from the sale of their products.

A number of handicrafts

products have been put on display textile products, fashion apparel, embroidered garments, hand bags, traditional items made from date palm leaves and wheat straw, hand crafted jewels, wall hanging and key chains pulled large crowds at the first day while it will continued till holy month of Ramadan.

On the occasion, Manager, Crafts Enterprises and Development Riaz Jalalani, Ms Hafeeza Bozdar,



Caretaker Minister Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi offering fateha for departed soul of late Haji Rahim Syed.

### Minister condoles over death of Rahim Syed

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Excise and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi Sunday visited village Sheikh Kalay on Katlang Road in Mardan and expressed his condolence to the family members of progressive farmer Haji Rahim Syed who breathed his last the other day.

The Minister stayed there for some time and expressed heartfelt sympathies with the deceased's sons Syed Manaf Commissioner In-land Revenue, Zakir Muhammad Collector Customs, Shakir Muhammad Additional Collector Customs and the bereaved family.

The minister offered Fateha for the departed soul and prayed for the eternal peace of late Haji Rahim Syed in the life hereafter.

### DPO visits Church to review security

KOHAT (APP): District Police Officer Shahzada Umar Abbas Babar visited the Catholic Church on Sunday to review Easter security at night.

DSP City Sadat Khan and other police officers also accompanied him on the occasion.

During the visit, he made a detailed inspection of the security arrangements in and around the church premises.

The district police chief also met leaders of the Christian community and church administrators.

DPO Shahzada Umar Abbas Babar instructed the police personnel on duty to remain alert at all times and use bullet proof jackets and helmets during duty.

He exhorted the police officers and men to adopt all precautionary measures and focus all their attention on the protection of life and property of the people and the establishment of law and order.

### AC imposes fines on shopkeepers for violating

ABBOTTABAD (APP): District administration Abbottabad Sunday continued its operation regarding price control in Ramadan.

Assistant Commissioner HQs Saqleen Saleem visited markets in Supply, Jinnahabad, Mansehra Road and adjacent areas to implement the official rate list. The AC inspected fruit and vegetables, general stores, chicken, and meat shops and imposed heavy fines on shopkeepers for violating the rate list.

The district administration also took notice of tinted glasses, fancy number plates, unnecessary decorations, extra bumpers, stairs and unnecessary LED lights in vehicles.

The team under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner Abbottabad Saqlain Salim along with the traffic police, inspected the vehicles near the Havellian Motorway Interchange. It removed black sheets, and fancy number plates from more than 30 vehicles for violating the law.

## 114 candidates in Attock submitted nomination papers

ATTOCK (APP): A total of 114 candidates submitted their nomination papers in the five provincial constituencies PP1 to PP5 of Attock district, out of which only Rah-E-Haq Party candidate Allamah Ifthikhar Ahmad Faruqi from Pindi Gheib constituency submitted his nomination papers rejected.

There are 113 candidates, including Chairman PTI Imran Khan's close friend former SAPM Malik Amin Aslam, his son Malik Shamsheer Aslam, former provincial minister PMLN ticket holder Jahangir Khanzada, the leader of Major Group MNA Major

(Rtd) Tahir Sadiq's son Zain Elahi PP-3, are very popular in constitutions.

16 candidates in PP-1, 24 candidates in PP-2, 24 candidates in PP-3, 23 candidates in PP-4, 26 candidates in PP-5 the papers are accepted.

District Returning Officer for Attock is Rao Atif Raza & District Election Commissioner Noor Khattab will supervise the election process.

**Training workshop held for presiding officers, senior assistant presiding officers**

A training workshop was organized in Jinnah Hall of the district council here

Sunday to prepare for the Punjab Assembly elections in Attock.

Ishaq Khan Marwat and Mrs. Shaheen Ghazal, expert trainers of Election Commission of Pakistan Islamabad, gave training to 32 male and female presiding officers and senior assistant presiding officers of Attock district.

Later, they will train the officers and staff participating in the election process in five constituencies of the Punjab Assembly.

On this occasion, Rana Asad Amin of District Election Commission Attock and other officers were also present.

## Addl IG for use of scientific methods in investigation

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Additional Inspector General Police for South Punjab, Maqsood-ul-Hassan has emphasized the need to avail modern information technology and scientific methods to investigate cases lodged at police stations.

According to a spokesman for Bahawalpur Police, Additional IGP for South Punjab, Maqsood-ul-Hassan visited DPO Bahawalpur Office where he held a meeting with Regional Police Officer, Bahawalpur, Raey Babar Saeed, District Police Officer, Bahawalpur, Syed Muhammad Abbas and senior officials of the Police Department.

The Additional IGP reviewed performance of Investigation Officers, SDPOs, SHOs and other police officials. He also reviewed pace of work in investigation into FIRs and

tracing out whereabouts of the criminals besides arresting them. He urged the police officials must avail modern information technology and scientific methods in investigation process and tracing out the whereabouts of the suspects.

Speaking to the police officials, he said that modern information technology and scientific devices had become need of hour which helped Police Department to trace out the whereabouts of criminals and to arrest them timely.

He assigned the task to SDPOs to accelerate the pace of investigation into FIRs and to ensure arrest of the criminals who could not be taken into custody so far. "It is duty of the police officials to ensure arrest of the criminals wanted in heinous crimes including murder and robberies without further delay," the Additional

IG said. He asked the senior police officials to follow any development in investigation and other process carried out in FIRs.

The Additional IGP for South Punjab also held a meeting with the "Ghazi" police officials and personnel who suffered injuries when they were on duty and engaged in actions against criminal mafias. He appreciated their bravery and role against criminals.

He ensured that the Central Police Headquarters would take steps for the welfare of Ghazi police officials and their families. He also issued directives on their applications in order to resolve their legitimate problems immediately.

Meanwhile, show cause notices were issued to the police investigation officials who showed low performance in investigation into FIRs.

## Over 35 fraudsters booked in Multan

MULTAN (APP): District administration has initiated strict monitoring against swindler mafia at the flour sale points and got registered cases against over 35 cheaters who found involved in misappropriation of government flour during last ten days.

The ten people involved in swindling were arrested from various flour centers while receipts and identity cards were recovered.

The accused were found involved in embezzlement of government flour by making fake and tampered receipts. Lohari Gate police station registered case and started the legal action.

Speaking on this occasion, DC said that over 40 people involved in embezzlement of flour have been arrested from the centers so far. The fake identity cards and swindling cases were registered against the accused and recovery was also made. Mr Umer said that the double checking of receipts has been devised at all the centers.

The action would continue against the fraudsters as each flour bag of government flour was given of deserving people.

**Food dept procured over 5581 metric ton wheat so far in Multan division:** Food department has procured 5581.895

metric ton wheat during the ongoing wheat procurement drive 2023-24 so far as over six lac metric ton wheat procurement target set across Multan division.

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

He said that the gunny bags distribution process was also underway through 48 wheat procurement centers and 54794.9 metric ton gunny bags have been distributed among growers so far which is 8.42 percent of the total.

He informed that the wheat procurement drive has been started into two districts of Multan division including Lodhran and Multan as harvesting start there due to early wheat sowing.

DD Food informed that 4,83,058 metric ton wheat storage would be done at open places while 1,55,449 metric ton of wheat storage in covered places across the division.

Similarly, 1,84,558 metric ton wheat target set for Multan district, 95,764 metric ton for Lodhran, 1,28,185 metric ton for Vehari and 2,30,000 metric ton wheat to be procured in Khanewal district.

The wheat procurement drive would continue till completion of the target

while Rs 3900 per maund rated fixed by the government, he concluded.

### Secretary, DC inspect free flour distribution

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Secretary Auqaf Punjab Dr. Syed Tahir Raza Bukhari and Deputy Commissioner Bahawalpur Zaheer Anwar Jappa on Sunday visited free flour distribution centers established at Dring Stadium and Model Bazaar Bahawalpur.

Secretary Auqaf Dr. Syed Tahir Raza Bukhari said that the process of flour distribution should be made easier so that eligible persons do not face any problems. He said that flour bags should be provided to senior citizens on a priority basis.

He also asked the people about the arrangements related to flour distribution.

Deputy Commissioner Bahawalpur Zaheer Anwar Jappa said that provincial ministers and secretaries are playing an active role in monitoring the distribution of free flour under the Ramadan relief package.





## Migrants die in new wrecks off Tunisia, Morocco

TUNIS (AFP/APP): Twenty-seven migrants from sub-Saharan Africa are dead or missing and 53 others were rescued after two flimsy boats sank off Tunisia's coast during attempts to reach Europe, an official said.

The incidents are the latest of several over the past few weeks, and came after Tunisian officials reported a five-fold increase in rescues compared with the first quarter of last year.

In Morocco, 11 migrants drowned when their makeshift boat sank off the west coast, media reports said, adding that the dead were eight Moroccans and three sub-Saharanans trying to reach Spain's Canary Islands.

One migrant was reported to have been rescued.

There was no immediate confirmation of the reports from the Moroccan authorities.

In Tunisia, Faouzi Masmoudi, the court spokesman in Sfax city, told AFP that four people died, three were missing and another three dozen were saved in the latest tragedy off the country's coast on Saturday.

"There was a new shipwreck this morning -- four bodies were recovered from the beach at Sfax and three other people are missing. Another 36 were saved," Masmoudi said.

He said that another vessel with 37 people aboard went down after setting off from Tunisia's coast before it "sank on Friday afternoon", and that 20 people were unaccounted for.

Citing witness accounts, he added that 17 people were rescued from Friday's incident.

Enquiries have begun into both incidents, Masmoudi said.

He said the objective was to "find out the organisers behind these attempted crossings in boats made from metal sheeting which don't even offer minimum safety conditions but are cheaper to make than wooden ones". Tunisia's shores, only about 150 kilometres (90 miles) from the Italian island of Lampedusa, are increasingly being used as a springboard for often per-



ilous attempts by West Africans, Sudanese and others to reach safety and better lives in Europe.

Saturday's sinking was at least the seventh since the beginning of March, according to an AFP tally, in incidents which have left around 100 people dead or missing.

The latest cases add to the more than 14,000 migrants which Tunisia's coastguard said on Friday it had intercepted on their way to Europe between January and March.

That is more than five times the number from the first quarter of 2022, official data showed.

"Coast guard patrols prevent 501 clandestine attempts to cross the maritime border and rescued 14,406 (migrants) including 13,138 from sub-Saharan African countries," between January 1 and March 31, the coastguard said in a statement.

That is up from 2,532 intercepted in the same period last year, including 1,657 from sub-Saharan Africa, National Guard spokesman Houcem Eddine Jebabli told AFP.

"The number is well up, because many more people are trying to leave," he said.

Dozens of migrants drowned in a

string of incidents last month after comments in February by Tunisian President Kais Saied.

He ordered officials to take "urgent measures" to tackle irregular migration, claiming without evidence that "a criminal plot" was under way to change Tunisia's demographic make-up. The comments led to a wave of evictions and violence against black migrants. Tunisia itself is in the throes of a long-running socio-economic crisis, with spiralling inflation and persistently high joblessness.

Tunisians are also among the migrants trying to reach Italian shores. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni last month urged greater support for the North African country.

European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell warned that a Tunisian collapse "economically or socially" could trigger a new flow of migrants to Europe -- an assessment rejected by Tunis. An EU delegation visited Tunisia in late March to examine the situation and discuss cooperation over irregular migration. According to the Italian interior ministry, more than 14,000 migrants have landed in Italy since the start of the year, compared with just over 5,300 during the same period last year.

### 40 pct of Japan nursery schools fall short of capacity

TOKYO (Xinhua/APP): At least 40 percent of nursery schools in Japan failed to meet their April 2023 enrollment quota, due partly to a shrinking demand for childcare as a result of the declining birthrate, according to a recent Yomiuri Shimbun survey.

The survey was conducted in February and March on 109 prefectural capitals, government ordinance-designated cities, Tokyo's 23 wards, and heartland cities.

A total of 103 valid responses were received, according to the Japanese newspaper.

Of the roughly 18,000 nursery schools overseen by 103 local governments, about 6,800 failed to meet their intake quotas in the first round of admission screenings for April, the survey showed.

Apart from the falling birthrate, the lack of childcare workers and parents' preferences for certain facilities are believed to be attributed to the shortfall, it said.

The number of applicants fell 2.3 percent from last year to a total of 286,400. Some 71 municipalities reported a decrease, with 57 citing a "declining preschool population."

When asked what the challenges were regarding capacity issues, 43 municipalities said some nurseries were unable to fulfill their capacity due to a lack of childcare workers.

### Philippine residential fire kills 7

I S L A M A B A D (Xinhua/APP): Seven people, including a two-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy, died late Saturday night when a fire swept a residential community in Rizal province, east of Metro Manila, Philippine police said on Sunday.

The fire broke out before 10 p.m. local time on Saturday in Taytay town and spread fast in the densely packed neighborhood of old houses, engulfing over 40 houses before it was declared under control more than an hour later.

The victims were trapped in their house at the end of the street, and the bodies were found on the kitchen floor and inside the bathroom, according to the police.

The fire also left more than 60 families homeless. The Bureau of Fire Protection is investigating the cause of the fire.

### Iran successfully tests kamikaze drone

TEHRAN (Internews): Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has successfully tested a homemade long-range, high-precision kamikaze drone equipped with a 50-kilogram warhead, said an official on Sunday.

Ali Kouhestani, the head of the Research and Self-Sufficiency Jihad Organization of the IRGC's Ground Force, announced during an interview with the semi-official Tasnim news agency.

The unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), named "Meraj-532," has a range of 450 kilometers, and is capable of flying at a maximum altitude of 12,000 feet for three straight hours, said Kouhestani, noting that the drone can hit targets with pinpoint accuracy.

The suicide drone is equipped with a piston engine and can take off from a vehicle, Kouhestani added.

He said the UAV has a 50-kg warhead and can be assembled and prepared for flight easily, making it suitable for rapid reaction operations.

Iran has made significant progress in the area of manufacturing UAVs over the past years.

The country is currently producing drones capable of carrying out a wide range of missions.

## Marseille building collapse injures five, fire hampers search

MARSEILLE (AFP/APP): The collapse of a four-storey residential building in Marseille on Sunday left at least five people from surrounding structures injured, but a fire was preventing rescue workers in their search for victims, officials said.

The collapse of the building in the port city in southern France occurred around 12:40 am (2240 GMT), Marseille mayor Benoit Payan told reporters, damaging parts of the two surrounding buildings. So far, five people were injured from two residences next to the collapsed building in the central La Plaine district, he said, but the fire in the rubble was "ongoing". "(The fire) is extremely difficult to control.. The firefighters are judging minute by minute how best to put out this fire because there are potentially people alive inside," Payan said.

"We have to be prepared to have victims in this terrible tragedy."

The streets around the

collapsed building were cordoned off and choked with dust. Firefighters could be seen attempting to work their way through the building debris.

"We are trying to speed up the (search and rescue operations) because time is of essence," but the search dogs cannot keep up in the heat, said the commander of the Marseille marine firefighters, Lionel Mathieu. It remains unclear how many residents were in the collapsed building, authorities said. But rescue workers are in a race against time to evacuate damaged neighbouring buildings also at risk of collapse. "At the moment, we are clearing the buildings next door, taking care not to endanger the people who could be beneath the rubble," the mayor said.

In the surrounding buildings, more than 30 residents were "affected", while five were injured. All evacuees were currently sheltering in schools and nurseries.

Regional prefect

Christophe Mirmand told AFP there were "strong suspicions" that an explosion caused the collapse, possibly a gas leak.

A late-night food vendor working on the street said "everything shook" during what sounded like an explosion. "We saw people running and there was smoke everywhere," said Aziz, who declined to give his last name.

Gilles, who lives on a side street near the fallen building, told AFP the sound of the crash "was huge". "It sounded like an explosion," said Gilles, also declining to provide his last name. Another major structural collapse occurred in Marseille in November 2018, when two dilapidated buildings in the working-class district of Noailles caved in, killing eight people. The accident cast a light on the city's housing standards. But authorities appeared to rule out structural issues in the latest collapse, in a neighbourhood known for its bars and nightlife.

## Macron says Europe should not follow U.S. or Chinese policy over Taiwan

PARIS (Reuters): French President Emmanuel Macron said in comments published on Sunday that Europe had no interest in an acceleration of the crisis over Taiwan and should pursue a strategy independent of both Washington and Beijing.

Macron has just returned from a three-day state visit to China, where he received a warm welcome from President Xi Jinping. China began drills around Taiwan on Saturday in anger at President Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Kevin McCarthy on Wednesday.

China views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory and has never renounced the use of force to bring the island under its control. Taiwan's government strongly objects to China's claims.

Macron said Europe should not accelerate the conflict but take the time to build its position as a third pole between China and the United States in comments to French newspaper Les Echos and Politico made during his visit to China.

"The worst thing would be to think that

we Europeans must become followers on this topic and adapt to the American rhythm or a Chinese overreaction," Politico quoted him as saying.

Europe must better fund its defence industry, develop nuclear and renewable energy and reduce dependence on the U.S. dollar to limit its reliance on the United States, both media outlets quoted him as saying. The joint interview was given on a flight on Friday between Beijing and the city of Guangzhou.

On Friday, an adviser to Macron told reporters in Guangzhou that Xi and Macron had a "dense and frank" discussion on the issue of Taiwan during their meetings.

"The president's feeling is that we should be careful there's no accident or an escalation of tensions (that could lead) to the Chinese going on the offensive," the Elysée adviser said.

Macron travelled to China with a 50-strong business delegation including Airbus and nuclear energy producer EDF, which signed deals during the visit.

## Texas governor seeks pardon of man convicted of murder in Black Lives Matter shooting

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN (Reuters): Texas Governor Greg Abbott said on Saturday he is seeking the pardon of an Uber driver convicted of murder a day earlier in the July 2020 shooting death of a man at a Black Lives Matter protest in downtown Austin, the state capital.

Abbott, in a post on Twitter, said he will pardon Daniel Perry, 37, a U.S. Army sergeant, as soon as a request from the parole board "hits my desk." The Republican governor noted that he can grant pardons only on the recommendation of the state's Board of Pardons and Paroles, but that he is allowed to request pardons.

The case hinged on whether the shooting was in self-defense. A jury found on Friday that Perry, who is white, shot and killed Garrett Foster, a 28-year-old white man, who was carrying an AK-47, according to the Austin American-Statesman newspaper.

Perry was driving in the city the night of the shooting and turned his Uber vehicle onto a street where a Black Lives Matter crowd was marching, according to media. Perry stopped, and several protesters including Foster approached his vehicle. Protesters told police that they feared they were being assaulted with the vehicle, according to media accounts. Perry's defense team claimed the weapon was leveled at him and he had no choice but to fire his pistol in self-defense, the newspaper reported. Neither of Perry's attorneys was immediately available for comment by phone or email. Perry was convicted of murder after the jury deliberated for 17 hours in the eight-day trial, according to media accounts.

"I will work as swiftly as Texas law allows regarding the pardon of Sgt. Perry," Abbott wrote on Twitter.

"Texas has one of the strongest 'stand your ground' laws of self-defense that cannot be nul-

lified by a jury or progressive district attorney," he said. "Additionally, I have already prioritized reining in rogue District Attorneys, and the Texas Legislature is working on laws to achieve that goal."

Jose Garza, the district attorney for Travis County, where the case was tried and where Austin is located, is a Democrat, and has been in office since Jan. 1, 2021. When the verdict was read, Perry buried his head into the chest of one of his lawyers and sobbed, the Austin American-Statesman reported.

"We're happy with the verdict. We're very sorry for his family as well. There's no winners in this," said Stephen Foster, the victim's father, according to the newspaper.

Perry faces life in prison and is due to be sentenced by State District Court Judge Clifford Brown on Tuesday, according to online court records for the 147th District Court in Travis County, Texas.

## Canadian minister condemns hate crime at mosque

TORONTO (INP): Canada's Trade Minister Mary Ng condemned on Saturday a hate crime at a mosque, saying the incident, which an Islamic society said had apparently involved an attempt to tear a copy of the Holy Quran, had no place in Canadian society.

The Islamic Society of Markham (ISM) said in a statement that an individual had come into the mosque in Markham, 30 kilometres north of Toronto, on Thursday and apparently torn a cove of the Holy Quran, ranted at worshippers, and then tried to ram them with his vehicle.

"Deeply disturbed to hear of the violent

hate crimes and racist behaviour at the Islamic Society of Markham," Ng said in a post on Twitter.

She did not give details of the incident, but said: "This violence and Islamophobia has no place in our communities."

Muslims see any attempt to damage the Holy Quran as blasphemous because they consider the book to be the literal word of God. The incident comes during Ramadan, when worshippers throng to mosques. Thousands of people attend the mosque at Markham, the society said.

The National Council of Canadian Muslims said in a post on Twitter it was "greatly distressed" by the incident.

## Pope Francis: Easter Mass brings relief to public after pontiff's illness



VATICAN CITY (BBC): In the early hours on a stunning Easter morning in Vatican City, thousands of people from around the world waited to be let into St Peter's Square for Pope Francis' Mass.

Once access was opened, nuns and priests were among those who ran to secure a good vantage point, in a square bedecked with nearly 40,000 flowers donated by the Netherlands.

Just days ago they may have had doubts about whether Pope Francis, 86, would be well enough to attend Holy Week events at all. Recent complaints of breathing difficulties had

led to an untimely spell in hospital. Since being discharged after what was determined to be a bout of bronchitis, Pope Francis has managed to fulfil most of his commitments, leading Mass on Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

But for the first time since becoming pope in 2013, he did miss the Via Crucis ceremony on the evening of Good Friday at Rome's Colosseum, which commemorates the final hours in the life of Jesus.

At other points during the week the Pope had appeared tired and sometimes breathless.

It all meant that many who had come to St Peter's Square today spoke of their concerns about how the Pope might look and sound.

In the end, he appeared untroubled through the 75-minute long Mass.

But it was immediately afterwards that he seemed particularly energised, moving along a row of cardinals in his wheelchair to greet and smile and speak with them, before taking to his open-top vehicle to wave to the crowds.

"The Pope looked in really good health," said Sally, who was visiting from Maidenhead, in the UK, with her husband and two children.

"The crowd was encouraging him along, but he looked happy and it was great to see him in fine spirits." Eliana, from Liguria in north-western Italy, said: "I was very worried when he was in hospital and I kept informed because he's so special. He wanted to fulfil all his commitments for this Holy Week, and to see him here you realise just how strong he is."

The last of those commitments was an appearance at the main balcony of St Peter's Basilica to deliver his "Urbi et Orbi" blessing - to "The City and the World."

In it, he spoke of his "deep concern" over the recent flare-up of violence between Israelis and Palestinians, praying for peace in Jerusalem and beyond. Pope Francis has faced criticism from some Ukrainians in the past for seeming to conflate their suffering with that being experienced by Russians.

He prayed to "help the beloved Ukrainian people on their journey towards peace", and also to "shed the light of Easter upon the people of Russia".

And with that, as he disappeared from the view of the estimated 100,000 who had come to see him, Pope Francis had successfully negotiated the toughest week in his calendar.

## King Charles joined by family for first Easter service as monarch

LONDON (BBC): The King and other senior royals have attended their first Easter Sunday service at Windsor Castle since the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

Charles was accompanied by Camilla, the Queen Consort, with his siblings the Princess Royal and the Duke of York immediately behind them.

The Prince and Princess of Wales were also at the St George's Chapel service, with all three of their children. Last year, only Prince George and Princess Charlotte joined them.

But on Sunday, Prince Louis - their youngest, at the age of four - held his mother's hand for the walk to the chapel, in the spring sunshine. The family was colour-coordinated



ed in shades of blue, with Charles and Camilla also wearing dark blue outfits.

Other royals at the traditional Easter Sunday Mattins included the new Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh - Edward and Sophie - with their son James, the Earl of Wessex.

Princess Eugenie - who

is expecting her second child this summer - attended with her husband Jack Brooksbank, along with her sister Princess Beatrice and her husband Edoardo Mapelli Mozzi.

Zara and Mike Tindall were joined by their two eldest children, daughters Mia and Lena, and her brother Peter Phillips.

The 15th Century chapel where the service was held is the late Queen's final resting place. She is buried in its tiny King George VI Memorial Chapel, alongside the late Prince Philip and her parents George VI and the Queen Mother.

It is now less than a month until Charles's coronation at Westminster Abbey. Sunday also marks the 18th anniversary of his marriage to Camilla.

The pair left the chapel separately, with Camilla stopping to receive a posy of flowers before waving to members of the public and wishing them a Happy Easter as she got into a car.

As the King left a few minutes later, he received a round of applause from the crowd.



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# Political instability and role of influentials

Recently, President Dr. Arif Alvi returned the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023 for the reconsideration of the Parliament, to be set in line with the provisions of Article 75 of the Constitution. The president observed that Bill’s prima-facie travels beyond the competence of the Parliament and can be assailed as colourable legislation. The President was of the view that the provisions of the Constitution cannot be amended by ordinary law as the Constitution is a father of laws, an embodiment of fundamental principles, and law above other laws.

Pakistan’s ongoing political and constitutional crises are worsening expeditiously with every passing day, because the warring political factions, combatant politicians, as well as the people wearing judges’ robes are not ready to give in to their personal ego and abide by their official code of conduct in a larger interest of the nation. Unfortunately, the contesting political groups always acted selfishly and brought political issues to the court to manipulate the law and get verdicts of their own choice. Inter alia, the courts fell prey to the Politicians’ scheme in an effort for constitutional evaluation of political strategies that attracted controversies, discredited courts, and defame adjudicators, while encouraging the political strategists to use unfair means to get relief from the judiciary that was not possible otherwise. Meanwhile, the selective appreciation of the court decisions, harassment of the judges, and politicization of the jury became tools for the politicians that hurt the core system of the judiciary.

In fact, the repercussions of the current political tussle had reached all nooks and corners of the country and badly affects all aspects of our national life. Historically, framing politically motivated legislation is not a new phenomenon and all previous governments passed legislation to comprehend their political goals and protect their party interest. The ruling coalition accused a specific bench of judges of prejudice and favoritism and having played on behalf of the opposition by means of suo motu actions and court verdicts, thus the government proposed changes to the constitution to slash the powers of the Chief Justice of Pakistan to create a so-called level playing field for themselves. Although, the President blocked the government’s bid yet the treasury is set to get it down through the joint sessions of the parliament on Monday.

In fact, the Constitution of the country has become a mere piece of document, as the political elite blatantly changes the laws by taking advantage of its majority in the parliament. Previously, President Alvi blocked the National Accountability (Second Amendment) bill and Election Amendment Bill to rescue the PTI’s long-held legacies of Electronic voting and unrestricted accountability, now Presidency returned a judicial amendment unsigned. Apparently, both warring groups are using their public offices for the enhancement of their party agendas, the coalition government is protecting the PDM narrative while President firmly standing with PTI’s manifesto.

During the ongoing dogfight between the parties, people’s trust has largely eroded in the public institutions and political leadership which persistently added to the public issues and encouraged undemocratic norms and dictatorial values in national politics. The irrational conduct of the political stakeholders has stymied unimaginable political instability, while persistent intolerance and clash, absence of debate, and dialogue are continuously widening the gap between the contenders. In fact, Political stakeholders must abandon the politics of hate, lies, and propaganda by taking a principled course of mutual respect, national well-being, and public interest so a constructive political activity could revive, that strengthens democratic institutions and ensures peace and tranquility in the country.

# This Easter, the resurrection of a new Middle East might be upon us

For the first time in decades, winds of hope are blowing across the Middle East this Easter. And the timing could not have been more significant for Arab Christians celebrating Easter Sunday today, Muslims who have been fasting through the ongoing month of Ramadan, and Jews who have just celebrated Passover.

The Beijing-backed Saudi-Iran peace deal has just taken a step forward with the foreign ministers of both countries officially signing the pact into existence last Thursday. Upon implementation, not only will we see a restoration of diplomatic ties, resumption of flights, and issuing of visas, but also an agreement to non-aggression and respecting sovereignty which might resolve several long-standing regional disputes.

Should Tehran play ball, the Saudi-Iran agreement could enable both regional

powers to discuss how to help Arab countries which have long suffered due to the presence of Iranian militias. Essentially, this could mean better lives for people in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

However, the deal has already reflected positively on Yemen, where we are seeing a truce which has so far held for the longest time since the conflict erupted. We are also hearing of Saudi-Omani efforts to ride the current positive wave and have a shot at a permanent peace agreement between the warring factions within Yemen which, if signed, would hopefully end the conflict and redirect efforts toward rebuilding and rehabilitation.

Last year, we saw a reset of Saudi-UAE, and Egyptian ties with Türkiye. This suggests that whatever happens in the upcoming Turkish elections, relations will have a chance to improve under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan or

Faisal J. Abbas

start on a fresh and positive note with a new leader.

And in 2021, as a result of the AIUla Agreement, the rift with neighboring Qatar ended the boycott of that country just in time for the 2022 World Cup which has been described as one of the best ever hosted.

Indeed, what we are seeing is a Saudi-led “Tsunami of Peace,” as Saudi political analyst Salman Al-Ansari described it to this newspaper in a recent interview. If this momentum continues, I believe we will be seeing the manifestation of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s vision that the Middle East can become the “new Europe,” something he alluded to as his hope for the region during a panel at the 2018 Future Investment Initiative conference in Riyadh.

The only bad news this Easter is unfortunately coming from the Holy Land

itself. Sadly, since January the situation between Israelis and Palestinians has deteriorated, mainly due to the swearing in of an ultra right-wing government spearheaded by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The continuous provocations, from a serving member of Israel’s Cabinet who said there was no such thing as the Palestinian people, to the Israeli military’s attacking and arresting Muslim worshippers praying in Al-Aqsa Mosque, are only making things more complicated.

In fact, as I have repeatedly said in this column, such actions by the Israeli government embarrass those Arab countries that signed the Abraham Accords in good faith, and create more difficulties convincing those that did not — such as Saudi Arabia — that embracing Israel before resolving the

Palestinian issue will encourage the Jewish state to become a more rational player.

Naturally, the extent of such disruption of the status quo would also trigger escalation in areas such as Lebanon and Gaza. Of course, Israel will — rightly so — say it has a right to defend itself, but there is an overwhelming consensus among pundits and observers that the recent provocative behavior in Al-Aqsa is an attempt to distract attention from the huge Israeli protests and anger at Netanyahu’s proposed judicial changes.

Regardless of how Netanyahu’s team sees the situation, or what they think of the Palestinian leadership, there is a genuine opportunity to build on the momentum now evident in the region, should they want to. It is really surreal and unfortunate that the existing dovish Arab push is paired with an extremely hawkish government in

Israel. Yet, this might still be turned into an opportunity if Netanyahu manages to display true leadership, rein in the extremists, and convince the far right that peace is the best and most secure way forward.

If the Saudi-Iran peace deal sticks, then Israel might find itself the only missing piece in a new regional map that is built on peace and prosperity. I genuinely advise them to compare the short-term gains they win from increased right-wing provocations to what is at stake in the long run. They should remember that in a 2022 interview with The Atlantic, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said that the Jewish state could be a potential ally of Saudi Arabia.

“We don’t look at Israel as an enemy, we look to them as a potential ally, with many interests that we can pursue together... But we have to solve some issues before we get to that.”

# Japan’s G7 agenda emerges in face of geopolitical gale

Andrew Hammond

Japan’s G7 in 2023 has been dominated by the geopolitical gale that continues to blow from Ukraine. Yet the outlines of the economic agenda have become much clearer in April.

One of the defining priorities of Japan’s chairing of the event will be promoting — ahead of COP28 in Dubai this November — the energy transition. And this will be a key feature of an April 15-16 ministerial meeting of the Western club. Tokyo has long been a leader on this important agenda and has developed numerous green alliances with powers across the world, including the EU, to try to deliver on decarbonization while securing a stable energy supply, and promoting economic growth.

Economic security, including export controls, is another key G7 economic platform this year for Japan. These issues were prominent in last Tuesday’s first meeting of G7 trade ministers in 2023 with the nations committing to enhance their outreach to international partners, including the Global South, in order to boost supply chain resiliency.

The move comes soon after Tokyo announced that it will curtail exports of semiconductor manufacturing equipment. This echoes US moves in this area designed to impede Beijing’s defense and wider technological momentum that the G7 ministers said on Tuesday threaten “global, regional, and national security.”

A broader issue that appears central to Japan’s

G7 presidency, at the prompting of the US, is economic security, particularly in a context of challenging coercion from authoritarian powers. An example sometimes cited here is China’s increasing tariffs on key Australian imports after the latter’s

***This G7 emphasis on economic security shows how, even though the body is most associated with financial affairs, its role as a geopolitical lynchpin has long been key too. And this is assuming paramount importance some 14 months into the Ukraine war. The Western club is spearheading the massive international package of sanctions against Moscow; has pledged never to recognize any redrawn boundaries for Ukraine; provided tens of billions in military and humanitarian assistance; and is currently looking at plans to rebuild Ukraine in what would be a mini-version of the postwar Marshall Plan that saw the US-backed rebuilding of postwar Europe. As well as this year’s G7 super priority of Ukraine, a second key focus for Japan in 2023 is what Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has called the “absolutely unacceptable” threat of nuclear proliferation, and it is therefore no coincidence that the leadership summit is being held in Hiroshima where the US detonated a nuclear bomb in 1945. These proliferation concerns have been raised recently in Europe with Russia threatening to potentially move atomic weaponry to Belarus.***

government pushed for an international inquiry into the origins of the pandemic.

However, the issue has also come onto the radar screen since the Ukraine war began with the G7 condemning Moscow’s intent to use Europe’s dependence on Russian oil and natural gas as a weapon. For instance, state-owned Gazprom cut gas deliveries last year to numerous nations, including France and Italy, just days after their leaders

were in Kyiv to formally back Ukraine’s bid to join the EU.

The US is already moving forward unilaterally on this agenda with a bill being considered in Congress that would grant the nation’s

president stronger powers to counter Chinese economic coercion. However, the Biden team wants to explore joint G7 and wider economic action.

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threat of nuclear proliferation, and it is therefore no coincidence that the leadership summit is being held in Hiroshima where the US detonated a nuclear bomb in 1945. These proliferation concerns have been raised recently in Europe with Russia threatening to

potentially move atomic weaponry to Belarus.

However, the challenge of proliferation in Japan’s eyes is much broader, including in Asia. For instance, recent North Korean ballistic missile tests have raised concerns of a breakdown in security in the region.

These twin focal points of Japan’s G7 year are only the latest examples of the prominence of geopolitical and security issues in the Western club’s meetings. In

recent years, the body has played a significant orchestration role in the West’s policies.

When Japan last held the G7 chair in 2016, for instance, there was a significant discussion of the geopolitics of the South China Sea. This prompted strong objections from Beijing, which claims much of the South China Sea, and which asserted that the G7 should focus its time on its founding mandate of global economic cooperation.

As this reaction indicates, the G7’s involvement in its geopolitical dialogues has met with significant international criticism from time to time. In this context, it is sometimes asserted, especially by developing countries, that the G7 lacks the legitimacy of the UN to engage in these geopolitical and security issues, and/or is a historical artefact given the rise of powers such as BRICS — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

However, it is not the case that the international security role of the G7 is new. The body helped coordinate Western strategy toward the then-Soviet Union. Its capacity for action was shown when it played an important role in convincing Moscow to pull out the remnants of the Red Army from the Baltic States.

Taken together, this is why the Japan-hosted G7 will be dominated by geopolitics. Moreover, continuing uncertainty over the Ukraine conflict means this security role is not only likely to continue, but could even grow.

# EU on a green roll portends well for COP28

Ranvir S. Nayyar

Of late the EU seems to have been racing toward meeting its commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement. First, on March 25, it announced an agreement with Germany over phasing out sales of cars using fossil fuels by 2035, after weeks of negotiations.

Germany, along with Italy, Poland and Hungary, had been holding out against the phase-out, saying that cars using biofuels, e-fuels, or synthetic fuels should also be exempted from the ban. Now with the agreement in place, the EU is setting limits for carbon emission standards for cars in order to proceed with the phase-out by 2035.

The measure is very important for the EU in meeting its target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and cutting its net greenhouse gas emissions by 55 percent by 2030.

Capitalizing on the rare unanimity in the 27-member bloc, the EU decided to rapidly move toward agreement on yet another sector of the economy that is a major producer of carbon emissions — energy. On March 30, the European Commission announced that it had reached a deal with the EU parliament and the member states to almost double its target for phasing out fossil-fuel-driven energy consumption. Under the new agreement, the share of renewable energy in the

EU’s overall energy consumption will rise to 42.5 percent by 2030, a steep jump from the current level of 22.1 percent.

Yes, certainly, in typical fashion, there is a fudge in the agreement over renewable energy, just as there is for the agreement on cars.

***Despite the shortcomings or fudges, the EU should be commended for raising its own ambitions significantly in cutting greenhouse gas emissions. As one of the largest emitters, both in absolute and in per capita terms, the EU plays an important role in global fortunes in this and other domains. Hence, any cuts achieved by it ahead of its commitments under the Paris Agreement will help the world in moving toward slowing down climate change. Even more significantly, as the EU has made its targets public well before the next round of climate change talks, COP28, gets underway in Dubai at the end of November, it portends well for the negotiations as it gives more than enough time for other countries, especially the big emitters such as the US, China, Canada or Australia — and even India, which though very low in per capita terms is one of the biggest emitters in the world thanks to its 1.4 billion population.***

Due to conflict over whether to accord green energy status to nuclear power, instead of banning identified sources of energy production the agreement sets greenhouse gas emissions intensity as a benchmark for achieving its target. This will allow the participation of a country such as France, which derives 75 percent of its total energy consumption from nuclear power, even though other states, notably

Germany, have railed against nuclear power which they do not consider green or renewable.

Despite the shortcomings or fudges, the EU should be commended for raising its own ambitions

as the EU has made its targets public well before the next round of climate change talks, COP28, gets underway in Dubai at the end of November, it portends well for the negotiations as it gives more than

own enhanced targets well before the talks begin. This would be instrumental in creating a positive and upbeat momentum before delegates begin to gather in Dubai, which could allow the negotiations to get off on a strong footing.

If that happens, it would

make COP28 a meeting where, instead of despondency and differences among countries, which has been a hallmark of climate change talks, there could be a sort of bonhomie and feel-good factor, which is so critical for any negotiation, complex or simple, to succeed.

Besides the upbeat mood, which the delegates can definitely use, it would also allow the delegates to

immediately get to address some of the biggest challenges that the outcomes of past meetings pose for the climate change agreement.

One of the biggest issues is the outcome of the last meeting, which in principle approved setting up a loss and damage fund for developing countries hit by climate change. The delegates in COP27 agreed to set up the fund, but in typical fashion left out all relevant details, such as the total amount of the fund, where the money would come from, and who would be the beneficiaries. The agreement also left the mechanism for doling out funds under the loss and damage fund to be fleshed out at a later date.

Advancing with a loss and damage fund is just one thorny issue to be sorted out at COP28. There is also the issue of what happens if a country misses its commitments for carbon emission cuts, as the current agreement is totally silent on this critical question. The list is far too long to be detailed here. But if the climate change negotiations have to get down to brass tacks and make the Paris Agreement work, they would need all the time and room for maneuver that they can get in Dubai and beyond to address these challenges so that a real and meaningful rollback in the amount of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere can begin.



# In Iraq, a resilient Al-Sudani forges on

As the 20th anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq, marked by hindsight-driven analysis of the past and pessimistic assessments of the future, over-shadows the great strides on a razor-thin edge that Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani's government has made in just over 160 days of its term. Since its term began, Iraq was teetering on the brink as multiple convergent challenges buffeted an overwhelmed republic still unable to find its feet after a chaotic two decades. Difficult questions remain unanswered to date, and comprehensive solutions to Iraq's most pressing issues are still a long way away.

Yet, Iraq — for all its troubles — retains enormous economic and political potential. Most of it, of course, goes largely unrealized as daunting obstacles, many of them self-inflicted, continue constraining the chances of Baghdad successfully navigating its quagmire. As a result, hurdles from the political to the governmental, to economic and even budgetary issues, combine with the cultural and the religious to technological and environmental — leaving very little room for authorities to address the Iraqi public's growing list of needs. Meanwhile, the post-pandemic triple threat of high unemployment, unruly inflation, and disruptions to public service delivery has not made things any easier either, and is partly responsible for the collapse of the previous administration.

Fast-forward to October of last year and Al-Sudani's emergence was hardly surprising in such a chaotic climate, rife with tensions that left an overwhelmed political sphere holding its breath in anticipation and cautious optimism for whatever was next after gross escalations by the Sadrists. To many, Al-Sudani's relative independence from prevailing parties, blocs and loose coalitions made him the perfect candidate to end the Iraqi political crisis and manage a post-Mustafa Al-Kadhimi "reset" of sorts. Critics, on the other hand, remain unconvinced since his proximity to the Shiite-dominated Coordination Framework gives the impression that Al-Sudani is simply going to be a continuation of an entrenched, 20-year-long status quo.

Fortunately, the then prime ministerial candidate was not keen on repeating the mistakes, committing unforced errors and tripping on the same pitfalls that tanked his predecessors. He quickly set about

gaining the trust of not only the Iraqi public but a combative Iraqi parliament as well by presenting a platform that combined immediate demands and hopes of the various forces, movements and blocs in a very divided republic — including the "muqawama" (resistance) and the Sadrist movement. His message

***It is an unenviable position that the new premier finds himself in, since the bulk of his job would seem to be more about managing chaos than governing in line with the declared intentions and priorities for the state. Nonetheless, Al-Sudani has prevailed despite being hobbled by severely limited political capital as he navigates crises on the domestic front, both politically and economically, while also catering to Iraq's reintegration into the region. It may be a little early to unequivocally credit Al-Sudani for relative successes in managing the chaos in Iraq but his use of his own personal advantages has been commendable. A few of these include his past experience in government, a frequently highlighted non-involvement in Iraq's endemic corruption, and balanced speeches that seek full legitimacy and not only from parliament. Al-Sudani also hails from southern Iraq, granting him a geographic affiliation to the country's most impoverished region, and granting it some say in the country's development. Unlike other Iraqi politicians with alleged ties to external actors, Al-Sudani lacks such allegiances and citizenship in another country, which means he is not beholden to any influences, malign or otherwise, actively seeking to influence Iraqi politics or infiltrate its government in the shadow of its intense political malaise. That "distance" from polarizing actors is especially important when aiming for clear, balanced approaches to managing Iraq's external ties, facilitating its regional reintegration and sustained prosperity.***

was not tinged by boisterous populism, often a last resort for aspiring despots. Instead, he pledged to hold provincial council elections, amending the general election law and declared his intent to hold early parliamentary elections, which was enough to rally a Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish coalition's support for his bid to head the government.

However, well-timed speeches, political savvy, and promises of much-needed reform are not enough to "heal" Iraq after many years of political stagnation, loss of trust in public institutions, deteriorating economic conditions, intense polarization, porous security, external meddling

Hafed Al-Ghwell

and the ever-present threat of Daesh's re-emergence. All these challenges were inherited from previous governments, which now make the task of, for instance, holding early local and parliamentary elections very unlikely. Besides, while the Al-Sudani gov-

ernment has broad support from the Coordination Framework, it lacks a large enough parliamentary majority to push through a new electoral law, let alone a comprehensive reform project covering the executive, legislative and the judiciary. Elsewhere, militia groups have not shied away from their intentions to limit the Al-Sudani government's latitude and ability to resist their demands or their weighing in on strategic policy deliberations, security decisions, and even appointments to public offices.

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to be more about managing chaos than governing in line with the declared intentions and priorities for the state. Nonetheless, Al-Sudani has prevailed despite being hobbled by severely limited political capital as he navigates crises on the domestic front, both politically and economically, while also catering to Iraq's reintegration into the region. It may be a little early to unequivocally credit Al-Sudani for relative successes in managing the chaos in Iraq but his use of his own personal advantages has been commendable. A few of these include his past experience in government, a frequently highlighted non-involvement in Iraq's endemic corruption, and balanced speeches that seek full legitimacy and not only from parliament.

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Unlike other Iraqi politicians with alleged ties to external actors, Al-Sudani lacks such allegiances and citizenship in another country, which means he is not beholden to any influences, malign or otherwise, actively seeking to influence Iraqi politics or infiltrate its government in the shadow of its intense political malaise. That "distance" from polarizing actors is especially important when aiming for clear, balanced approaches to managing Iraq's external ties, facilitating its regional reintegration and sustained prosperity. It also affords Al-Sudani the ability to objectively weigh the merits of collaboration and strategic cooperation to better serve Iraqi interests, rather than succumbing to the four-way extraterritorial scramble among the US, Iran and Türkiye.

This seemingly re-emergent Baghdad is currently resisting calls from within the Shiite coalition to divorce Iraq from the US and abruptly end a strategic partnership between the two countries that was outlined within the 2008 Strategic Framework Agreement, guiding Iraq-US cooperation in the diplomatic, military, security and economic spheres. Al-Sudani has insisted on strengthening and balancing relations with key partners as it will contribute significantly toward combating corruption, diversifying Iraq's fossil fuel-dependent economy while simultaneously tackling the country's high rates of poverty, rampant unemployment, as well as worsening food and water insecurity.

Many of Al-Sudani critics, both within and outside Iraq, preface their nay-saying with unrealistic expectations — forgetting rather conveniently: "Rome was not built in a day." Many of Iraq's maladies are an accumulation of a 20-year-long governance vacuum in a country torn by competing interests and visions that mostly fell flat — to the frustration of an exasperated public. Throw in Daesh, the pandemic, unstable global energy prices, climate change-induced droughts, the threat of a breakaway Kurdistan and ceaseless political squabbling, to list a few — the end result is a dangerous powder keg that will take a long time to diffuse before Iraq can regain its footing. What is, therefore, more important is ensuring that the right man is in the right place, with the right set of policies that do not make a mockery of Iraq's woes nor dismiss them — and Mohammed Al-Sudani is that man.



## Change of course: Finland's shift from neutrality

Dr. Diana Galeeva

On Tuesday, Finland officially joined NATO, obtaining the status of the 31st member of the Western alliance. Together with Sweden, Finland applied to become a member in May last year, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Kremlin has already warned about "counter-measures" to Finland's NATO membership. What is next? What does this mean for broader Russia-NATO relations? It is worth considering some of the implications and possible scenarios resulting from these actions.

In the Western press, among the most prevailing narratives is that, as AP puts it, "the move is a strategic and political blow to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin, who has long complained about NATO's expansion toward

behind the two right-wing parties. The conservative Petteri Orpo, leader of the National Coalition Party, is likely to be the next prime minister; the position on NATO is unlikely to change, however. Orpo campaigned strongly on economic issues, vowing to "fix Finland" and its economy. Orpo accused Marin of eroding Finland's economic flexibility due to the energy crisis in Europe, which dramatically affected the country's cost of living. This does suggest that the policy of the newly elected government might focus more on the internal development of the country rather than links with European partners.

At the same time, in his victory speech Orpo said: "First to Ukraine: We stand

km. Russians are sensitive to the shift. A "Stop NATO" demonstration was held outside the US Embassy in Moscow on Tuesday. Alexander Grushko of the Russian Foreign Office said that the country aims to strengthen its military presence in the western and northwestern areas.

Asked about a scenario in which Finland was attacked, Jens Stoltenberg, the NATO chief, said: "Finland will get an iron-clad security guarantee. Article 5 — our collective defense clause 'One for all and all for one' — will now from today apply to Finland." This means both more protection for Finland but also escalating risks, since any incident may lead to greater consequences.

Fortunately, this scenario seems unlikely. Indirect confrontation

***Obviously, this decision may further damage relations between Russia and NATO. The Finnish-Russian border is sensitive. It runs roughly north-south for some 1,340 km, mostly through unhabitated taiga forests and sparsely populated rural areas. It is a significant and difficult zone to patrol. There is also a symbolic aspect, since the new configuration means that the territory of a NATO member will be much closer to Russia's former imperial capital (and major cultural center) - St. Petersburg. The distance from the border is just 435 km. Russians are sensitive to the shift. A "Stop NATO" demonstration was held outside the US Embassy in Moscow on Tuesday. Alexander Grushko of the Russian Foreign Office said that the country aims to strengthen its military presence in the western and northwestern areas. Asked about a scenario in which Finland was attacked, Jens Stoltenberg, the NATO chief, said: "Finland will get an iron-clad security guarantee. Article 5 — our collective defense clause 'One for all and all for one' — will now from today apply to Finland." This means both more protection for Finland but also escalating risks, since any incident may lead to greater consequences.***

Russia and partly used that as a justification for the invasion." On June 17, 2022, US President Joe Biden said: "He (Putin) wanted a sort of Finlandization of NATO. He got the NATO-ization of Finland, instead." This refers to the long-term neutral relations that have existed between Finland and the Soviet Union, as well as modern Russia, prior to the invasion of Ukraine. While Putin may supposedly have hoped that more NATO-leaning countries would adopt a cautious attitude in the face of Russian pressure and proximity concerns.

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by you, with you... We cannot accept this terrible war. And we will do all that is needed to help Ukraine, Ukrainian people, because they fight for us. This is clear." Moreover, the Finnish public's view has changed dramatically since Russia's invasion. According to polls from YLE & Demoskop, in 2017, Finnish citizens were 19 percent in support of NATO membership, while in 2022, 68 percent supported the move. Therefore, at both the leadership and public level, there is a consensus around the significance of the current security concerns.

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between Russia and NATO members is already happening in Ukraine. Notably both sides are working hard to avoid a shift to direct confrontation, which would effectively mean a third world war starting in Europe. Recent nuclear rhetoric has made the devastating possibilities here all the clearer.

However, the problem of relations between Russia and NATO simply won't go away, and has reached ever higher levels of mistrust. "Democracy" versus "autocracy" is a continuing crisis in international relations, and both sides have been forced to consider whether military scenarios may be inevitable. Given this, one option might be to seek to change the venue of the confrontation away from Europe, again seeking indirect means. One of the potential places for continuing indirect great power competition may turn out to be involvement in a conflict between China and Taiwan. But even in this case, a third world war looms large. Perhaps it is time for all sides to call for greater diplomacy and dialogue, before the military posturing gains too much momentum of its own.

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## Israeli crisis has exposed social and political cleavages

In the current, hotter-than-usual cauldron of Israeli society and politics, the main fuel is the ill-intentioned anti-democratic legislation driven by the government which would transfer more power from the judiciary to the unsafe hands of the executive branch. However, as much as the focus is on the so-called judicial reforms, more than ever before, the crisis has exposed deep political and social rifts within Israel that are being exacerbated by a single issue that channels into it much of these divisions as well as the deep-seated malaise and resentment harbored by different parts of Israeli society.

It is right at this point in time to direct much of the effort, even the anger, toward opposing the coalition government's blitz of legislation that will not only deal a huge blow to democracy but will also facilitate corruption at the heart of government, compromise any semblance of good governance and impoverish the country, and is also bound to increase tensions with friends and allies within and beyond the Middle East.

Nevertheless, the battle for the democratic character of the state, which is taking place mainly on the streets but also in the Knesset, the media, the military and every other possible avenue, is about the very character of the country and its people.

On the eve of the 75th anniversary of its independence, many of the unresolved issues that have

always divided Israelis have surfaced after being swept under the carpet for decades, often for the sake of unity in the face of security threats, some more genuine than others, which have often been cynically exploited by unscrupulous politicians to gain and maintain their power.

To begin with, the Zionist dream of forming a Jewish and democratic society, as expressed in the Declaration of Independence, was faced with enormous challenges before the ink of the founding fathers' signatures had dried. It might have been a nice dream, at least for the Zionist movement, of gathering as many Jews as possible from around the world to build a national home, under some rough idea of what Judaism is, in the hope that this would be enough of a foundation on which to build a coherent society. But despite some considerable initial success, cracks soon appeared in the edifice.

Considering the many different strands of Judaism, let alone the fact that for many Jewish-Israelis theirs is more a form of cultural and national identity rather than a religious one, frictions were inevitable.

Moreover, to live up to the ideals and pronouncements of the Declaration of Independence about the equal status of each and every one of its citizens and respecting their diverse identities, Israelis should have recognized from the outset that their Arab-Palestinian minority was

Yossi Mekelberg

bound to identify more with the democratic than the Jewish character of the state, and that this should not diminish in any shape or form their equality under the law, nor result in their being subjected to informal discrimination. These conditions should have been accompanied by full respect for their national, religious and cultural identity, not to mention sensitivity to the terrifying catastrophe of the Nakba that they were forced to endure.

Instead this large minority, one that comprises 20 percent of the population, has always been treated with suspicion and discriminated against instead of being truly integrated. Hence, it is not shocking that many Palestinian-Israelis don't participate in the current protests and have little expectations of any Israeli government, regardless of its political persuasion.

Furthermore, whenever a major issue of profound disagreement surfaces in Israel, as is the case with the current attacks on the checks and balances in the country's governing system, the ethnic divide between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews returns to play a role in the discourse, and often in its nastiest form.

At the best of times this unresolved issue — which originated in the early days of the state when Jews who came from the Arab world were looked down on and suffered discrimination by the country's authorities

and institutions that were dominated by Jews from Central and Eastern Europe — has been a major hurdle in building both nation and state.

In times of crisis this social cleavage is always exploited by right-wing and religious politicians, and by nobody more effectively than Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in order to rally support from the Mizrahis by portraying his political rivals as privileged Ashkenazis who patronize Mizrahi Jews and treat them as second class citizens.

To this end, in the current crisis Netanyahu has greatly exaggerated the fact that the makeup of the Supreme Court is not truly representative of Israeli society's diversity. This is not to argue that discrimination does not take place, or that there is no need for a drive to invest in parts of the society, mainly those from the Middle East, who have been left behind, especially as Israel is now an affluent country though too many of its citizens do not enjoy the fruits of this success. And because Netanyahu's Likud party has been in power for a long time, and Netanyahu has been prime minister since 2009 except for a very short break, they can hardly blame anyone else for this situation.

There is also no doubt that over the years the schism between the country's secular liberal-progressive Jews and its religious Jews has deepened. It would be oversimplistic to describe it as a straightforward



# Macro-economic indicators start improving, says Bilal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Economy and Energy Bilal Azhar Kayani on Sunday said that due to hectic efforts by the incumbent government during the last 08 months, the micro-economic indicators of the national economy had started improving gradually.

Addressing a press conference here, he said at the imposition of Imran government in 2018, the economy was on the path of sustainable economic growth with 6 percent GDP and less than 4 percent inflation. He said that work on energy production projects under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Project was also initiated to produce about 12,000 MW energy.

Besides, a programme with International Monetary Fund (IMF) was completed and an operation against terrorism was launched to eradicate the menace of terrorism from the country.

He said the PML-N government in 2013-18 led by Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, pulled the country out of darkness and put it on a fast track for economic development, creating over 6 million job opportunities.

Then, he said Imran Khan was imposed and during four years of his government, inflation continuously increased, four finance ministers were changed in four consecutive years, adding that over 20 million people were pushed below the poverty line.

Bilal Azhar Kayani said the debt grew by 70 percent from Rs 2, 500 billion to Rs 4,400 billion in four years, which was the highest in

the history of Pakistan. He said the debt taken during Pakistan Muslim League-N tenure was spent on the constitution of motorways, CPEC and maintaining peace and security in the country.

He said that it was a matter of grave concern that the people who had destroyed the economy during the last 4 years were now delivering lectures on the economy.

He said the government, which came into power with a motto to reduce expenses, gave four budgets with a fiscal deficit.

He said for the first time in the history of Pakistan after 1952, the national GDP witnessed negative growth, adding that electricity circular debt soared from Rs 11,00 billion to Rs 2,500 billion and the current account deficit was recorded at Rs 1,700 billion.

He said all the hardships, which were being faced by the people in the country were the result of the IMF program that was initiated by Shaukat Tareen under the directives of Imran Khan. He said they not only negotiated a program with IMF but later they broke the agreement at a time when the foreign exchange reserves of the country were at the lowest level.

Bilal Azhar Kayani said that the current account deficit during the last 8 months narrowed by 68 percent as compared to the corresponding period of last year, whereas the trade deficit also reduced significantly.

Besides, the fiscal deficit came down from 3.4 percent to 2.8 percent, he said adding that there is a primary surplus of 0.9 percent

of GDP this year as compared to a primary deficit of 0.6 percent recorded during last year of PTI tenure.

While condemning the criticism on the national economic policies of the incumbent government by Imran Khan and his economic team, Bilal said the current economic difficulties, including inflation have been directly caused by the disastrous decisions of the Imran Khan government, which destroyed Pakistan's economy in four years and deliberately pushed the country towards default before leaving the government. The current government has averted default and made significant progress towards stabilizing and rebuilding the economy, he added.

"There is a primary surplus of 0.9 percent of GDP this year as compared to a primary deficit of 0.6 percent during last year," he said adding the current economic difficulties, including inflation, have been directly caused by the disastrous decisions of the Imran Khan government which destroyed Pakistan's economy in four years and deliberately pushed the country towards default before leaving the government last year.

"Imran Khan's government not only almost doubled Pakistan's debt but also caused a current account deficit of \$17.4 billion in the fiscal year 2022," he said adding that this figure would have been even higher if the current government had not taken mitigating measures after assuming office in April 2022.

Bilal Azhar said that the

previous government's actions eroded trust in the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The government led by Imran Khan not only broke its promises with IMF to stall the IMF program and push the country towards default, but it also actively tried to sabotage the current government's efforts to revive the IMF program.

However, Bilal said that the government was renegotiating with IMF and other multilateral partners besides restoring relations with them and reached close to staff level agreement.

He said the incumbent government was taking all necessary measures for the 9th Review to pull Pakistan out of the current economic crisis, adding that the technical level agreement with the IMF had been reached and the Staff Level Agreement had been held up because of a lack of assured financing of \$3 billion.

He said that to bridge the external financing gap, one of the friendly countries assured to provide support of \$2 billion and another country would also provide \$1 billion.

The Coordinator said that despite of all the financial constraints, the government was determined to protect underprivileged segments of society and enhance the allocation for Benazir Income Support Program.

Replaying to a question, he said that after the IMF program, the inflows from friendly countries would receive, and exports would strengthen, which would improve external account and enhance the GDP growth.



FAISALABAD: Labourers unloading potatoes sacks from a delivery truck at vegetable market.

## SMEs report improved performance

BEIJING (APP): China's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) registered a further increase in their activities in the first quarter of this year as the country's economy continues its robust recovery, industrial data showed Sunday.

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Index, based on a survey of 3,000 SMEs from eight major industries, came in at 89.3 in Q1, up from 88 in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2022, the China Association of Small and Medium Enterprises said in a monthly report.

The figure, although still lower than the boom-and-bust line of 100, reversed the downward trend seen since the second quarter of 2021.

The sub-indices for all eight major sectors rallied in Q1, with that of the accommodation and catering industry, the information transmission, computer service and software industry, and the transportation, postal and storage industry marking the more significant increases among all sectors tracked.

Thanks to the country's overall recovery momentum and expanding market demand, SMEs were more confident in business development, reflected in their improved market expectations, the association said, adding that their capital shortage had eased.

But the association still cautioned about the difficulties of rising labor and housing costs, calling for efforts to improve the business environment, and maintain the continuity, stability and transparency of government policies.

**China's bulk commodity market sees improving demand in March**

China's bulk commodity market saw improving fundamentals in March with a marked increase in sales as demand rebounded, industrial data showed. The China Bulk Merchandise Index, a gauge of domestic bulk commodity market growth, rose to its highest level since August 2020, according to the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing.

The index stood at 103.4 percent for March, up 0.6 percentage points compared with February.

A reading above 100 indicates expansion, while a reading below 100 reflects contraction.

The sub-indices for bulk commodity supply and sales went up compared with the previous month, while the sub-index for inventory went down.

# Sugar prices continue to skyrocket across country

ISLAMABAD (INP): The price of sugar continues to increase in different cities of the country as the sugar price also jumps to Rs6,000 per 50kg bag in a month in wholesale market.

In Faisalabad, sugar has increased from Rs130 to Rs135 after an increase of Rs40 per kg.

The price of sugar has increased by 20 rupees in Hyderabad whereas it has gone up to Rs120 in the

wholesale market of Karachi and Rs130 per kg in retail.

On the other hand, in Peshawar, sugar has increased by Rs35 to Rs125 per kg in two weeks and the price of molasses has been increased by Rs20 to Rs150 per kg.

In Quetta, one kg of sugar is being sold at Rs125 and in the suburbs at Rs130 per kg. On the other hand, normal quality ghee is

available in Peshawar at Rs450 to Rs490 per kg, while the chicken is being sold at Rs380 per kg with an increase of Rs65 per kg in two weeks.

In Peshawar, the price of fruits has also recorded an increase, with Kino being sold at Rs500 per dozen, Strawberry at Rs400 to Rs450 per kg, Melon at Rs120, Watermelon at Rs70 and Guava Kohati at Rs400 per kg.

## Kashif underlines importance of currency diversity

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman and Chairman Kyrgyzstan Trade House Meher Kashif Younis Sunday underlined the importance of currency diversity with less dependence on US dollar. He asked for promoting global and regional trade in currencies of friendly countries to arrest the fragile economy from tumbling down.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists and traders led by Faran Shahid he said it's high time for Pakistan and dire need of hour to explore on top priorities the avenues of trade in currencies of friendly countries especially with regional economic players to ease the pressure on Pak currency. Besides, he stressed the need for promoting barter trade worldwide to help boost our delicate economy.

He said by reducing their

dependence on the US dollar, countries can reduce the impact of these imbalances on their economies as the BRICS countries have also signed bilateral currency swap agreements, which allow them to trade in their own currencies rather than the US dollar. These agreements have reduced the need for the countries to hold large reserves of US dollars and promoted currency diversity in the global economy, he added.

He said recently China and Brazil reached a deal to trade in their own currencies, instead of the US dollar, which has been the dominant currency in world financial systems since the end of World War II.

He said the abuse of economic sanctions by the US government has also played a significant part in de-dollarization as many countries have been subject to

US sanctions, which can have a significant impact on their economies. By reducing their dependence on the US dollar, these countries will minimize the impact of US sanctions.

Meher Kashif Younis said in addition, the rise of other global powers such as China and the increasing use of alternative currencies such as the euro and the Chinese yuan would challenge the US dollar's dominance in the future.

He said the countries that hold significant amounts of dollars in their foreign reserves are exposed to currency risk, which can be costly and difficult to manage. He said it's good sign that Pakistan and China have also pledged to deepen their economic ties with Pakistan signaling its support for China's efforts to expand the use of the "Renminbi" (RMB) as a global economy.

## PFC to take part in Rwanda International Trade Fair

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) will take part in Rwanda International Trade Fair starting from July 26 to discover business opportunities and explore new markets access for Pakistani products.

Chief Executive Officer PFC Mian Kashif Ashfaq talking, while to a delegation of industrialists led by Zeeshan Elahi Arain CEO Marvel Cables here on Sunday, said that PFC along with Chenone would also participate in this mega event.

He said that Chenone would also exhibit its high

quality international standards products to capture their share in global market. He said that it was an excellent opportunity to showcase Pak products and develop business deals with international buyers. Over a hundred Pakistani companies will showcase their products which included furniture, textile, garments, leather garments, sports wear, sports goods engineering etc, he told.

Mian Kashif Ashfaq said that the Expo would also offer professional buyers a sourcing platform with wide variety of products

ranging from basics to the most creative and qualitative. He said the PFC and Chenone have already attended several other international fairs in US, China, Italy, Sri Lanka etc and introduced its products which are in great demand.

He hoped in getting orders from foreign buyers. TDAP is facilitating the manufacturers of export products, he said and added, he said he will also hold series of marathon meetings with tycoons for investment to avail the government's unprecedented special package for foreign investors.

# PIAF: Lack of growth, investment exacerbate economic challenges

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) on Sunday called for putting the economy on a sustainable growth, asking the government to provide incentives to the trade and industry, as the business confidence has taken a significant hit due to ongoing political and economic crises, leading to a lack of investment and growth, exacerbating economic

challenges further.

PIAF Chairman Faheem ur Rehman Saigol asked the government to address the underlying structural vulnerabilities through smooth energy supply at competitive rates, as country's overall export proceeds continued to shrink, showing a pessimism about the conditions and prospects of the businesses amidst political instability combining with various economic crises to worsen business insecurity.

He added that the current vicious uncertainty, which is aggravating each other's impact, is eroding business confidence, as the political tug of war and the inconsistent approach to the IMF program are leading to a trust deficit between the business community and the government and between the international community and the government.

Around 70% of businesses perceive bad conditions in Sindh and KPK, and 64% in Punjab. The report highlights that 61% of businesses in the first quarter of 2023 said future expectations are negative while the Net Future Business Confidence score has worsened by 11% since the previous quarter and is now at -22%.

He added that political chaos in the country is having a serious negative impact on business and the life of the general public. Due to the lack of political stability, investors and industrialists are facing an uncertain situation. He says businesses in Pakistan are

faced with multiple calamities, including decades-high inflation killing consumer purchasing power, an absolute lack of stability in the political system causing an environment of uncertainty and mistrust, and poor economic policies leading to a lack of investment and growth. He emphasized the need for the government to take bold steps to improve the situation, including implementing policies that support business growth and addressing the concerns raised by the business community.

He underscored the need for the government to take immediate steps to address the concerns of the business community, including implementing policies that support business growth, promoting employment and productivity through incentives, and addressing inflation and currency depreciation. Failure to do so will only exacerbate the country's economic challenges and hinder its ability to attract investment and create jobs.

PIAF Chairman said that the government has increased the gas and electricity tariffs and, at the same time, also the subsidy has been phased out, which will further increase the cost of production.

Month on month increases in consumer prices may be countered by a further mean reverting international commodity prices and some exchange rate stability due to decreased pace of depreciation.

billions rupees and credit to private sector from 1043.1 to 703.6 million rupees. He added that the government's policies that promote employment and productivity through incentives to businesses, including tax benefits, subsidies, and skill development, can help. He also highlighted that inflation is the most cited problem that businesses would like the government to solve. Referring to the report of business confidence, he said 66% of businesses perceive themselves as facing bad or worse conditions, with a 7% increase in businesses reporting very bad business conditions. Most business types reported the business being in a bad state, with a 50-50 split between good and bad conditions in the construction, cosmetics, and industrial machines and equipment sector.

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## AI market to top \$ 26b

BEIJING (APP): China's artificial intelligence (AI) market value is expected to reach 26.44 billion US dollars in 2026, an industry report showed.

The spending of the country's AI market is forecast to hit 14.75 billion dollars in 2023, accounting for about 10 percent of the world total, said a report from global market research firm International Data Corporation (IDC).

The report projected the compound annual growth rate of China's AI market to surpass 20 percent during the 2021-2026 period.

Optimistic about the long-term expansion of China's AI market, IDC emphasized the importance of innovation and upgrading of AI technology in promoting the better landing of application scenarios.

He added that the current vicious uncertainty, which is aggravating each other's impact, is eroding business confidence, as the political tug of war and the inconsistent approach to the IMF program are leading to a trust deficit between the business community and the government and between the international community and the government.

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# Volatile rupee, constant jump in markup destroying trade, industry

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) stressed need for a revisit of government policies, as the local currency continued to witness the intense fall while the key policy rate has constantly been escalated by the central bank to the record historic level, which will destroy the trade and industry completely.

FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said that volatile exchange rate, unprecedented hike in markup rate, repeated increases in electricity rates, gas shortage, price spiral, mismanagement and bad governance have now become the hallmarks of

the govt.

He observed the negative economic indicators and uncertainty over resumption of the International Monetary Fund program continued to push the rupee towards a new historic low against the US dollar.

He said that massive fall of rupee value continued to damage the economy, as the rupee witnessed a huge depreciation; one of the highest devaluations of local currency in Pakistan's history.

Mian Anjum urged the policy makers to concentrate on increasing tax-to-GDP ratio which was the lowest in Pakistan in the region.

The BMP leader warned if the government failed to take appropriate measures for economic revival, the

trade and industry will face a complete shutdown, asking the government to convene a conference, taking the business community onboard.

The rupee during the week closed at 287.29, a loss of Rs2.25 or 0.8%, which is the lowest level for the Pakistani rupee since it hit 285.02 against the greenback in March this year, as the uncertainty pertaining to the IMF program is causing pressure on the Pakistani rupee while the country's foreign exchange reserves have also declined, which is another source of concern for investors, he said.

He added that the SBP's latest move to impose fines on exporters delaying receipt of payments would prove ineffective.

While demanding a clear

roadmap for the revival of economy, the BMP Chairman termed the present financial crisis as a nerve-shattering for trade and industry.

There was a consensus among the business community that there was a lack of coherence in the government policies and things on economic front went shaky instead of moving for the last several months.

The FPCCI former president observed that besides increasing exports and controlling imports the government will have to take administrative measures, as a large demand of cash dollars are seen in the market.

He argued that this devaluation of the currency was dictated by the IMF through prior actions and it has nothing to do with

macroeconomic fundamentals.

He said that there was a complete breakdown of economic policymaking, as the country's fiscal policy had become subservient to monetary and exchange rate policies.

He said that the monetary tightening and exchange rate depreciation resulted in higher inflation, public debt and debt servicing.

The empirical evidence showed that the one percent monetary tightening hiked the inflationary pressure by 1.3 percent in the case of Pakistan, he added.

He said that the US dollar continued to rise against the rupee, reaching a record high.

The government needs to devise a strategy on war-footing to increase foreign investment in Pakistan so

as to stop the upward trajectory of the dollar, he added.

Exports went down quantitatively while the situation of new investment remained very bleak during the year, they observed adding that the Monetary Policy Committee of the State Bank of Pakistan has raised the key interest rate by another 100 basis points, taking it to 21 percent — the highest level since October 1996.

The government can blame the IMF or some unfriendly foreign powers for its economic predicament if it wants. But it cannot deny that it is in hot water today due to its misplaced confidence that it could deviate from the IMF program and turn to friendly countries for its dollar requirements to avoid

defaulting.

Nearly four months after Finance Minister refused to be dictated to by the IMF, these countries also seem to be siding with the lender, providing Pakistan only enough to keep it going until the bailout loan is finalized.

With a large credibility gap and trust deficit exacerbated by the ongoing political drama in the country, it is foolish to expect them to step up to help us in a big way without the IMF on board.

The IMF is now showing further strictness on issues such as the exchange rate, interest rate, external financing gap and the permanent debt-servicing surcharge on electricity.

It must be pointed out that some of the new IMF conditions, such as linking

interest rates with headline inflation and the imposition of permanent debt surcharge on electricity, seem quite unreasonable.

He appealed the IMF to show some elasticity on these conditions to prevent the country's economic crisis from getting out of hand.

He said power tariff registered an upward trend manifold and due to this single reason, Pakistani merchandise failed to get due appreciation in the international market and the neighboring countries made huge gains.

Calling for bringing down the rate of interest, he said the State Bank of Pakistan should focus on banking spread that was intolerable and pushing the equity away from the reach of business community.





In brief

Bangladesh call up pacer

DHAKA (Agencies): Bangladesh on Sunday included uncapped left-arm pacer Mritunjay Chowdhury in their squad for the three-match one-day international series against Ireland next month. The matches, which will be held at Chelmsford in England on May 9, 12 and 14, are part of the ICC Super League and crucial to Ireland's chances of qualifying for this year's World Cup in India. The 21-year-old Mritunjay, a member of Bangladesh's Under-19 World Cup-winning squad, replaced injured Taskin Ahmed, who had been suffering from a side strain. Taskin missed the recent one-off Test against Ireland at home due to the injury, which was expected to sideline him for about four weeks. Bangladesh beat Ireland by seven wickets in the Test after also winning the preceding one-day international and Twenty20 series. Conditions for the matches would be "challenging", chief selector Minhajul Abedin told reporters while announcing the team. But he added: "Our team is more experienced now than the past. We have enough ability to adapt quickly." Batsman Liton Das and pacer Mustafizur Rahman, who are playing in the Indian Premier League, have been retained in the squad. Star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who withdrew from the IPL citing a family emergency, was also retained. Pace bowler Shoriful Islam returned to the ODI side while left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed missed out. Squad: Tamim Iqbal, Liton Das, Rony Talukdar, Najmul Hossain, Towhid Hridoy, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Yasir Ali, Mehidy Hasan, Taijul Islam, Ebadot Hossain, Shoriful Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Hasan Mahmud, Mritunjay Chowdhury.

Jabeur advances

CHARLESTON (AP): Second-seeded Ons Jabeur advanced to the Charleston Open final for the second straight year, beating No. 3 seed Daria Kasatkina 7-5, 7-5 in a rain-delayed match Saturday. Jabeur, who lost this championship a year ago to Belinda Bencic, will have to wait until Sunday to find out her opponent. The second semifinal match between No. 1 seed Jessica Pegula and the fourth-seeded Bencic was suspended because of rain. Bencic was ahead 4-2, yet trailing Pegula 4-2 in a second-set tiebreaker. The two will conclude their match, weather permitting, and after suitable rest, the final will be played. Jabeur fought off Kasatkina to win her 10th semifinal in her 12 visits to the final four. Jabeur of Tunisia also won her fifth straight over her Russian opponent and first since the two played in the Rome semifinals a season ago. Jabeur had quipped Friday she'd try and get her supporters in Tunisia to send sunshine to the Credit One Tennis Center. Instead, it was an overcast, chilly with rain delays that had the match ending more than 5 1-2 hours after it began. Jabeur trailed 5-3 in the opening set when the rain delayed the match. She returned after the delay of more than three hours to win the next four games to take the set. Jabeur turned it up again at the end of the final set, surging from a 5-all tie to put away Kasatkina and reach her first final of the year. Jabeur said she just started over after the delay with a fresh mindset.

## Islamabad police say fully equipped, ready to provide security to NZ team

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): The Islamabad police are fully equipped and will provide "end-to-end, foolproof" security to the New Zealand cricket team for their upcoming tour of Pakistan. "Islamabad Capital Police is fully equipped and shall provide end-to-end, foolproof and world class security to New Zealand cricket team during their forthcoming visit," an Islamabad police spokesperson told Arab News. The spokesperson said

the capital police would play a key role in providing "flawless security" to the visitors in collaboration with other stakeholders in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The ODIs will be played in Rawalpindi (April 27, 29) and Karachi (May 3, 5, 7).

T20 squad: Babar Azam (captain), Shadab Khan (vice-captain), Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Iftikhar Ahmed, Ihsanullah, Imad Wasim, Mohammad Haris,

Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shan Masood and Zaman Khan. ODI squad: Babar Azam (captain), Shadab Khan (vice-captain), Abdullah Shafique, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Haris Sohail, Ihsanullah, Imam-ul-Haq, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Wasim, Naseem Shah, Salman Ali Agha, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shan Masood and Usama Mir.

## Palace thrash Leeds to boost survival bid



(Agencies): Crystal Palace boosted their bid for Premier League survival with a 5-1 demolition of relegation rivals Leeds on Sunday.

Roy Hodgson's side erased Patrick Bamford's first half opener with a superb display of counter-attacking at Elland Road.

Marc Guehi equalised just before the break and Palace turned on the style after half-time with emphatic finishes from Jordan Ayew, who netted twice, Eberechi Eze and Odsone Edouard.

Palace's first win at Elland Road since 2006 lifted them six points clear of the relegation zone,

while Leeds remain just two points adrift of the bottom three.

The south Londoners were without a win in 2023 before Hodgson replaced the sacked Patrick Vieira until the end of the season.

Palace had gone three games without mustering a single shot on target in the final days of Vieira's reign, but their biggest league win since 2020 showed Hodgson has already made a major impact.

Hodgson, in his second spell as Palace boss, had inspired an important 2-1 win against fellow strugglers Leicester in his first match and his second game was even more impressive.

Palace star Wilfried Zaha was sidelined due to a groin injury, an ominous absence given they had won only four of their last 33 league games without the Ivory Coast forward.

The early signs were not encouraging for Palace as Sam Johnstone, making his first top-flight appearance since 2021, had to repel Brenden Aaronson's shot before leaping to his left to save Luis Sinisterra's sting-in strike.

Sinisterra was a constant menace in the first half and the Colombian tested Johnstone twice in quick succession from a pair of Luke Ayling crosses.

Leeds' pressure was finally rewarded in the 21st minute when Bamford met Aaronson's corner with a glancing header that bounced in off the far post.

Barely able to escape their own half before Bamford's goal, Palace threatened when Jeffrey Schlupp headed against the post before Ayew's effort was cleared off the line.

Leeds resumed their barrage, with Jack Harrison's free-kick palmed away by Johnstone and Robin

Koch's header saved by the over-worked Palace keeper.

Pascal Struijk's header forced yet another superb save from Johnstone moments later.

But somehow Palace survived the seige and snatched an equaliser in first half stoppage-time.

Eze whipped in a free-kick that Schlupp flicked towards Guehi, who got to the ball before Leeds keeper Illan Meslier and volleyed home from close-range.

Palace were energised by their leveller and took the lead in the 53rd minute.

Ayew had scored only once all season but he rose to meet Olise's pin-point cross with a fine header that gave Meslier no chance.

Hodgson's men had all the momentum and they struck again two minutes later as Eze found Olise, raced onto his return pass and slotted home from 10 yards.

With Leeds in disarray, Edouard drove in Palace's fourth goal from Olise's pass in the 69th minute and Ayew bagged the fifth with a close-range finish eight minutes later.

## Ali Naqvi and Chris Broad to lead playing control teams during Pak-New Zealand series

LAHORE (PPI): Former Test cricketers and respected match referees Ali Naqvi and Chris Broad will lead the playing control teams in the T20 International and One-Day International series between Pakistan and New Zealand from 14 April till 7 May.

Ali Naqvi will be the match referee in the five T20Is – spread over Lahore and Rawalpindi – in which Ahsan Raza, Aleem Dar, Asif Yaqoob, Faisal Afridi and Rashid Riaz will take up on-field umpiring duties.

Chris Broad, member of ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees, will return to Pakistan for the first time in 14 years to officiate the five ODIs to be played in Rawalpindi and Karachi.

In these five ODIs, Ahsan Raza, Aleem Dar, Asif Yaqoob, Faisal Afridi, Langton Rusere, Joel Wilson, Rashid Riaz will carry out the on-field umpiring duties.

Amongst the umpires to officiate in the two series,

Ahsan Raza and Joel Wilson are the members of the ICC Elite Panel of Umpires, while others are members of ICC Int'l Panel of Umpires.

Detailed appointments: 14 Apr – First T20I, Lahore. Ahsan Raza and Faisal Afridi (on-field), Asif Yaqoob (third umpire), Rashid Riaz (fourth umpire); Ali Naqvi (match referee)

15 Apr – Second T20I, Lahore. Asif Yaqoob and Rashid Riaz (on-field), Ahsan Raza (third umpire), Faisal Afridi (fourth umpire); Ali Naqvi (match referee)

17 Apr – Third T20I, Lahore. Faisal Afridi and Ahsan Raza (on-field), Aleem Dar (third umpire), Rashid Riaz (fourth umpire); Ali Naqvi (match referee)

20 Apr – Fourth T20I, Rawalpindi. Aleem Dar and Rashid Riaz (on-field), Faisal Afridi (third umpire), Asif Yaqoob (fourth umpire); Ali Naqvi (match referee)

24 Apr – Fifth T20I, Rawalpindi. Aleem Dar and Asif Yaqoob (on-field),

Rashid Riaz (third umpire), Faisal Afridi (fourth umpire); Ali Naqvi (match referee)

27 Apr – First ODI, Rawalpindi. Aleem Dar and Ahsan Raza (on-field), Rashid Riaz (third umpire), Faisal Afridi (fourth umpire); Chris Broad (match referee)

29 Apr – Second ODI, Rawalpindi. Aleem Dar and Rashid Riaz (on-field), Ahsan Raza (third umpire), Asif Yaqoob (fourth umpire); Chris Broad (match referee)

3 May – Third ODI, Karachi. Langton Rusere and Faisal Afridi (on-field), Joel Wilson (third umpire), Rashid Riaz (fourth umpire); Chris Broad (match referee)

5 May – Fourth ODI, Karachi. Joel Wilson and Asif Yaqoob (on-field), Langton Rusere (third umpire), Faisal Afridi (fourth umpire); Chris Broad (match referee)

7 May – Fifth ODI, Karachi. Langton Rusere and Rashid Riaz (on-field), Joel Wilson (third umpire), Asif Yaqoob (fourth umpire); Chris Broad (match referee).

## Messi reaches 1,000 club goal contributions in PSG win over Nice

PARIS (Agencies): One week after being jeered by his own fans, Lionel Messi scored one goal and set up the other as Paris Saint-Germain won at a wasteful Nice 2-0 to reestablish their six-point lead at the top of Ligue 1 on Saturday.

Messi was booed by some PSG fans in last weekend's home defeat to Lyon, leading to increased speculation he could leave this summer.

With his goal and assist, Messi now has 1,000 goal contributions in his club career, according to ESPN Stats and Information, to reach yet another extraordinary milestone in his career.

Argentina's World Cup-winning star clipped in a cross from left back Nuno Mendes in the 26th minute. Then Messi's corner from the left was headed home by veteran defender Sergio Ramos in the 76th.



Nice were unbeaten in 14 matches overall before this game and went close to equalizing in the first half, but PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma kept out efforts from Nicolas Pépé and striker Terem Moffi.

Veteran defender Dante's shot came off the underside of the crossbar and appeared to cross the line in the 51st. But referee Jérémie Pignard was not alerted by goal-line technology that it crossed, even though video replays showed a goal should likely have been awarded.

Donnarumma kept out more shots from Pépé and Youssouf Ndayishimiye as Nice kept up the pressure on PSG, who have lost eight matches in 2023.

Nice hit the crossbar late on in a match of wasted chances. Under-pressure PSG coach Christophe Galtier returned to the club he coached last season but Nice's ultras greeted Galtier with an insulting chant and unfurled a derogatory banner about him.

After the final whistle, Galtier walked over and sarcastically gave a thumbs up to the section of fans who insulted him, sparking an angry reaction. PSG sporting director Luis Campos intervened to encourage an upset-looking Galtier to leave the field quickly. PSG moved back to six points ahead of second-placed Lens ahead of their match in Paris next weekend.

## PPC Ramazan Sports Gala begins

Ali Sheikh

PESHAWAR: The annual Ramadan Sports Gala began in Peshawar Press Club the other day. Caretaker Provincial Minister for transport Shahid Khattak was the chief guest, while the Caretaker Provincial Minister for Excise and Taxation Manzoor Afridi, Caretaker Minister for Housing Shafiullah and Zubair Elahi, CEO of Hope, were also present.

A large number of journalists associated with the Peshawar Press Club were present on the occasion. Journalists will participate in five different competitions, including badminton, table tennis, snooker, carrom board and ludo.

On the first day of Sports Gala, two matches were played in Rahmatullah Khan Badminton event

were played in which the team of Malik Abdul Zada/Asad Ali and team of Irfan Khan and Aziz Buner stood victorious. Similarly, Fayyaz Ahmed, Zahid Awan, Iqbal Haider and Abdul Razzaq won their matches in the Gulshan Aziz Carrom board competitions. Meanwhile, Zeeshan Liaquat, Zahid Mirukhel and Sheikh Irfan Elahi won their matches in the Rahimullah Yousafzai Table Tennis Championship.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Excise and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi on the occasion said that media community must take full part in sports and other healthy activities as sport energized the hearts and minds of human beings and inculcate the creative abilities of them. Haji Manzoor Afridi said that the journalist com-

munity as the fourth and most important pillar of the state has to perform its duties in very difficult circumstances.

They also have to focus on national issues with dedication, so they should pay full attention to their health and sports so that they can serve the nation well, he added. He urged the journalists to play a key role in saving the new and future generations of the nation from the growing scourge of drugs and to make the efforts of the provincial government successful in this regard.

The caretaker Minister for Transport, Science and Technology Shahid Khattak and the Minister of Jails Shafiullah Khan also addressed the event while Shahid Khattak announced a cash donation of Rs two million for the Peshawar Press Club.

## Dott reaches 'horrible' final qualifying round

SHEFFIELD (Agencies): The final qualifying round for the snooker World Championship is "horrible", says Scotland's Graeme Dott.

Dott, 45, beat Andy Hicks 10-6 at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield to reach 'Judgement Day'. The 2006 world champion has missed out on a place at the championships for the past three years, losing in the last round each time.

Dott faces Englishman Matthew Selt on Tuesday. "That last round is not nice. I don't think anybody could enjoy it," said Dott.



"They are horrible matches to play in. All you want to do is win, regardless of how you feel or how you play." Dott also said it had been a difficult experience watching the championships over the past three years.

"I would rather just go on holiday for two weeks

and not see it, but hopefully this year I can get back there," he said.

Elsewhere, Anthony McGill fought back from 9-7 down to beat John Astley 10-9, including breaks of 136 and 98 to take the game to a deciding round.

McGill will face Cao Yupeng, who beat Ben Woollaston 10-6. Thailand's Thepchaiya Un-Nooh also made it through to the final round after beating Mark Joyce, and he will face Ricky Walden.

This year's World Championship takes place from 15 April-1 May at the Crucible in Sheffield.



AUGUSTA (Agencies): Five-time winner Tiger Woods, who limped through an awful, bogey-strewn start to his rain-halted third round of the Masters, pulled out of the tournament with a foot injury organizers said on Sunday.

"I am disappointed to have to WD (withdraw) this morning due to re-aggravating my plantar fasciitis," he posted on Twitter shortly after organizers had announced his decision.

"Thank you to the fans and to @TheMasters who have shown me so much love and support. Good luck to the players today!" It is the second time in the past year that Woods has been forced to withdraw from a major championship citing injury.

The 15-times major winner, who now plays a very limited schedule on the PGA Tour focusing instead on being able to compete in majors, had speculated before the tournament that this may be one of his last Masters.

"I don't know how many more I have in me," Woods had said on Tuesday, "So just (have) to be able to appreciate the time I have here and cherish the memories."

The Masters is aiming to finish the rain-impacted third round on early on Sunday before proceeding to the decisive final round at Augusta National.

Woods is still dealing with the impact of severe leg injuries suffered in a 2021 car crash. He made his return at last year's Masters, where he shared 47th and spoke of walking 72 holes on the hilly layout as a victory of sorts.

For 47-year-old Woods, who has talked about playing in pain and who operates a minimal tournament schedule, the weather enforced changes meant he would have attempted to play 29 holes on Sunday in order to finish.

In November, Woods cited the

plantar fasciitis in his right foot when he withdrew from the Hero World Challenge event in the Bahamas.

Woods had battled to make the cut early on Saturday, playing in cold and wet conditions and limping at times. He eventually made it into the final two rounds after the cut-line rose to three-over par 147.

By making the cut, Woods matched the Masters record of Fred Couples and Gary Player with 23 consecutive made cuts.

But Woods, who hasn't missed a Masters cut since 1996 when he was playing as an amateur, made a dreadful start to his third round.

Starting on the 10th hole, Woods made two bogeys before double bogeys on the par-5 15th and par-3 16th left him bottom of the leaderboard on nine over overall.

In September, Woods pulled out of the PGA Championship at Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa in September after he had made a 9-over 79 in the third round - the first time he had withdrawn in a major.

Woods had shared 45th at his PGA event at Riviera in February in his most recent prior start.





## In brief

### Munir Niazi remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned Urdu and Punjabi poet, Munir Niazi was remembered on his birth anniversary on Sunday. Munir Ahmed Niazi was born on April 9, 1928 in a village near Hoshiarpur, India. After partition, he moved to Pakistan. Munir Niazi proved himself as one of Pakistan's famous movie songwriters. He also wrote a number of pieces for newspapers and radio. He launched a weekly 'Saat Rang' from Sahiwal in 1949. He also established a publication institute Al-Misal in 1960 and remained associated with Lahore Television and lived in Lahore until his death. His poetry influenced an entire generation of young writers and poets. His works include Dushmanoon Key Darmiyan, Mah-e-Munir, Aghaz-e-Zamastan Main Dobara and Aik Musalsal. Munir Niazi deeply influenced his contemporaries and later generations of poets and is respected by the reading public. His works have been translated into many other languages. For his literary achievements, Niazi was awarded Kamal-e-Funn Award for the year 2002 by Pakistan Academy of Letters and the President's Award for Pride of Performance in 1992 and Sitara-e-Imtiaz in 1998. He passed away due to respiratory illness on December 26, 2006 in Lahore.

### IRSA releases 74,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 74,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 50,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1434.99 feet and was 36.99 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 19,000 cusecs while outflow as 10,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1111.50 feet, which was 61.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 24,700 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 26,400, 30,200, 37,200 and 8,300 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 18,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,300 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### 7 wanted criminals arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 7 proclaimed offenders wanted in various cases here on Sunday, informed police spokesman. Taxila police nabbed 4 wanted criminals including Aqib in the theft case while the same police held Babar in the drug pushing case and 02 wanted criminals Javed and Liaquat were also arrested in an environmental pollution case. Similarly, Waris Khan police netted Sajid in a cheque dishonour case. While, Sadiqabad police arrested Muhammad Younas involved in a theft and fraud case. Following the operation, Rata Amaral police booked Zahid for hurling death threats. SSP Operations Captain (R) Mohammad Amir Khan Niazi while appreciating the police teams said that the ongoing crackdown against the advertising criminals will be accelerated.



ISLAMABAD: Archbishop Shaw performing religious rituals to mark the celebrating the Easter at Fatima Church F-8 in the Federal Capital.

## 'PPP only party to steer country out of difficult times': Kundi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi Sunday lashed out that the nation was suffering due to the PTI's failed policies and PPP is the only major political force in the country, which can steer the country out of difficult times.

Talking to a private news channel, he asked PTI's chairman Imran Khan to stop double standards, as the nation is suffering the consequences of his short-

comings, adding, the government and opposition should sit together and think about how to direct the country towards prosperity and development.

Keeping in view the current situation in the country, we cannot afford separate elections in the country, he said, adding, such elections will result in a heavy burden on the economy of the country.

It is the time that every political party must have to establish itself as everyone knows what is right and

what is wrong, he mentioned. In reply to a question, he said that it is the moral responsibility of President Dr. Arif Alvi to sign the Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Act, 2023, so that the country can get rid of the constitutional and political crises.

"President Alvi returning the Supreme Court Bill duly passed by Parliament is most unfortunate and he tried to challenge the powers of parliament which will not be acceptable", he criticized.

### Commissioner to ensure transparency in SSC examination system

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatta has directed the authorities concerned of Rawalpindi Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (RBISE) to ensure transparency in Secondary School Certificate (SSC) annual examination system.

According to a Commissioner Office spokesman, the

Commissioner while visiting different examination centers including Denny's school, Islamia High School No 4, Islamia Higher Secondary School No 1 and Divisional Public School reviewed the arrangements made by the RBISE for annual SSC exams. The Commissioner visited various examination halls and rooms and inspected the arrangements and the exams holding process. The Commissioner also checked attendance sheets of the students, their roll number slips and seating plan. Strict action in accordance with the law would be taken against cheating mafia and no one would be allowed to violate the rules, the Commissioner said and informed that separate raiding teams had been formed to make the monitoring system more effective.

He directed the monitoring teams to perform their professional duties without any discrimination.

The Commissioner informed that sealed question paper envelopes were opened in front of CCTV cameras.

# PML-N is well prepared for elections: Rana

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Federal Minister for Interior Affairs Rana Sanaullah said his coalition government is making every attempt to bring the country out of catastrophe. According to a report, he talked to the media on Sunday and chastised the previous government for failing to provide development funds for public welfare despite having resources.

Rana Sanaullah said the PML-N is well prepared for the election. He stated that the

government would finish its term and that the election would be held on time.

Rana Sanaullah blamed that due to poor performance, Imran Khan of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) failed to control inflation and efforts to deliver in his last regime. He stated that the current government is devoted to controlling inflation and that citizens will see significant changes in a short period of time.

## Marriyum, sanjrani lauds services of Christian community

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday wished Happy Easter to the Christian community in Pakistan and around the world.

In a tweet, the minister extending congratulations to the Christian community said that the efforts of the Christian community in the creation of Pakistan and the nation-building process were commendable and unforgettable. "We want to see all the minorities, including Christians, moving forward in every sphere of life,"

Aurangzeb said. Meanwhile, Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani has conveyed his warmest Easter greetings and best wishes to Christian brothers and sisters and their families, both in Pakistan and around the world.

In his message, Chairman Sanjrani reflected on the shared values of love, compassion, and forgiveness that are central to both Christianity and Islam. He emphasized the importance of working together to create a society that is inclusive, tolerant, and respectful of all

beliefs and backgrounds. The Chairman acknowledged the active and positive role played by the Christian community in the development of Pakistan and expressed his gratitude for their contributions.

Finally, Chairman Sanjrani expressed his hope that this Easter season would bring peace, happiness, and blessings to all Christian brothers and sisters, and that the bond of brotherhood and sisterhood between different communities would continue to grow stronger with each passing day.

## RDA accelerates operation against illegal housing schemes

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of Director General (DG) Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa has accelerated its ongoing operation against illegal housing schemes.

According to RDA spokesman, the authorities concerned in an operation against illegal housing schemes namely Cighu Farmhouse Housing Scheme, mouza Chak Cighu, Royal Ghar Housing Scheme, mouza Pariyal, Chak Beli Khan Road and New Iqra City/Iqra Residencia, mouza Chakri, Jorian Rawat road, demolished booking offices, bill boards and main gates.

He said that the Enforcement Squad was taking strict action against illegal housing schemes.

Notices were also issued to the rules violators, he added.

Earlier, MP&TE directorate had also issued notices to the owners of five illegal private housing schemes namely Green lake City at dhoke bhaia Rawat, Chak beli Khan Road, Safanza New Era at Ralla Gujrain Chak beli Khan Road, Royal Ghar (Apna Ghar) at Mouza Pariyal Chak beli Khan Road, New Iqra City at Mouza dheri Jorian, Rawat and Hoon Farm House at Mouza

Adiala Road.

The DG had also instructed the Director MP&TE to take action against illegal advertisements and marketing of illegal projects and lodge FIRs against the rules violators.

The spokesman said that the owners and sponsors of illegal housing schemes were misleading the public through illegal advertisements.

The Enforcement Squad including Incharge/Assistant Director Building Control, Deputy Incharge, Superintendent Scheme and others took part in the operation.

The spokesman said that the DG had advised the citizens not to invest in illegal and unauthorized housing schemes and check status of the housing projects before investment on RDA's official website [www.rda.gop.pk](http://www.rda.gop.pk).

He said the DG had directed the MP&TE Directorate to take strict actions against illegal and unauthorized housing schemes without any discrimination. RDA had also requested the departments concerned including Islamabad Electric Supply Company, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Ltd and PTCL not to extend services to illegal housing schemes, he added.

## Strict regulatory measures needed to conserve Margallas habitat

ISLAMABAD (APP): Struggling to sustain amidst ever increasing population pressure in surroundings and tourists influx, the Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP) faces enormous challenges of biodiversity conservation in absence of strict regulatory regime. This National park had spotlighted in recent years with its nature and wildlife reserves showing considerable growth but the much-cherished thriving biodiversity conservation was elusive without a strict regulatory regime and a powerful Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB).

The country as a whole and the federal capital in particular had witnessed population expansion causing shrinking space for the natural habitats. The issue has aggravated after the ill-planned road and connectivity infrastructure that started creating habitat interruptions forcing the wildlife and birdlife to either migrate to other regions or start venturing upon human settlements.

"MHNP has been a continuous habitat of leopard with its terrain expanding from Galiyat to Murree. However, road infrastructure has affected the entire habitat to a great deal," said Vaqar Zakaria, a member of Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB).

"Besides leopards, animals like jackals, foxes and number of bird species are also diminishing with people also killing or hunting wildlife," Zakaria said. "Now we are left with Ayubia National Park and MHNP that are protected areas and outside these we are helpless."

About killing of wildlife, Zakaria said the law states that people can kill animal if it threatens their lives. But, killing them even when there is no threat to human lives is unjustified.

Zakaria pointed out that recently a leopard was shot down in Shahdara area and its paws were dismembered by the poachers. "The hide of the leopard could be sold for a hundred thousand rupees for taxidermy and its paws might

be used for preparing some archaic medicine by the poachers."

He said the Board had been effectively engaging with the local communities in recent years. "We have community officers who regularly meet and educate local people. We also issue locals, the Kachnar permits so they can harvest vegetable for earning some money and stop poaching and damage to nature; but, could not get desired results."

According to IWMB, there are some 10 to 11 leopards in the Park and it could not accommodate more. Many leopards come from Ayubia to MHNP through Murree, Kahuta and Kotli Sattian.

"These three areas can also be treated as national parks ensuring better wildlife protection if the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments, Galiyat authority and IWMB work in tandem or at least in coordination to monitor protected areas," Zakaria suggested.

The Murree, Kahuta and Kotli Sattian areas lacked departmental presence on ground as it was not really staffed and better managed. However, Ayubia National Park has been a better place due to proper staff and departmental care.

The IWMB is also preparing for future planning as a team of experts is arriving from South Africa this summer to train the Board's staff on how to engage with the communities, manage forensics of predation and other critical matters related to wildlife and predators' management. The Board will also convene meetings with wildlife departments of KP, Punjab and Gilgit Baltistan (GB).

Referring to different measures for habitat conservation, Zakaria informed about preparing Islamabad Nature Bill with a provision of imposing strict fines and penalties as previous laws are moderate and could not serve the purpose of strict protection and conservation of nature.

"The Islamabad (Protection, Preservation, Conservation and Management) Ordinance, 1979 has

gone obsolete. Therefore, the envisaged Islamabad Nature Bill will be the first law to provide strict legislation for ensuring nature, biodiversity and wildlife protection," he said.

Meanwhile, the Snow Leopard Foundation (SLF) has started a compensation and assistance pilot program in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). But, it has yet to take grounds and is coming across number of minor issues regarding claims of the local people and verification for the damages that have to be compensated.

Since, the IWMB is facing shortage of funds, it is also mulling to charging visitors fee to earn a sizeable amount from ticketing and invest this money back for protection of wildlife and habitat in the National Park and the uplift of adjoining villages.

Margalla Hills National Park also faces challenge of Zone-3 encroachments entering into national park leaving the nature and human settlement vulnerable due to ill-conceived development of the area.

Since, Margalla Hills is a declared National Park and falls within the ambit of certain rules and regulations regarding a National Park. Therefore, it is obligatory upon all state players and departments to protect this treasure from damages.

Ongoing constructions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa side of Margallas, stone crushing along GT road towards Peshawar and then the expanding villages in the heart of Park and commercial activities closer to it, are a constant threat to beauty, habitat, biodiversity and overall environment of MHNP.

In this scenario, both the Ministry of Climate Change and Capital Development Authority owe the responsibility to conserve MHNP wildlife and habitat. These both departments must have to keep their eyes and ears open all the time to ensure that this treasure does not fall as an easy prey to unruly visitors, property tycoons, illegal developers and above all fire mongers.

## Trains punctuality ratio improves from 76 to 87 percent in two months

ISLAMABAD, Apr 9 (APP): The overall punctuality ratio of train services has improved from 76 to 87 per cent in two months owing to close monitoring by Pakistan Railways at the divisional and ministry levels.

"With the punctuality of trains and concrete measures taken by the present government in last two months, the number of passengers has increased by over 20 million, which is ample proof of the department's achievement," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP on Sunday.

He said the punctuality of passenger trains, which was around 60 percent during the tenure of the previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, was now improving day by day on the directives of Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique. The official said the present government had taken several steps to end the deficit of the department including the introduction of RAABTA, an initiative towards enhanced customer facilitation.

"RAABTA platform lets customers plan the trip, check train status, choose and purchase seats, order car rental, meals and refreshments, and book hotels," he added.

To facilitate passengers, he said a mobile application 'Pakrail live' had been launched for real-time tracking of trains.

The official said the high-capacity/high-speed hopper trucks had been inducted in the current fleet for swift movement/unloading of coal and new high-capacity high-speed rolling stock coaches and wagons were being procured.

He said online e-ticketing through Jazz Cash, UBL Omni and credit cards has been introduced to facilitate passengers at their doorstep and attract more passengers through outsourcing of non-core activity.

"A policy for transfer of technology is being pursued in collaboration with the People's Republic of China for indigenization of Railway Rolling Stock in Pakistan Railways facilities," he added.

## Al-Shifa Trust provided treatment to 0.5m eye patients

RAWALPINDI (APP): Al-Shifa Eye Trust has set a new record of treating half a million eye patients, including 2.5 lacs children in rural and remote areas of the country during the last year, with 1,500 free eye camps to reduce avoidable vision impairment.

Maj Gen (R) Rehmat Khan, President of Al-Shifa Trust, said this while briefing media persons about the outreach program achievements

in 2022-23 here Sunday. Rehmat Khan said that Pakistan Army had facilitated the trust in arranging free eye camps in remote areas, including Waziristan, Malakand, Panni, Gawader, Zhob, Jiwani and the far-flung regions of Gilgit-Baltistan, and Chitral.

He said that camps aimed to reduce the cases of avoidable vision impairment, alleviate the suffering of underprivileged patients, especially

in deprived areas, improve the eye health of the community, raise health awareness and reduce the level of poverty associated with visual impairment. The Trust's president said that free eye camps were also organized in the deprived areas, including Loralai, Chaman, Skardu, Chitral, North and South Waziristan and Malakand, where the Trust received a very positive response.



### Officials visits Baghlan

BAGHLAN (Agencies): The Ministry of Information and Culture's delegation who traveled to Baghlan to survey the historical sites in that province, ask for people's cooperation in the preservation of historical sites. The provincial head of nformation and Culture of Baghlan, Mawlawi Asadullah Mustafa Hashimi, asked the residents of the province to consider the cultural places and historical monuments as national assets for the sake of national and social responsibility.

## The Frontier Post

Ramazan 19, 1444 — Monday, April 10, 2023

### Mujahideen to be joined school

NURISTAN (Agencies): Local officials of Nuristan Education Department said that based on the proposal of the Ministry of Education and the approval of Prime Minister, the mujahideen whose education was incomplete during the last 20 years of Jihad are being enrolled into the 12th grade. 380 Mujahideen have been joined an exam conducted for this propose in the central city of Parun, said Sayed Rasool Abid an official at the department of Education of Nuristan.

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

# IEA Deputy PM meets Jawzjan athletes



KABUL (Agencies): The Islamic Emirate's deputy prime minister Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi met with a number of athletes in Jawzjan province.

At the meeting, the athletes thanked the Islamic Emirate for supporting them and the youths in the country, and that shared some of their problems and

challenges with Hanafi. The athletes asked for more support from the Islamic Emirate with the aim of encouraging youths to prevent drugs.

Hanafi meanwhile welcomed the athletes of Jawzjan and assured them that the IEA would further support sports and other sectors in that province.

# Only 2 of 33 print media outlets operating in Balkh

M A Z R - I - S H A R I F (Pajhwok): Thirty-three operational licences were issued for print media outlets during the past two decades in northern Balkh province but currently only two are functional.

Officials cite economic problems and other limitations as the main reason for the closure of media outlets. Atif Arian, chief editor of the Weekly Aweejha, told Pajhwok Afghan News, prior to the Islamic Emirate's takeover, they earned an income from advertisements. Currently, however, they have neither any income source nor readers. The administration cannot afford to print the

weekly on its own. The publication was suspended because of financial straits and other problems, he said. Abdul Saboor, chief editor of the Weekly Balkh Voice, also cited economic problems and other limitations as the reason for the closure of his weekly.

He said: "The licence for the Weekly Balkh Voice was secured in 2019, but after the collapse of the previous regime, I suspended the publication of the weekly due to economic problems and restrictions imposed on media."

As of now, Weekly Bedar (owned by the government) and a private monthly magazine are

operating in Balkh province. Habibullah Behmanish, head of Weekly Bedar, explained the publication previously appeared as a daily newspaper with a circulation of thousands of copies. However, it has now been converted into a weekly with a thousand copies week.

Najibullah, in charge of a printing press, also grumbled about the dwindling market for publications. In the past, he recalled, many daily newspapers and weeklies were published and printing presses had a good business. But now the market has slumped.

But Abdul Latif Sahak, head of the Journalists'

Safety Committee, complained the closure of media outlets had left many journalists jobless.

Information and Culture Director Atta Mohammad Sahoo said the department had issued 33 licences for print media outlets over the past two decades. But, currently, only two of them are functioning. Government officials were in contact with chief editors of some print media organisations on how to help these outlets resume function, Sahoo said.

Apart from Balkh, In some other provinces as well, print and electronic media outlets have ceased operations, rendering many employees jobless.

## Ramazan assistance packages distributed in Kabul

KABUL (Agencies): Bayat Foundation distributed food parcels to dozens of needy families in Kabul on Sunday as part of their ongoing campaign to provide aid during the holy month of Ramadan.

Bayat Foundation officials said that aid packages include flour, rice and oil.

According to foundation officials, this assistance was provided following a transparent and thorough survey to identify those in need.

Haji Mohammad Ismail,

deputy head of the Bayat Foundation, emphasized that these donations will continue until the end of the holy month of Ramadan and that the campaign is also being rolled out in other provinces.

"In continuation of Bayat Foundation's donations that we had previously distributed in Kabul city due to the holy month of Ramadan, today we came to one of the areas of Kabul city to distribute a quantity of food including flour, oil and rice to the needy families," said Mohammad Ismail.

"Bayat Foundation's donations continue in Kabul and other provinces on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan," he added. Recipients of the aid thanked the Bayat Foundation and called on other organizations to also provide people with assistance.

"Many thanks to the Bayat Foundation, which helped us in this blessed month of Ramadan," said one Kabul recipient. For nearly two decades,

Bayat Foundation provides food and non-food aid to thousands of needy families in the center and provinces every month of Ramadan.

In addition, it helps the needy not only during the holy month of Ramadan, but also during times of natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes. The foundation has helped thousands of families in the last two decades and played an active role in the reconstruction of hospitals, as well as health and educational centers.

## Uniforms related draft generates hopes for reopening of girls schools

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Education (MoE) has introduced a draft regarding uniforms for school students — boys, girls — and teacher from class one to 12th and shared the document with relevant department.

Last year in March, the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' barred girls students above class sixth from attending the school and said a strategy was being worked out on the bases of which girls would be allowed to attend schools.

A reliable source of the MoE, speaking on the condition of anonymity, confirmed to Pajhwok Afghan News that a draft regarding the uniform had been completed for the boys and girls schools students and sent to the relevant authorities in the ministry for comment.

According to the source, the newly-made draft about uniforms was confirmed by the relevant department.

Mustafa Ghazni High School principal Satayesh Hashimi also shared the draft on her Facebook page.

The copy of this draft also circulated in social media which is comprised of five chapters containing 13 articles in Pashto and Dari languages.

The purpose of introducing uniform for schools students was to promote discipline, the sprite of learning and obeying the law, eradication wealth difference among the students and differentiating students from

other people.

Referring to the specialties of religious uniform it was said that uniform should not be tight, narrow, it should be similar to the uniform of opposite sex and the uniform would be applicable on the students of private and government schools equally.

### Male students' uniform

Article five of the draft said that male students uniform is comprise of Shalwar Kameez fit to the body size of each student the length of Kameez should exceed from the knees.

Referring to the color of male uniform, article second of the draft said that from class one till sixth the color of the uniform is blue and from class seventh till 12th the color of male uniform is pistachio green.

Male students of madrasahs will wear Shalwar Kameez with a white cap and the uniform will be steel color. Madrasahs students from class 7th will have to wear white color uniform with white turban.

In addition, article second said male students of Teacher Training Institutes will have to wear navy color uniform.

### Female students' uniform

Article sixth of the draft said that female students uniform is comprised of Shalwar Kameez and Shall with specialties described by the Sharia Law. The uniform will fit the sized of every student and reflect

upon the culture of Afghan society. The length of Kameez skirt will go down the knees. The color of uniform for students from class one to sixth will be light yellow and their shall will be white color.

The color of female students from class 7th to 12th will be teal with black color shall and their Shalwar Kameez will be sewed from same color cloth.

### Teachers' uniform

Article eight of the draft said that the uniform of general teachers, teachers of NGOs and teachers of education ministry's institutions was national clothes and the uniform of teachers for religious institutions was also national clothes which should be in line with the principles of Sharia.

Article ninth of the draft said that the uniform of all teachers was local shalwar Qameez and shall in line with Sharia Law.

Article second of the draft said that female teachers must wear Jijab while commuting and could use mask as well. Female teachers and students are urged to wear simple and flat shoes.

### Additional clothes

Article 10th of the draft said that in case of cold weather, teachers and students could wear additional warm clothes such as jacket, scarf and warm cap.

It said that narrow weskit matching the color of uniform and wearing white cap for the students

of general schools depended on their own choice.

### Banned clothes

Article 11 of the draft said that clothes without necessity are additional and not allowed for students.

Article second and third of the draft said that short shalwar and trouser are not allowed for female teachers, wearing ties is also not allowed for students and teachers.

Article 12th of the draft director of the educational institutions is tasked to ensure the implementation of matters related to the uniform and urged the student to ensure cleanliness of their clothes.

The draft said that if the student did not wear the uniform without solid reason then he will be advised to wear the uniform and in the case of continued violation the matter will be shared with the parents of the student.

Zabihullah Farooqi, the resident of Maidan Shahr City, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "Fair uniform has been introduced to teachers and students, it is Islamic and in line to Afghani culture. The introduction of uniform for girls above class 6th generated hope for the reopening of girls schools as well."

Rehana, the student of 10th class from Kabul's Qabal Bai area, said the draft made students hopeful that girls' schools above class 6th will be opened as well.

## 21 killed last week as violence continues to claim lives

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Islamic Emirate's decision to ban women from working with UN agencies drew widespread reactions last week, when the interim government expressed its desire to expand bilateral relations with Russia and Japan pledged \$5 million in aid to Afghanistan.

### Casualties

Violence continued to take lives in Afghanistan as last week 21 people were killed and two others were injured in various incidents of violence across the country.

Security forces killed six Daesh or Islamic State militants in Balkh, two in Herat and one in Parwan and held three women and seven children from the house where the operation was conducted in Charikar on Friday night.

Due to a misunderstanding that led to firing between security forces in central Panjsher province, two people, including a judge, were injured.

Unknown people killed two children with sticks and stones in Sari Pul province, where a woman's body was found. In Parwan, a person was killed with a knife and a young man shot and killed his father in Kandahar province. A drug addict killed his wife in the same province.

According to reports, two children of a family were killed when an old rocket shell exploded in Maidan Wardak province, unknown gunmen killed one person in Bamiyan and three people were killed in a conflict between two families in Baghlan.

In the previous week, 17 people were killed and 16 others were injured in various incidents across the country.

While before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of civilians, security forces and insurgents would get killed and wounded every week.

### Ban on UN female's staff

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) last week asked all its staff in Afghanistan not to come to their jobs until further notice after the Islamic Emirate issued an order to ban UN female employees.

The UN called the decision as illegal and unacceptable according to international laws. UN special representative for Afghanistan, Roza Otunbayeva, has been talking to the senior officials of the caretaker government in this regard.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called the ban a violation of the inalienable fundamental human rights of women and

called for immediately revoking the decision.

"It also violates Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights law and infringes on the principle of non-discrimination, which is a core tenet underpinning the United Nations Charter," he said in a statement.

Female staff members were essential for UN operations, including in the delivery of life-saving assistances, he said, warning the decision would harm the Afghan people, millions of whom were in need of assistance.

Guterres called on the caretaker government to reverse all measures restricting women's and girls' rights to work, education and freedom of movement. Six global organisations urged the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) to lift restrictions on Afghan women aid workers.

Save the Children, Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council, INTERSOS, Action Against Hunger and World Vision issued the call in a joint statement late on Wednesday.

The call came a day after the interim government extended the ban on Afghan women aid workers to UN agencies in the country.

Leaders of the six organ-

isations said: "Without our female staff, the humanitarian community cannot effectively reach women and girls. With more than 28 million people in desperate need of aid to survive, this act will cut off people's lifelines."

Also the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the US State Department, the Australian Foreign Minister, the Japanese Embassy in Kabul and the German Embassy in Afghanistan condemned the decision and called it a loss for Afghans.

In addition, Amnesty International, Doctors Without Borders, the Foreign Minister of Norway, the representative of the United Arab Emirates in the UN and some others said that the new decision of the Islamic Emirate would leave a negative impact on the world's interaction with Afghanistan.

In Ankara, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu discussed Afghanistan during a meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov.

The Turkish FM criticized the attitude of the Islamic Emirate towards women and girls in Afghanistan and called it an unacceptable.

The United Nations Security Council held a closed-door meeting on

Afghanistan at the request of Japan and the United Arab Emirates after the world's body said women's activities in their relevant agencies had been restricted in Afghanistan. The details of the meeting have not yet been published.

But speaking to reporters in New York after the UNSC meeting, US deputy ambassador to the UN, Robert Wood, said Washington considers the ban "basically as another effort by the Taliban to erase Afghan women and girls from society."

Barbara Woodward, the Permanent Representative of the UK to the UN, said that "it would be very hard to recognize the Taliban as a government" as they are "excluding women from society in general and that is not an acceptable step for recognition."

While asked about the ban, the Russian ambassador to the UN, Vassily Nebenzia, told reporters that "everybody was appalled by the decision that Taliban made."

"We agreed to work on a product by the Security Council, proposed by some delegations, to work it in a quiet atmosphere and come up with something that would be useful and balanced," he said.

### CSTO concerns about

### threats of terrorism from Afghanistan

The Russia-led bloc Collective Security Treaty Organization has once again expressed its concern about an increasing risk that terrorist groups from Afghanistan will infiltrate its member countries.

The Russian news agency, TASS, quoted SCTO Secretary General Imangali Tasmagambetov as saying that there was an increasing risk that terrorist groups and extremist ideas will infiltrate the territories of CSTO allies.

"Complex threats coming from Afghanistan are of particular concern," he pointed out, addressing a meeting of senior officials from the organization's Secretariat and Joint Headquarters. Tasmagambetov noted that apart from various terrorist groups, the forces behind illicit drug production and trafficking were also strengthening their positions in Afghanistan.

Before him, Chief of the Joint Staff of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) Colonel Anatoly Sidorov had said the number of Islamic State or Daesh had significantly increased to about 6,500, with up to 4,000 militants concentrated along Tajikistan's southern border in the provinces

of Badakhshan, Kunduz and Takhar.

But Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate, said Daesh group had no physical presence in any region of Afghanistan.

He said some countries were trying to portray Daesh as a great danger and then use it as propaganda against the Afghan people and the system.

### Relations with Russia

Last week, acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi met Russian ambassador in Kabul Dmitry Zhironov and assured him that no serious security threat inside or emanated from Afghanistan and that the Islamic Emirate was willing to strengthen its political and economic relations with Russia.

The meeting comes after Zamir Kabbulov, Russia's special representative for Afghanistan, said that Russia had started its consular services in Balkh province.

Muttaqi said that there was no serious security threat inside nor emanating from Afghanistan and said security had improved in the country.

"The meeting focused on detailed discussions of political, security, and economic cooperation between Afghanistan and Russia,"

the Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan wrote on its twitter page.

Dmitry Zhironov also stressed maintaining close ties between the two countries, expressing readiness for future visits by various government delegations between the two countries.

Zabihullah Mujahid once again called the international community's interaction with the caretaker government as beneficial and asked the international community to interact instead of putting pressure on the Islamic Emirate.

The embassies of China, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, India, Turkey, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are currently operational in Afghanistan.

### Continuity of aid

Japan last week pledged five million US dollars to Afghanistan in assistance and Saudi Arabia also donated 100 tons of dates to Afghanistan.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has appealed for 4.6 billion dollars for humanitarian aid in Afghanistan for the current year, but it has so far received only five percent of the appeal. The World Food Program says Afghanistan is facing the highest risk of famine in 25 years.



Aggression continues

# Israel hits Syria after rockets fired towards Golan Heights

JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israeli jets hit Syrian military targets on Sunday in response to rockets launched towards Israeli controlled territory overnight, Israel's military said, as violence flared again following cross-border exchanges of fire during the week.

State media in Syria reported explosions in the vicinity of the capital Damascus as Israel said its forces continued to hit Syrian territory after six rockets were fired overnight towards the Golan Heights. Israel said artillery and drone strikes hit the rocket launchers and were followed by airstrikes against a Syrian army compound, military radar systems and artillery posts. The Israeli military "sees the State of Syria responsible for all activities occurring within its territory and will not allow any attempts to violate Israeli sovereignty," the Israeli Defense Forces said in a statement.

The Syrian defence ministry said its air defences had responded to the Israeli attacks and intercepted some Israeli missiles. It said no casualties had been reported with only material damage caused by the strikes. Sirens had sounded earlier near towns in the Golan Heights as rockets were launched from Syrian territory, but no damage or casualties were reported. Israel seized the Golan Heights in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed the 1,200-square-km (460-square-mile) territory in 1981, a move not recognised by most of the international community.

Only three of the rockets crossed into Israeli-controlled territory, with two falling on open ground and a third inter-

cepted by air defence systems, the military said. Lebanon-Based Al Mayadeen TV said the rocket salvoes were claimed by Al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of the Iranian-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement.

On Thursday, more than 30 rockets were fired towards Israel from southern Lebanon, drawing cross-border counter-strikes from Israel on sites linked to the Islamist movement Hamas in Lebanon and Gaza. The cross-border exchanges came amid sharply increased tensions between Israel and Palestinian groups following Israeli police raids in recent days on Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, which caused outrage across the Arab world.

Israel said the operations were intended to dislodge groups of what police called extremists that had barricaded themselves into the mosque armed with firecrackers and stones. But the raids, during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, drew a furious reaction and concern even among Israel's U.S. allies, with mobile phone footage from inside the mosque showing police beating worshippers. The site in Jerusalem's Old City, holy to both Muslims and Jews, who know it as Temple Mount, has been a longstanding flashpoint, notably over the issue of Jewish visitors defying a ban on non-Muslim prayer in the mosque compound. Clashes there in 2021 helped set off a 10-day war between Israel and Hamas. The recent exchanges of cross-border fire have awakened memories of that conflict. Despite fears of further violence around the mosque on Saturday, there were no reports of serious disturbances overnight.

# China simulates striking Taiwan on second day of drills

TAIPEI (Reuters): China's military simulated precision strikes against Taiwan in a second day of drills around the island on Sunday, with the island's defence ministry reporting multiple air force sorties and that it was monitoring China's missile forces.

China, which claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, began three days of military exercises around the island on Saturday, the day after Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen returned from a brief visit to the United States.

Chinese state television reported that the combat readiness patrols and drills around Taiwan were continuing. "Under the unified command of the theatre joint operations command centre, multiple types of units carried out simulated joint precision strikes on key targets on Taiwan island and the surrounding sea areas, and continue to maintain an offensive posture around the island," it said.

The Chinese military's Eastern Theatre Command put out a short animation of the simulated attacks on its WeChat account, showing missiles fired from land, sea

and air into Taiwan with two of them exploding in flames as they hit their targets. A source familiar with the security situation in the region told Reuters that China had been conducting simulated air and sea attacks on "foreign military targets" in the waters off Taiwan's southwestern coast. "Taiwan is not their only target," the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media. "It's very provocative."

Taiwan's defence ministry said that as of 0800 GMT on Sunday they had spotted 70 Chinese aircraft, including Su-30 fighters and H-6 bombers, as well as 11 ships, around Taiwan. The ministry said they were paying particular attention to the People's Liberation Army's Rocket Force which is in charge of China's land-based missile system. "Regarding the movements of the Chinese communists' Rocket Force, the nation's military also has a close grasp through the joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance system, and air defence forces remain on high alert," the

ministry said. It reiterated that Taiwan's forces will "not escalate conflicts nor cause disputes" and would respond "appropriately" to China's drills. The security source said about 20 military ships, half from Taiwan and half from China, were engaged in a stand-off near the Taiwan Strait's median line, which has for years served as an unofficial barrier between the two sides, but did not behave provocatively.

China's aircraft carrier Shandong, which Taiwan has been monitoring since last week, is now more than 400 nautical miles off Taiwan's southeast coast and is carrying out drills, the source said.

Zhao Xiaozhuo of China's Academy of Military Sciences told the Chinese state-backed Global Times newspaper this was the first time China had openly talked of simulated attacks on targets in Taiwan. Key targets would include infrastructure such as runways, military logistics facilities and mobile targets "to annihilate them in one fell swoop if necessary", the report cited Zhao as saying.

# Pakistan welcomes 2,800 Sikh delegates joining Baisakhi celebrations

ISLAMABAD (APP): More than 2,800 Sikh pilgrims from India reached Lahore via Wagah border to attend the annual Baisakhi festival starting from Sunday (today).

According to details, Sikh pilgrims from India will participate in the main event at Gurdwara Panja Sahib Hasanabdal on April 14. During the visit, pilgrims will visit Dera Sahib, Panja Sahib, Nankana Sahib and Kartarpur Sahib.

The Additional Secretary of Evacuee Trust Property Board Rana Shahid while talking to a private news channel, has welcomed the Sikh brothers and said all arrangements related to clean drinking water, clean wash-rooms, trains, sitting arrangements and security have been made available for the Sikh yatrees. After attending the main ceremony at the Gurdwara Panja Sahib (Hasanabdal), the pilgrims would also visit Nankana Sahib and other places, he added.

A Sikh delegate commented that they were very happy to come to Pakistan as its people give a message of brotherhood by promoting peace in the sub-continent. "The arrangements made by the Pakistan government for us are impressive," said another delegate. Sikh pilgrims will leave for India on April 18 after performing religious rituals. It should be remembered that every year, a large number of Sikh pilgrims from India visit Pakistan to participate in various religious festivals and events.

# Islamabad court grants one-day physical remand of Ali Amin

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A local court granted one-day physical remand of Pakistani Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Amin Gandapur on Sunday.

The duty magistrate began hearing in connection with threatening audio case filed against Gandapur, in which the prosecutor sought a five-day physical remand of the PTI leader. At the beginning of the hearing, the prosecutor told the court that Gandapur had to undergo a test and the police had to collect evidence. He read out the details of FIR against the PTI leader, saying Gandapur mentioned the plan to attack Islamabad in the audio linked to the case. He said that the former lawmaker threatened to gather weapons to fight against the police. "This was a part of the attack on the judicial complex," the prosecutor said adding that all the offences included in the FIR were of serious nature and were non-bailable.

The prosecutor argued that a suspect could be sent on remand for 90 days. At this, the magistrate inquired that the prosecution had demanded a 15-day remand.

The prosecutor stated that it was the minimum duration that they had requested. At this point, Gandapur's lawyer Babar Awan started his arguments, saying the date and time mentioned in the FIR were of immense importance, while it didn't mention the police or the individual responsible. "The complaint stated that [the complainant] was sitting in his house when the audios of Ali Amin were aired," Awan stated.



LAHORE: Christian community attending religious rituals on the Easter service at St. John's Church Regal.

# President directs FOSPAAH to afford hearing opportunity in alleged harassment case

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has directed the Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace (FOSPAAH) to decide the matter of alleged sexual harassment at Air University, Islamabad afresh by affording opportunity of hearing to both the parties.

The president noted that the Ombudsman had previously not given an opportunity to the parties, including the opportunity to produce evidence and had rejected the complaint of the woman complainant in a slipshod manner, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Sunday.

The president gave these remarks while deciding on a case where a woman employee of the Air University had filed a complaint before FOSPAAH that she faced workplace harassment at the hands of a senior university official in 2019 when she reported a serious matter of MBBS students using drugs in the college premises and their involvement in immoral activities. FOSPAAH had rejected her complaint by stating that the com-

plainant had failed to prove her case beyond reasonable doubt and that the complainant had leveled allegations of general nature.

Feeling aggrieved, the complainant filed a representation with the president.

The president said that the denial to afford opportunity of producing evidence was violation of Article 10-A as enshrined in the Constitution, provisions of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010 and the principles of natural justice.

He, therefore, set aside the order of FOSPAAH and remitted the matter to the ombudsman to decide it afresh by affording opportunity of hearing to the parties.

The president further said that the allegations narrated by the complainant against that accused were of serious nature which needed appropriate probe and evidence to reach the right conclusion.

He noted that that the ombudsman, instead of following the procedure, had drawn the conclusion on the basis of contents of the complaint by observing that "the complainant has

levelled allegations of general nature against the administration, and that a representative of the organization appeared and told that none of the complaints had been ever filed and he belied the stance of the complainant."

The president observed that the ombudsman had placed reliance solely on the contents of the complaint and the statement of representative of the organization and as a sequel rejected the complaint.

No opportunity of producing evidence or cross examining the representative had been afforded to the complainant despite the fact that in the preliminary order, the learned ombudsman had observed that the allegations leveled by the complainant were of grave nature which required evidence, but subsequently with utter disregard of this preliminary order, no evidence was recorded and the complaint was rejected in a slipshod manner, he added. The president concluded that in view of the gravity of allegations, full opportunity of hearing to the parties should have been afforded including opportunity to produce respective evidence.

# ECP issues 30-point code of conduct for international election observation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued a 30-point code of conduct for international observers and media persons, providing guidelines for conduct, impartiality, and security during the observation and reporting of the country's electoral process, and aims to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections. According to the code of conduct, individuals or groups who observe and report on the electoral process in Pakistan must read and sign a Code of Conduct that includes a pledge.

This code of conduct is also applicable on official social media accounts of international newspapers, channels, media persons and other social media influencers.

International observers and media personnel must follow the rules for visa applications and respect Pakistan's sovereignty and the fundamental rights and freedoms of its people. They cannot stay beyond the duration of their granted visa.

International observers and media should follow the constitution and laws of Pakistan and respect the Election Commission and its officials. Observations and reporting should be impartial, objective, and accurate. International observers and media must follow instructions from the Election Commission and State

authorities and maintain a respectful attitude. Comply with safety advisories from the government or security agencies. Respect the culture and customs of the country and act professionally.

Display official identification badges at all times and present them when requested. Maintain political impartiality, with no bias or preference for political parties or candidates. Obey rules for photography and restrictions on taking pictures.

Ask questions and clear queries without obstructing the election process. Work harmoniously with other observers, media, and polling staff. Consult with Election Commission for safety and select areas for observation to ensure balanced reporting. International Election Observers and media persons may hire the services of Pakistani interpreters if required.

However, they shall provide all necessary details of these interpreters while applying for accreditation card. These interpreters shall also remain non-partisan and unbiased.

Observe and report without interfering in the proceedings. No interference in internal process at any polling station. Avoid personal/professional relationships that could lead to a conflict of interest.

No gifts or favors from political

parties/organizations/persons involved in the election. No wearing/carrying/displaying of party symbols/colors. No personal comments on observation or conclusion to media. Avoid activities that favor or oppose political parties/candidates. International media content should not threaten the peace/security of Pakistan or incite hatred/violence against any group/person.

Avoid personal attacks on candidates/political parties based on gender, religion, sect, caste, etc.

No broadcasting/printing of content that adversely affects public opinion against a political party/candidate. Refrain from conducting surveys/polls that may influence voters' choice. Only broadcast/publish official election results issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Share findings/methodology/recommendations/reports with Election Commission of Pakistan. The government and law enforcing agencies of Pakistan shall provide security to International Observers and media persons. Violation of the code of conduct may result in withdrawal of observer accreditation/journalist accreditation.

The authority to determine the violation also rests with the Election Commission of Pakistan.

# UN recognised Pakistan's Indus Delta for global convention

ISLAMABAD (APP): The shrinking delta of Mighty River Indus of Pakistan has emerged on the United Nations radar after it accepted to create a global convention on all deltas of the world to ensure its protection against rising climate change impacts casting serious impact on its nature and habitat.

The development occurred after a strong international civil society nexus of experts, academicians, policy makers and stakeholders unanimously raised their voice for an international UN Convention for the Conservation River Delta (UN-CCRD) on the sequel of its UN Geneva Pact and many others to ensure that all the major deltas of the world were dying due to adverse impacts of climate change and environmental degradation namely sea intrusion, sea level rise, droughts, depleting water flows, shrinking creeks and others.

The African Centre for Climate Actions and Rural Development Initiative (ACCARD) in collaboration with the Nigeria's Bayelsa

State Government, the Institute for Environmental Diplomacy and Security at the University of Vermont, the Consortium for Capacity Building at the University of Colorado, Transboundary Water Cooperation Network (TWIN), Water Environment Forum-Pakistan, Center for the Advancement of Public Action (CAPA) Bennington College; Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam and Center for Environment and Sustainable Livelihood Projects (CESLP), among others hosted a side event at the UN Water conference titled "Integrative Highland to Ocean (H2O) Action for Disappearing Deltas: Towards a UN Convention on Conserving River Deltas.

Former Senator and federal minister for information and broadcasting and Chairman World Environment Forum, a civil society organization working to protect water resources and environment participated virtually to represent Pakistan in the sideline event

whereas Freeman Elohor Oluowo of ACCARD and Prof. Dr. Asim Zia, Director, Institute for Environmental Diplomacy, Vermont physically participated in the session. The global convention would help in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030 namely SDG-6 demanding "Clean Water", SDG-13 "Climate Action", and SDG-14 "Conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources".

The announcement has come after successful campaign of the above mentioned coalition of non-governmental and civil society organizations who started the drive for a global convention of UN to protect deltas.

The speakers, and experts discussed deltas starting from Nigerian Niger Delta, Indus Delta of Pakistan, Mekong River, Colorado, Nile and St. Lawrence transboundary river basins.

Each of these deltas possessed varying risks owing to spiking up sea level rise and salt water intru-

sion from the oceans, and rapidly melting glaciers, increasing dams and shifting rainfall patterns in the highlands. The UN had accepted that all the world deltas were under threat and sea level rise and intrusion was causing damage to soil and water ecosystems.

It is not only nature but rather the communities, the livelihood opportunities and human lives that were diminishing and demanded the world to respond for their protection. There will be various activities in Delta countries towards achieving the UN Convention for the Conservation River Delta.

As per the UN SDGs website, the United Nations Convention for the Conservation River Deltas (UN-CCRD) objectives are to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity among delta communities and water stakeholders to climate-related hazards and natural disasters through increased knowledge sharing, partnerships, global attention, UN recognition, and community participation.

# Some elements intend to involve institutions in politics: Murtaza Abbassi

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbassi Sunday while questioning the impartiality of the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) said that the present judicial system did not accept a four-three verdict, this was the same system that had disqualified former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and also murdered Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

He expressed these views while addressing a huge gathering after the inauguration of the Sui gas provision project for the 38 villages of Tehsil Lower Tanawal with a cost of 1.68 billion rupees.

Murtaza Abbassi further said that these are the elements that intend to stop the development and pros-

perity of the country by involving institutions in politics. He said that Pakistan Muslim League-N has started CPEC, and established industries, and motorways and when PTI led government took over they stopped most of the developmental schemes.

Nawaz Sharif would come back and would also bring the country on track for development, we have sacrificed our politics but would not let Pakistan down, he said. Murtaza Abbassi assured the people of Lower Tanawal of the provision of funds for developmental projects and said despite the fact that this is not my constituency but every person in the area would be benefited from the gas provision project whether he requested this facility or not. He said that after the

refusal of the No Objection Certificate (NOC) by the Abbottabad Cantonment Board (ACB) we have diverted the gas pipeline route from Abbottabad to Havelian and started installation.

The minister said that during the last 20 years, PTI didn't spend even a small amount for the development and uplifting of Tanawal like PML-N has allocated huge funds for developmental schemes including Sui gas provision projects and others, he asked the people of Tanawal that now you will have to decide whether support PML-N or PTI. He said I am thankful to former prime minister Nawaz Sharif who had allocated 1.6 billion rupees for the sui gas provision project for Tanawal and with a cost of 560 million rupees during his tenure.