

**Three children killed**  
CHAMAN (PPI): Three children were killed and five persons injured when an earthquake demolished rooftop in Chaman, rescue sources said on Saturday. The quake hit Bilalzai area near Chaman, causing collapse of house roof. As a result, three children were killed and five people were injured. The victims were identified as two girls and a boy aged. Two women were among the injured.

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**Hasan Niazi granted bail**  
Syed Waliullah Shah  
NOWSHERA: Session Judge Nowshera Asad Hameed Bangash has granted bail to Hasan Niazi, nephew of PTI chairman Imran Khan, on Saturday. During hearing, large number of PTI workers and Insaf Lawyer Forum members were present before court to argued Hasan Niazi case. On the eve of hearing, ILF provincial leader Mian Nauman Kakakhel Advocate addressed PTI's workers to obey the law.

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# Allies-Statement Coalition govt demands polls simultaneously; warns deviation to create political crisis

## F.P. Report

LAHORE (APP): The coalition government Saturday demanded that elections across the country should be held on the same day as it was a basic constitutional prerequisite for impartial, transparent and free polls and any deviation from it would create a disastrous political crisis for the country. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired the meeting of the allied parties in the government. Former president Asif Ali Zardari, chief of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, and leaders of other parties attended the meeting through video link. According to a statement issued here, the leaders considered in detail the overall political situation in the country and held consultations on future strategy. They said any deviation would be similar to a suicide attack on the economic interests of the country. The meeting made it clear that the conspiracy to create an unending political and constitutional crisis on the pressure of a party which was attacking the state institutions with its gangs, would not be acceptable in any way. They were of the view that unfortunately an administrative issue was turned into a political and constitutional crisis and ignoring of economic, security, constitutional, legal and political affairs would be akin to neglecting interests of the state. They said the haste to achieve a particular objective for giving relief to a party looked like a political agenda and it was against the constitution, law and authority of the Election Commission. According to article 218(3) and other articles of the constitution, holding the election was the prerogative of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and according to the Constitution, "Supreme

Court should not interfere in the authority of an independent and autonomous Election Commission". They said the four honourable judges of the Supreme Court gave the same verdict in the suo moto case number 1/2023. The meeting expressed their "no confidence in the three-member bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice and comprising Justice Ijaz ul Hasan and Justice Muneeb Akhtar and demanded that the majority decision of the four members in the suo moto case 1/2023 should be accepted and the current judicial proceedings should be stopped". "It is unfortunate that the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court wanted to impose the decision of the minority on the decision of the majority," they said. They said this behaviour was not only a clear example of a grave constitutional and political crisis in the country but was also evident of "deviation from the constitution" and laid down a legal procedure which was a "flagrant violation of the basic concept of separation of powers of the state". The meeting raised the issue that a bench headed by a senior most judge of the Supreme Court Justice Qazi Faez Isa ordered the suspension of hearing of all cases under article 184(3) of the constitution, adding that contradictory court decisions had created an unimplementable and complex situation and respect of the decision of the bench of Justice Qazi Faez Isa was also mandatory for everyone. The leaders demanded that action should be initiated on the references filed by Pakistan Bar Council and other associations under article 209. They clarified that Justice Ijaz ul Hasan had already voluntarily recused himself from the bench in this particular case, so he could not be part of the present bench. In this respect, orders of Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail were clear

and it all was present on the record. The meeting urged the Chief Justice of Pakistan to listen to the dissenting voices rising from the benches of the Supreme Court as chief of the institution and immediately form a full court to negate the impression of "one man show". They declared that the "verdict of the three members on the issue of article 63A was the cause of political instability and through it the constitution was re-written". They also stated that clear "division could be seen in the thinking of the Supreme Court, therefore the apex court should refrain from issuing controversial political decisions". It was urged that the impression regarding the Chief Justice and some other judges should be removed that they were adopting a special discriminatory attitude in the matter of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). They also highlighted "that those who are advising politicians to take decisions by sitting together are also divided and they should create unity and unanimity among themselves". Federal Minister for Law Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar informed the leadership about the legislation enacted in the Parliament about article 184(3) of the constitution and briefed on the situation arising out of the conflicting decisions and formation of benches. The meeting fully supported the recent legislation in the Parliament and said the legislation had removed obstacles in the way of justice. The new legislation had put a stop to the path of one-sided justice to the people and gave them the right to appeal which was according to natural justice and the basic intent of the constitution. The Parliament had given a clear opinion about the article 184(3) through its legislation, they said, adding Parliament was a supreme institution and its opinion should be respected by all.

## Maryam announces relaunch of MSF

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice-President and Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz Sharif Saturday announced the relaunch of Muslim Students Federation (MSF) with new vigour.

The PML-N leader invited the youth to join the MSF in droves. The PML-N has started restructuring the Muslim Students Federation. The 'QR Code' has been issued through which the youth can register themselves. Maryam Nawaz tweeted that the MSF had played a fundamental role in the formation of Pakistan. She said that scan the QR code and become part of the dynamic and active organization of students and youth, and with your involvement, Pakistan will be made a strong, active and developed country. On the other hand, PML-N leader and former Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry has in a statement asked Imran Niazi and Fawad Chaudhry "just don't have to panic".

## LHC to hear contempt plea against CEC

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court will hear a contempt petition against the Chief Election Commissioner and other ECP members for postponing the election to Punjab Assembly earlier scheduled to be held on April 30.

LHC judge Justice Jawad Hassan will hear advocate Muhammad Shahid Rana's contempt petition against the CEC and other members on April 3 (Monday). The petition states that the LHC had ordered to conduct elections in Punjab within 90 days and the Election Commission of Pakistan announced to hold the polls on April 30. But later, the ECP changed the poll date despite court's order.

The petition further states that the ECP changed the poll date at the behest of PDM. By changing the Punjab election date, the ECP has violated the court order which is tantamount to contempt of court, it added. The petitioner requested the court to initiate contempt proceedings against the CEC and other members of the ECP.

## Hajj scheme 2023 reviewed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting to review progress on Hajj Scheme-2023.

Mufti Abdul Shakoor, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Secretary Religious Affairs, Special Secretary Finance and senior officers from Finance and Religious Affairs Ministries attended the meeting, said a press release issued here Saturday.

The meeting reviewed and discussed progress on the Hajj-2023. Secretary Religious Affairs briefed the meeting that receipt of applications for the Hajj-2023 was closed on 31st March, 2023 as per the government policy. It was also informed that 72869 applications had been received in the banks against the government regular scheme quota of 44190.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and interfaith Harmony also provided details about its foreign exchange requirement for the Hajj-2023. It was desired by the Chair that complete and fully reconciled information regarding the final number of applications received under the Regular Scheme should be collected from the banks by Tuesday 4th April, 2023.

On receipt of complete information, the government shall review and decide the final number of intended applicants for Regular Hajj Scheme-2023. Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar stated that Hajj was a sacred religious obligation and the Government of Pakistan shall facilitate the Hujjaj in every possible manner.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa administering oath from Justice Musart Hilali as first ever women Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court.

## Justice Hilali takes oath as first PHC woman CJ

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa administered oath from Justice Musart Hilali as first ever women Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) while legal fraternity congratulated new chief justice, on Saturday.

Senior Supreme Court Advocate and Ishaq Law Chamber head Ishaq Ali Qazi declared appointment of Justice Musart Hilali as important which promote image of Pakistan on global fronts. He claimed that first ever High Court Judge in Pakistan's history also belonged to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa namely Justice Rashida Khalid who was appointed as Judge of International Court of Justice on becoming 2nd on seniority list.

The role of Justice Musart Hilali is appreciable at both bench and bar while in the Bar Chief Justice played active role for wel-

fare of legal fraternity and she is also well-known Human Rights defender, Ishaq Ali Qazi advocate argued.

The legal fraternity also appreciated Justice Musart Hilali tenure as and claimed that she has granted decision on merit ensure dissemination of justice and claimed that Justice Musart Hilali didn't become victim of Doctrine of Necessity to favor rulers.

The senior lawyer Ishaq Ali Qazi claimed that Justice Musart Hilali should be remember in judicial history of PHC for her commitment for establishment of Rule of Law. He added that during her legal practice Justice Musart Hilali become voice for voiceless in cases of Human Rights violations.

President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday approved the appointment of Justice Musart Hilali as the chief justice. She has replaced outgoing Chief Justice Qaiser Rasheed. She is the

second female judge to be elevated to the chief justice of a high court in Pakistan after Justice Tahira Safdar, the CJ of Balochistan High Court (BHC). Justice Hilali will serve as CJ till her retirement.

Born in Peshawar on August 08, 1961, she received Law Degree from Khyber Law College Peshawar University and enrolled as an Advocate of District Courts in 1983, as an Advocate of the High Court in 1988 and as an Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2006.

Being a female she had several achievements in her career including being the first female elected office bear on the post of Secretary at the bar from 1988-1989, vice president at the bar (twice) from 1992 to 1994, General Secretary 1997-1998, first female twice elected as an executive member of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) from 2007-2008 and 2008-2009.

## Pakistan, UAE to boost coop in diverse sectors

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and United Arab Emirates on Saturday agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation in diverse sectors. The understanding was reached during a meeting of UAE delegation with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad. The delegation was led by Chairman of Hayat Bio-Tech and a member of the ruling family of the UAE Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook al Maktoum.

Welcoming the delegation, the Prime Minister said brotherly relations between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates are deep rooted in history. He underlined that Pakistan attached great importance to further expanding brotherly ties with the UAE in diverse fields including trade and investment. The Prime Minister welcomed the keen interest of Hayat Bio-Tech to invest in Pakistan's pharmaceutical sector, especially in vaccine manufacturing. He also invited the visiting delegation to invest in the renewable energy sector and assured that foreign investors would be provided all possible facilitation.

On the occasion, Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook al Maktoum said they are aware of huge investment potential of Pakistan and UAE is looking forward to further expanding its footprint in the energy and health sectors. He expressed keen desire to further expand UAE's investment portfolio in Pakistan. The dignitary also briefed the Prime Minister about their ongoing 1200 MW power plant project undertaken in collaboration with the Government of Sindh which would be a hybrid power plant of solar and wind energy.

He expressed keen desire to further expand UAE's investment portfolio in Pakistan. The dignitary also briefed the Prime Minister about their ongoing 1200 MW power plant project undertaken in collaboration with the Government of Sindh which would be a hybrid power plant of solar and wind energy.

## Imran warns of protests if polls not held within time

LAHORE (Agencies): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan lashed out at the Mohsin Raza Naqvi-led interim Punjab government and remarked that there was no reason for the "attack" on his house in his absence. The Punjab police had dismantled the main gate of Khan's residence with the help of heavy machinery and broke into his house when he left for Islamabad to attend a hearing in the Toshakhana case.

Terming Punjab's interim CM Naqvi, Punjab Inspector General of Police (IGP) Usman Anwar, and CCPO Lahore Bilal Saddique Kamyana as "criminals", Khan said that a case has been prepared in connection with the "attack" on his house, adding that it would be filed soon. Talking about the current political situation, the deposed premier said that PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi and PTI President

Parvez Elahi have been given the task to restore contacts with the other political parties.

## Imran files contempt plea against Pemra

LAHORE (INP): Former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan has filed a contempt court plea against Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) over ban on his speeches in Lahore High Court (LHC).

As per details, the plea was filed against PEMRA by Barrister Ahmad Pansota on behalf of PTI chief Imran Khan and the Chairman PEMRA has been made respondent in the plea. The plea stated that despite the suspension of PEMRA ban from LHC, the TV channels are pressurized to not broadcast PTI chief Imran Khan's speeches.



KARACHI: People carrying the coffin victim of stampede for funeral prayer.

## Four soldiers martyred in terrorist attack: ISPR

### F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Four soldiers were martyred on Saturday in a terrorist attack along the Pak-Iran border in the Jalgai sector of Balochistan's Kech district, according to the military's media wing.

"In the attack, unfortunately, four soldiers, including Naik Shair Ahmed, Lance Naik Muhammad Asghar, Sepoy Muhammad Irfan and Sepoy Abdur Rasheed, were critically injured and later, embraced martyrdom."

The ISPR said that "necessary contact" with the Iranian side was being made for "effective action against terrorists" on their territory and to prevent such incidents in the future. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of four security personnel in an attack of terrorists in district Kech in Balochistan.

He paid tribute to the martyred Naik Sher Ahmed, Lance Naik Muhammad Asghar, Sepoy Muhammad Irfan and



Naik Shair Ahmed Sepoy Abdur Rasheed  
Lance Naik Muhammad Asghar Senov Muhammad Irfan

Sepoy Abdul Rashid. The prime minister condoled and sympathized with the bereaved families of the martyred. He said sons of the nation were sacrificing their precious lives for the defence, security and protection of the motherland. "Nation salutes the martyrs who sacrificed themselves for the country."

He said eradication of terrorism was a national agenda and with the help of Allah Almighty terrorists will be eliminated. He

prayed for the elevation of the ranks of martyrs and for patience to the bereaved families. Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah also condemned the attack and paid tribute to the martyrs. "The sons of the country are laying down their lives to protect their land, the whole nation salutes them, the nation is united in the war against terrorism," he tweeted, adding that "this scourge will be eradicated."





## Sanjrani condemns terrorist attack in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Saturday strongly condemned the recent incident of terrorism in Balochistan, in which four security personnel lost their lives.

The Chairman expressed deep sadness and sorrow over the loss of lives in the attack and extended his heartfelt condolences to the families of the martyred.

In a condolence message to bereaved families, the Senate Chairman praised the bravery and sacrifices of the security forces who have been at the forefront of the fight against terrorism in the country.

The Chairman further added that such cowardly acts of terrorism cannot deter the resolve of the security forces and the nation in their fight against

terrorism.

The Senate Chairman concluded his message by offering prayers for the elevation of the martyred security personnel and expressing solidarity with their families. He reiterated that the nation stands united in its resolve to eliminate the scourge of terrorism from the country.

**NA Speaker, Deputy Speaker condemn terrorist attack on security forces in Balochistan; offer condolences**

National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durrani on Saturday strongly condemned the terrorist attack on security forces in Kech district of Balochistan.

The attack, which occurred today, resulted in the martyrdom of four

security personnel.

Expressing deep sorrow and grief over the loss of precious lives, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker NA paid tribute to the services of these brave sons of the motherland who had laid down their lives in the line of duty.

They also paid tribute to the sacrifices of the security personnel who are responsible to maintain the security of the country and its citizens.

The Speaker and the Deputy Speaker offered their condolences to the families of the martyred personnel and prayed for their elevated ranks in the hereafter. They also expressed solidarity with the bereaved families and assured them that the entire nation stands with them in this hour of grief.



ISLAMABAD: Former Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and Syed Khurshed Ahmed Shah Federal Minister for Water Resources met Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Finance Division.

## APNS felicitates Sohail on his appointment

ISLAMABAD (APP): All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) on Saturday welcomed and congratulated Sohail Ali Khan on his appointment as Secretary (In-charge) of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

In a statement Secretary General APNS Sarmad Ali expressed the hope that the problem of print media would not only be resolved

soon but also strengthen the government's relations with media under the Secretaryship of Sohail Ali Khan.

"I would like to take this opportunity to bring in your (Sohail) notice the issues pertaining to the print media which are still lying unattended and these included our pending request for a 50 per cent increase in government

advertising rates which have been not increased since 2017, enhancement in the quantum of government advertising and payments of long outstanding dues," he said.

Sarmad Ali assured APNS full support and cooperation to the newly appointed Secretary Information & Broadcasting in the larger interest of the media and country.

## Bilawal condemned terrorist attack on forces

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has strongly condemned the terrorist attack on security forces in Kech district.

According to the statement issued by Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP expressed grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of four security forces personnel in the incident and said that the sacrifice of martyred Naik Sher Ahmed, Lance Naik Mohammad Asghar, Sepoy Muhammad Irfan and Sepoy Abdul Rasheed will not go in vain. "We will account for every drop of blood of the martyred personnel from the terrorists," he pledged.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has expressed heartfelt condolences and solidarity with the families of the martyrs.

## PML-N, coalition partners for polls in Oct: Khurram

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Energy Khurram Dastgir Khan on Saturday said that Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and coalition partners were in a favour of holding elections in October 2023.

Conducting elections in this current political, economic and security situation was not feasible for

this country, he said while talking to a private news channel.

He said early elections could create many issues for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) like the problems of delimitation unresolved. After compiling data from the census results, the ECP could hold free, fair and

transparent elections, he added.

In reply to a question about security for polling stations, he said that Pakistan Army could not deploy jawans in every corner of the polling stations.

He said Pakistan's Armed forces were fighting the war on terrorism with success. Keeping in view

the current situation, he suggested all the political parties including the PTI to wait for elections till October.

The government would provide all required funds, security and other essential items to the ECP for conducting transparent elections across Pakistan in October, he said.

## Zaid achieves incredible YouTube milestone

KARACHI (APP): Zaid Khan Tessori, son of Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori, achieved an incredible YouTube milestone, becoming the youngest YouTuber to hit 100,000 subscribers in one month.

Zaid Khan Tessori, who is just twelve years old, released his first video on his

YouTube channel in February. He got famous for his gaming videos and entertaining vlogs, said Governor Sindh's spokesperson.

During this one month, Zaid collaborated with other famous Pakistani YouTube celebrities as well. From Ducky Bhairi to Maaz Safder, many famous

Pakistani YouTubers featured in his videos.

'Kahani Suno' sensation Kaifi Khalil also made an appearance in one of Zaid's videos when the former visited his residence in Karachi. Currently, Zaid Khan has crossed 100,000 subscribers on YouTube alone.

## WASA disconnects 581 connections

LAHORE (APP): Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Managing Director Ghufuran Ahmad said that the agency had disconnected 581 connections of defaulters during

the month of March. Presiding over a meeting to review weekly performance of all towns here on Saturday, the MD said that Nishtar town had made a recovery of Rs 127 million

during the month of February.

He said that in one week WASA, Lahore had carried out desilting of 47 km long sewers.

Ghufuran Ahmad had

directed the officers of operation wings to expedite the desilting work.

All town directors had been directed to complete targets of desilting drains and sewerage lines.



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- Consultant Pathologist
- Consultant Physician Critical Care & Pulmonary Medicine
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- Locum Consultant Pathologist
- Locum Consultant Radiologist
- Consultant Breast Surgeon
- Consultant Upper GI Surgeon
- Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
- Consultant Head and Neck Surgeon

- Consultant Urologist
- Locum Consultant Urologist
- Locum Consultant Anaesthetist
- Locum Consultant Internal Medicine

### Senior Instructors:

- Senior Instructor Clinical and Radiation Oncology
- Senior Instructor Medical Oncology
- Senior Instructor Anaesthesia
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- Senior Instructor Paediatric Oncology
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**Note:** All Senior Instructor positions for Karachi & Peshawar involve working at Lahore for two years, followed by two years of training overseas. All applicants for Senior Instructor positions need to have passed IELTS test, or an acceptable alternative, at the appropriate level. For further details regarding the position and eligibility criteria, please visit our website on [www.shaukatkhanum.org.pk](http://www.shaukatkhanum.org.pk)

**TO APPLY:** Only online applications will be entertained. Please share your CV at the email address given below and do mention the position applied for in the subject line. We regret that only shortlisted candidates will be notified.

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**Government of Pakistan**  
**PAKISTAN ELECTRONIC MEDIA REGULATORY AUTHORITY**  
**ISLAMABAD**

## APPLICATIONS ARE INVITED FOR AWARD OF CABLE TV LICENCES

Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) invites applications under Section 19 of the PEMRA Ordinance 2002 (as amended by PEMRA Amendment Act 2007) for the award of Cable TV licences in different Cities of Pakistan. The Application Form along with Details of the Cities, Guidelines to establish/operate Cable TV Networks and Bidding Procedure can be obtained from the concerned PEMRA Regional Office and PEMRA website i.e., [www.pemra.gov.pk](http://www.pemra.gov.pk).

Interested firm/companies shall apply through the prescribed Application Form, along with requisite documents and application processing fee (non-refundable fee) of Rs.5,000/- in the form of Pay Order/Bank Draft in favor of PEMRA, Islamabad for each area applied for. **The duly filled Application Form must be submitted in the concerned Regional Office only.**

Only shortlisted firms/companies fulfilling the requisite criteria shall be invited to participate in an open and transparent bidding process and Cable TV licences shall be issued to the successful applicants after completion of all legal requirements under PEMRA laws and payment of requisite fees. Moreover a person who has already been issued a Cable TV licence for the proposed cities shall not be eligible to apply for the same area(s) for which he has been issued a licence.

Applications submitted after due date or incomplete applications shall be rejected. Last date of submission of application is **15<sup>th</sup> May, 2023**. For further information, **you may visit concerned Regional Office of PEMRA**. The bidding process shall be held in the respective Regional Office of PEMRA.

The submission of applications/shortlisting shall not establish any right or claim of any applicant company whatsoever for the grant of a licence. The Authority reserves the right to accept or reject all or any application by recording reason in writing in the light of PEMRA laws.

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**PEMRA Headquarters**  
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**Tel: 92 (51) 9107115, 92(51) 9107178**

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PID(I) 6026/22





# 41 Administrative secretaries, officers reshuffled in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): In a major reshuffle in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa bureaucracy, the provincial government with the consent of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has reshuffled 41 administrative secretaries and other high-ranking officers to ensure the conduct of free, fair and impartial general elections.

A notification KP Establishment department received to APP disclosed that six officers of BS-21, 30 officers of BS-20 and four of BS-19 were posted and transferred.

Some 13 officers including one BS-21 were asked to report to the establishment department.

The six officers of BS-21 including Ikramullah, Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) Planning and Development (P&D)

department have been transferred and posted as Senior Member Board of Revenue KP while Muhammad Zubair Asghar Qureshi has replaced him as ACS P&D.

Similarly, Secretary Climate Change, Forestry, Environment and Wildlife Muhammad Abid Majeed (BS-21) has been transferred and posted as Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs department.

Khayam Hassan Khan, Managing Director Lissail-e-Wal Mahrom Foundation KP (BS-21) has been appointed as Secretary P&D.

Masood Ahmad, Secretary of Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights department has been transferred and posted as Secretary Inter-Provincial Coordination department, while Rooh

Ullah Secretary of Labour (BS-21) was transferred and asked to report to the establishment department.

The BS-20 officers included Mahmood Hassan, Principal Secretary to Governor KP has been transferred to the establishment department while he was replaced by an officer of BS-19 Mazhar Irshad.

Syed Nazar Hussain Shah, Secretary Inter-Provincial Coordination has been transferred and posted as Secretary of Climate Change.

Khushal Khan, Secretary of Home and Tribal Affairs (BS-20) asked to report to the establishment department.

Dawood Khan, Secretary of High Education asked to report to the establishment department.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali meeting with Superintendent Engineer PESCO Peshawar Circle Habib ur Rehman Marwat.

## Pak-Afghan liaison body meets to discuss issues hindering bilateral trade

PESHAWAR (APP): A meeting of the Pak-Afghan liaison committee held to discuss different issues causing impediments in smooth sailing of bilateral trade and promotion of commercial activities in the region

The meeting was held at Model Custom Collectorate Peshawar with Director Directorate of Transit Trade, Arbab Qaiser Hameed in chair.

According to a press release issued here on Saturday, the meeting was attended by members of Pak-Afghan Liaison Committee including Director Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce (PAJCCI) Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, former SVP Sarhad Chamber, Engr Manzoor Elahi, President Khyber Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Syed Jawad Hussain Kazmi, VP Frontier Custom Agents Association, Imtiaz Ahmad

Ali, Commercial Attache Afghan Consulate, Waheedullah Himmat, Deputy Attache, Hameed Fazil Khel and others.

Speaking with the participants of the meeting, Director PAJCCI, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi raises points that goods checking by different departments are causing delay in clearance of containers which is creating a lot of problems for businessmen.

Apart of it, Zia continued, clearance of containers at Karachi sea port takes more than ten days ensuing in infliction of demurrage and detention charges.

Zia said despite issuance of notification regarding Cross Tufting of containers in Karachi, the decision is not implemented as a result of which containers are going to Afghanistan and take a lot of time in reaching back, forcing businessmen to

pay extra money under the head of detention charges.

The participants of the meeting also demanded permission for transportation of Afghan Transit trade goods in railway besides its shifting in bonded carrier.

They also demanded approval for filing of GD at Azakhel Dry Port so that the custom clearing agents of KP should continue their business.

Replying to the demands made in the meeting, Director Transit Trade, Arbab Qaiser Hameed said that he is well aware of problems being faced by business community.

Arbab Qaiser who is also Chairman of the Liaison committee held out assurance of his full cooperation to business community and said decisions will be taken with mutual coordination and consultation.

## PR police seize Rs2.20 million fake currency; arrest four accused

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Railway Police have seized Rs2.20 million fake currency concealed in shoes and arrested four accused.

According to Railways Police, the fake currency notes of Rs1,000 and Rs5000 amounting to Rs2.20 million was hidden

in large shoes by three passengers travelling through Rehman Baba Express Train from Peshawar to Karachi.

On identification of the arrested smugglers, another accused was also apprehended from Khyber tribal district.

The accused identified

are Amir Sadeeq resident of Karachi, Wali Khan of Quetta, Mehmood of district Pasheen Balochistan and ringleader Mazhar Shah belonged to Khyber.

Case has been registered against all the accused under the relevant law and investigation was started.



PESHAWAR: A man buying vegetable from local market.

## Increase in Corona cases in KP reported

PESHAWAR (INP): An increase in corona cases in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Peshawar with 13 more cases of corona have been reported during the last 24 hours, an official of the Health Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said here Saturday.

He said the number of people who have died due to Corona in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is 6376 and the total number of corona cases has reached 2,25,336. However, a total of 13 people have recovered from Corona in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with the total number has become 2,187,94, the official of the Health Department informed.

The number of people who died due to coronavirus in Peshawar is 3153 with 11 new cases of corona have been reported in Peshawar and with this, the total number has become 85492.

He disclosed that 619 corona tests were conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the last twenty hours with the number of active cases in the province is 166.

## SACM expresses grief over Singh's death

PESHAWAR (APP): The Special Assistant to Chief Minister (SACM), Malik Mehr Elahi here on Saturday expressed grief and sorrow over the killing of a Sikh, Dayal Singh and marked the incident as a poor-spirited act of miscreants to derail interfaith harmony.

In a statement, Malik directed authorities concerned to arrest the killers of Dayal Singh and urged them to ensure the protection of minority communities in the province.

He also expressed heartfelt sympathies with Sikh community and said that Sikhs are our brothers and have always contributed significantly to the development of the country.

## Caretaker Minister takes notice Kashif Ullah Khalil

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister Prison and Housing Shafi Ullah Khan in taking notice the clash between prisoners the Central Jail Peshawar, asked the IG Jail to submit report in this regard.

Caretaker Provincial Minister Shafi Ullah Khan said that the stern action should be taken against who are involved in the types of in prisons should not happen again the implement.

## Christian killed

PESHAWAR (APP): Unknown motorcyclists killed a Christian in Sufaid Dheri area, said police on Saturday.

Kashif Masih was an employee in town-III and was on the way to his home when unknown assailants opened fire and killed him on the spot.

Sufaid Dheri police station registered the case and further investigation is underway.

## Rain predicted for KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Regional Meteorological Department on Saturday forecast scattered rain-thunderstorm and cloudy weather for most parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for next 24 hours.

Scattered rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds and isolated heavy falls is likely to occur over Chitral, Lower and Upper Dir, Malakand, Buner, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torgar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Hangu, Kurram, Karak, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, North and South Waziristan and Dera Ismail Khan districts while isolated hailstorm is also expected at a few places in the province.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Information, Religious and Minority Affairs Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Khakakhel meeting with Singh community.

## KP Minister visits late Dayal Singh's residence

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Information, Religious and Minority Affairs Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Khakakhel here on Saturday visited the residence of slain Dayal Singh and offered condolences with his relatives.

The minister met with relatives and elders of the Sikh community in

Peshawar's Dir Colony and offered condolences there. He said that the person involved in killing of Dayal Singh would be brought to justice and the search operation of the police continued day and night to arrest the culprit.

The minister assured them that necessary action had been taken for the immediate arrest of the elements involved in the murder. Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah ensured concrete measures to protect the citizens of the minority community.

The killing of Dayal Singh is a highly condemnable and brutal act, Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhil said. "I have come to ensure all kinds of assistance from the Chief

Minister and the provincial government," he said.

The killers, he said, will be brought to justice soon. The Chief Minister and the provincial government are giving Rs. 0.5 million to the next of kin immediately.

The provincial government has an equal share in the grief of the bereaved family, the minister added.

## Over 125 near, dear appointed in KP Assembly before end of PTI govt

PESHAWAR (APP): More than 125 near and dear to the former Chief Minister, Ministers and assembly staff were appointed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly before its dissolution by the PTI government.

An official document available with this agency revealed that despite advertisements in the newspapers the official rules and procedures were overlooked in order to accommodate the blue-eyed.

An official of KP assembly on the condition of anonymity disclosed that the advertisements in the newspapers were floated just to avoid any litigation and for face saving, adding that thousands of candidates applied for the posts but amazingly only the relatives of the former Chief Minister, Ministers and Assembly staff fulfilled the

required experience and were appointed.

The document revealed that for Grade 16 to 18 the candidates close to former Chief Minister Mahmood Khan were appointed to important posts.

A candidate belonging to the constituency of former CM was appointed as Assistant Secretary in Grade 18 and Malik Ashraf, son of former PTI Minister Muhibullah, was appointed as Assistant Director Protocol while former PTI MPA Fazal Hakeem Khan's nephew recruited in Grade 16, the document revealed.

Similarly, Abdul Aziz, son of former MPA Abdul Salam Afridi was appointed as Assistant Director Reporting, Sarmadullah Afridi, son of Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Kifayatullah

Afridi was appointed as Assistant Secretary while daughter of KP Assembly's Secretary was appointed as Research Officer and his son-in-law was appointed on a post Grade-16.

The son of Special Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and his nephew were appointed as Research Officers. The son of Special Secretary IT Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Attaullah was also appointed as Research Officer in Grade-18.

The candidates who had applied for the posts had urged the Supreme Court, Peshawar High Court, Anti-Corruption department, National Accountability Bureau to take notice of the alleged illegal appointments so that the deserving qualified people could be appointed on these posts.

## Dayal's murder being probed, says SSP Opp

PESHAWAR (APP): SSP Operation, Haroon Rasheed said on Saturday that Dayal Singh's murder was being investigated and suspects would be arrested shortly.

Talking to journalists in his office, he claimed that two assailants killed Dayal Singh with a 30-bore pistol after entering Dir Colony via the Ring Road on a motorcycle.

He said after the incident, both the riders fled the scene through Bilal Colony, which is adjacent to Garhi Ata Mohammad near Dir Colony.

He said that the deceased Dayal Singh was shot twice, once in the head and once in the chest. According to SSP, investigation teams are working tirelessly to arrest the murderers.

## Effective security measure demanded

PESHAWAR (APP): Minority and Human Rights Activist, Haroon Sarab Dyal while expressing concern over target killing of a minority member in Peshawar has demanded effective security measures to prevent such incidents in future.

In a press statement issued here on Saturday, Haroon Sarab Dyal said the recent killing of a Sikh trader and a Christian in Peshawar has sent a wave of shock and insecurity among members of minority community.

Haroon Sarab Dyal demanded strict implementation of National Action Plan (NAP) formulated for eradication of terrorism and anti-state elements.

He also demanded consultation of minority members with security forces in chalking out measures for curbing of terrorism incidents.

Haroon said a large number of minority members are working in different government and private departments especially in the suburban areas of cities and need strict measures for security.

He also demanded transfers of minority employees in safe areas of Peshawar within interior city or cantonment areas for reducing their vulnerabilities to target killing.

He said representation of minority community in meetings held in connection with security measures can help in bringing drastic reduction in the incidents of subversive nature.



PESHAWAR: Bishop of Pakistan Humphrey Sarfaraz Peters offering dua during funeral prayers of Kashif Masih. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

## 240,842 flour bags distributed

PESHAWAR (INP): The distribution process of free flour under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's Ramadan Package continues smoothly with distributing the commodity among 80,295 deserving families so far in the district.

Sharing a report featuring performance until March 31, a spokesman of the district administration said that so far 240,842 flour bags weighing 10 kilograms each have been distributed among deserving families at various points across the district.

He said that effective measures have been made to ensure the distribution process in an orderly and organized manner and the process was being thoroughly monitored by officials of the administration and the district food department in cooperation with the police. He said the people have also been asked to cooperate in smooth distribution of free flour bags under Ramzan relief package by providing proper information and acting upon directions they

## 28 suspects arrested

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: City police here Saturday arrested 28 suspects during raids conducted on hideouts in Billi Tang area. Spokesman for Kohat police said that 28 suspects were arrested and arms and drugs were recovered from their possession.

Seized weapons and drugs include two Kalashnikovs, two rifles, one repeater, dozens of cartridges and 3460 grams of hashish. During operation, more than 70 targeted houses were searched with personnel of police and elite force.

received prior to getting free four bags.

Starting from March 27 to April 2, the administration would be distributing the free flour bags at Paharpur and Prova Tehsils and residents have been directed to collect the free flour bags from prescribed distribution points.





## In brief

### Girl shot dead in Kasur

KASUR (INP): A young girl was shot dead on Saturday after she refused a marriage proposal at Bhamba village in Kasur. According to the family of deceased girl Iqra said that a ceremony of her daughter engagement was being held at her house. Guests were gathered to perform the rituals of engagement. All of a sudden the main suspect Usman who wanted to marry with Iqra, along with his accomplices, barged into the house and opened fire at the girl. Usman killed Iqra for not accepting his proposal, the family members added. A police team reached the spot and shifted the dead body to hospital for autopsy and collected all possible evidence from crime scene. Police said raids are being conducted to arrest the runaway suspects.

### Civil Defence official held

SARGODHA (APP): The Anti Corruption Establishment (ACE) on Saturday arrested an official of the Civil Defence Department for taking a bribe. The ACE sources said Baari Hafiz, in his application, said that Civil Defence Inspector Muhammad Raees with Assistant Director Civil Defence Saira Khan and employee Akram Pervaiz had seized a patrol machine of his relatives- Muneer and Mehboob- and demanded Rs 60,000 for its restoration. Upon receiving the application, Circle Officer Investigation Muhammad Akram with Magistrate Muhammad Noorullah raided and arrested Inspector Muhammad Raees with Rs 50,000. A case was registered against Saira Khan, Raees and Pervaiz.

### Accused killing cop arrested

JHELMUM (PPI): Jhelum police on Saturday arrested a man who had stabbed a police inspector to death a few days ago. According to the police, the accused identified as Tariq is the elder brother of deceased inspector, Khalid Mehmood. "He had stabbed his younger brother at over six spots and fled away after killing him," the police said. A murder case was registered against the accused on the complaint of the police. Meanwhile, Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) after raiding, seized 47 kg drugs hidden in two trucks in the jurisdiction of district Jhelum on Saturday. The ANF official said that drugs were being smuggled to Lahore from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The drugs had been covered by tiles and cloths. Acting on a tip-off, the ANF stopped two trucks near Sohawa on GT road. On search, the Force recovered 27.6 kg drugs from one truck and 19.2 kg from other truck. The ANF officials said that five people were arrested who belonged to Khyber. The ANF has started investigations against the arrested drug-traffickers, after booking them under the anti-narcotics act.

### Sindh University receives grant

HYDERABAD (APP): The Student Financial Aid Office (SFAO), University of Sindh Jamshoro has received an amount of over Rs. 11.2 million from Sindh government under "Need Cum Merit" Scholarship Programme for deserving and needy students of the Varsity. The scholarship programme is aimed at providing financial assistance to the students who are unable to afford their educational expenses due to financial constraints, the University's spokesman told here Saturday.

# Security forces conducts joint search & strike operation

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Lower Dir police and security forces jointly carried out a search and strike operation against suspected militants in the Maidan area. The operation around the houses of wanted criminals was conducted on special directives from the Regional Police Officer Malakand Nasir Mehmood Sati. The district police officer Tariq Iqbal and Commandant Dir Task Force Colonel Mussawir supervised the operation.

SDPO Maidan Circle Sher Bahadar Khan, Colonel Sajjad of 185 Wing, SHOs Haya Serai Aurang Zeb Khan, SHO Lal Qila Saleem Shah, SHO Zaimdara Shah Faisal Khan along with a heavy contingent of police and security forces took part in the operation. The houses of wanted militants were searched but none of the suspects was found present therein. According to the DPO the operation was conducted at Koro Bagh, Ashorgay, Kargha, Kowarai, Asharko, Mano Banda, Lajbok Dara and Markhanai.

Also, the Balambat police foiled a bid of tim-

ber smuggling in the Lajbok area and seized the timber loaded in a mini truck. The accused were handed over to the forest department and a case was registered against them.

**PTI held protest:** The Pakistan Tehreek Insaf Youth wing held a protest rally against the disappearance of Azhar Mishwani, the PTI social media in-charge and the arrest of Rahatullah Farooqi, the PTI district general secretary from the Zaman Park Lahore. Dozens of the PTI workers gathered outside the Timergara press club and chanted slogans against the government.

The rally was addressed by the PTI activist Haji Muhammad Ali, Murad Baghi, Malik Ziaul Haq, Abdul Qayyum and others. They said the PTI social media in-charge Azhar Mishwani had disappeared while Rahat Farooqi had been arrested without committing any crime from the Zaman Park Lahore.

The speakers said the government should produce them before the courts if they had done any illegal act. They alleged the PDM government had been busy in political victimization of the PTI lead-

ership and workers in the country. They said the PDM could not compete with Imran Khan in the field so it was using state machinery against the PTI chief. They demanded the government to immediately release Azhar Mishwani, Rahat Farooqi and announce fresh elections in the country.

**Teachers demanded to fulfilling vacant seats:** Different teachers' organizations demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker chief minister and secretary education to fill the vacant post of the district education officer male in the Lower Dir district.

In their spate statements the teachers' organizations said the DEO post was lying vacant for the last two months due to which the department and the teachers' community faced problems. They said the deputy DEO Mehboob Illahi had no administrative and financial powers due to which a lot of cases were pending at the office. The number of government schools for boys in the district is 944 wherein 7388 teachers are performing their duties to teach a total of 236,164 students.

# Educated youth future of nation for social uplift

## Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Chief Executive Officer Education Hafizabad Wazir Ahmad Agha said that progress and prosperity of our country is in the hands of youth and it is hard need to impart better education and training to students according to requirements of present era because students would make the future of the country radiant.

He was addressing prize distribution ceremony at government high school Madina Colony Hafizabad. Principal Syed Muhammad Zaheer Shah, parents, teachers and stu-

dents attended the function. CEO Wazir Ahmad Agha said that our students were highly talented and capable to compete in all field of life in the world and it was need to polish their hidden talent to focus on quality education and character building so that our country could stand in the ranks of developed countries in the world in near future. CEO and Principal gave away prizes among students and teachers to showing good performance.

**As many as two lakh 70 thousand flour's sacks distributed:** Under Ramzan Package of the

government, two lakh and seventy thousand flour bags of 10 kg have been distributed free of cost in the district Hafizabad so far.

This was stated by the Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warraich while talking our correspondent during visit of flour distribution points. DC Said that free flour was being given away to deserving people at 15 points and 350 counters transparently and respectable manners in the district. He said that special arrangements were also made to monitor supply of flour at all points in the district.

# WSSCM observes 'Salam Sanitation Day'



## F.P. Report

MARDAN: The Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM) on Saturday observed "Salam Sanitation Day" to acknowledge the services of its sanitary workers. WSSCM General Manager Engineer Muhammad Khalil Akbar said the sanitary workers were always at the forefront in all emergency situations. He said the day was observed to present glowing tributes to the professional dedication and valuable services of sanitary workers.

A walk has been organized by WSSCM on the occasion of "Salam Sanitation Day" led by General Manager Engineer

Muhammad Khalil Akbar to paying tribute to sanitation workers. The participants of the walk hold banners and placards with the slogan "Salam Sanitation Staff". The GM called upon the citizens to honor sanitary staff diligently by cooperating with them. He said the aim of observing the day was to highlight the important role of sanitary workers who were always foregoing their own leave for private engagements while performing their duties even on public holidays.

"Now, as responsible citizens, it is incumbent on us to keep our surrounding areas neat and clean" he added. Appreciating the professional dedication and commitment demonstrated

by the sanitary workers in removing solid waste from the city, he said the WSSCM was perceived as "a role model institution at the national and international level".

The sanitary and other operational staffers of the WSSCM were present on the occasion. Khalil Akbar said 564 sanitation workers are deployed in fourteen union councils of Mardan city while 52 vehicles take part in sanitation activities. He said that within the limited resources we are providing the best facilities to the citizens in terms of cleanliness. Our mission is to make Mardan a model city in terms of cleanliness and we are using all our resources to complete this mission, he added.

# DPO visits flour distribution points at distribution points

BAHAWALPUR (INP): District Police Officer Bahawalpur Syed Muhammad Abbas visited flour distribution points established at Dring Stadium and Government Abbasia High school Saturday morning. He reviewed security protocols, registration procedures, and delivery processes.

He gave instructions to the officers on duty to facilitate people. He directed SDPOs

and SHOs to maintain discipline during flour distribution. DPO has said that providing convenience and security to the masses is part of our duties.

**Robbers arrested:** Police have arrested two robbers after an alleged encounter in the jurisdiction of Faqirwali Police Station in Bahawalnagar on Saturday.

Sources revealed that a policy party on patrolling

tried to stop four persons on motorcycles after having suspicion but the suspects opened fire on police. Two suspects were seriously injured in the firing of their accomplices, while two others managed to escape. The police further said the injured robbers have been shifted to a hospital. The arrested suspects were wanted to police in several serious incidents of crime.

## Flour mills in Waziristan inspected F.P. Report

WANA: Deputy Commissioner Lower South Waziristan Muhammad Nasir Khan visited various flour mills in Wana along with DPO South Waziristan Shabir Hussain Marwat, on Saturday.

According to details, the government reviewed the distribution of free flour in Ramzan, DC and DPO listened to the problems of the people and issued orders to solve them immediately.

DC and DPO while giving instructions said that transparent and fair distribution of flour should be ensured in any case, no one's rights should be violated, complaints of any kind will not be tolerated in this regard, the police should treat the public with courtesy, respect the elderly and help them in every possible way, there should be no malpractice during the distribution of flour, the DC and DPO said inshallah we will ensure that the bread reaches all the deserving people in a peaceful and fair manner.

While talking to the people, DC and DPO listened to their problems and suggestions and immediately issued orders to solve the problems and facilitate the distribution of flour.

## 5 gamblers held with stake money

ATTOCK (INP): Attock police apprehended five gamblers along with recovery of money at stake of Rs 1.5million from their possession here Al Habib adad within the jurisdiction of police station Jand. Police said, on tip off police squad led by ASI Samiullah Khan conducted a surprise raid in a Toyota Hiace wagon where some gamblers were found playing flash cards.

The police squad besieged the wagon and arrested five criminals identified as Mohammad Nawaz son of Gul Mohammad, Imran Khan son of Lal Khan, Mudasar Hussain son of Rabnawaz Khan, Afreen Aftab son of Intekhab Akbar and Zahid Iqbal son of Gul Sher Khan on the spot.

Later on, case was registered against all these gamblers under gambling act and started investigation. Meanwhile, these were also produced in the court of judicial magistrate Jand for seeking their physical remand before completion of legal formalities of police challan.

## Free flour distribution monitored F.P. Report

TANK: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) General Tank Tanvir Khan has paid a visit to different free flour distribution points and reviewed arrangements made to facilitate the citizens.

Accompanied by Assistant District food Controller, the ADC monitored the distribution process at different distribution points including Tank city, Station road, Dabara and Wazirabad. He expressed satisfaction with the distribution process.

Speaking on the occasion, the ADC said the distribution of free flour was aimed at extending relief to the people during the holy month of Ramadan and all necessary measures would be taken to ensure that blessings of the package were passed to citizens. He said effective measures have been made to ensure the distribution process in an orderly and organized manner. He also urged the people to cooperate in the smooth distribution of free flour bags under the Ramadan relief package by providing proper information and acting upon directions they received prior to getting free four bags.

## Body found

FAISALABAD (INP): The body of a woman was found from a canal in the area of People's Colony police station.

A police spokesman said on Saturday that some passersby saw the body of a 33-year-old woman floating on surface of water in Rakh Branch Canal near old M-Tax Chowk and informed police.

# Arrest of elders flay in Bara



## F.P. Report

BARA: A protest demonstration of tribesmen against the apprehension of a local elder by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in an alleged fake case was held here in Bara on Saturday.

Last day CTD police officials detained tribal elder, Mashad Gul at Bara Pul(bridge) and shifted him to their destination. Scores of Aka Khel tribal took out a rally from Bara Bridge while carrying banners inscribed with slogans

against arrest of their tribal elder and marched till Tehsil compound.

Speaking on the occasion those who led the rally included Haji Jafer Khan Afridi and others accused that on conspiracy of grabbers to halt distribution of land, fake cases were registered against the committee members, aimed to restrain them from the job of granting their due share of every person in the property. "We are peace loving people but ironically the CTD police allegedly kidnapped

their elder in a false case to blackmail him, that is injustice to them," they opined.

They asked the government to provide security to their elders as their lives were in danger. The protestors threatened that if the tribal elder Mashad Gul was not released till Monday then they would block the Pak-Afghan highway for all kinds of traffic. After assurance of Station House Officer (SHO) Bara Police Shamshad Afridi, they gave up their agitation.

# Forest foils timber smuggling, seized vehicle

## F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Forest's department has tightened its perimeter against the timber mafia. On the clear instructions of District Police Officer Lower Dir Tariq Iqbal, the Police Outpost of Balambat police station.

Forest's department foiled the attempts to smuggle timber through Dyna and seized a Dyna vehicle full of timbers. Blambat police took possession of timbers and the accused were handed over to the forest department.

**Rescue1122 issues monthly report:** Rescue 1122 Dir Lower released the monthly performance report for March 2023. Rescue 1122 provided services in more than 652 emergencies during the last month.

The Rescue 1122 control room received 7676 calls in the month of March, including more than 7024 unnecessary and fake calls. During the month of March, Dir Lower provided facilities to the injured in 42 traffic accidents, 335 medical, 19 in the last

month. Fires and 09 crime incidents occurred and during 25 other incidents facilities were provided to 228 patients referred by doctors under Ambulance Referral Service including 126 within the district and 102 outside the district trained by Rescue 1122.

Transferred to various hospitals under the supervision of the staff, on the orders of Director General Rescue 1122 Dr. Khateer Ahmed, in order to reduce the rate of accidents across the district, practical training for safety and life saving was provided in the community. He said that rescue youths are ready day and night to deal with every problem, if there is any kind of natural calamity, earthquake, flood and other calamities, they will serve the people beyond their lives.

**Al-Khadmit cheap bread scheme appreciated by public:** More than a thousand citizens started benefiting from the cheap bread program of Al-Khidmat Foundation Lower Dir daily, while iftar is going on daily for

patients and their companions in Al-Khidmat Hospital Zawal Baba.

These views were expressed by Al-Khidmat Foundation Lower Dir. President Hafeezullah Khaksar and official Ishtiaq Ahmed said that Al-Khidmat cheap bread program continued successfully in Lower Dir and Al-Khidmat cheap bread tandoors are active in Lower Dir headquarters in Timergara, Adenizi, Maidan and Jandol, from which more than 1000 are served daily. Citizens are benefiting.

He said that it is the mission of Al-Khidmat Foundation to serve the suffering humanity and under the same spirit, Al-Khidmat Hospital under the umbrella of Al-Khidmat Foundation is providing treatment for the patients, accompanying persons and travelers on the way from 1st of Ramadan. Arrangements have been made for Iftar, from which more than two hundred fasting people break their fast every day. He said that this Iftar of Al-Khidmat Foundation will continue until Eidul Fitr.

# Three outlaws held; stolen items recovered

## F.P. Report

D I KHAN: The Dera police on Saturday claimed to have arrested three suspects and recovered drugs and stolen items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, a team of Cantt police station led by its SHO Sabir Husain Baloch conducted different operations following the

directions of District Police Officer Dera Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani.

The police arrested accused Zahid Iqbal son of Faiz Muhammad resident of Mohallah Alam Sher, recovering 130-gram heroin and 115-gram Ice drug from his possession. In another action, the Cantt police arrested accused Aman Ullah son of Saif Ullah res-

ident of Basti Kanchkanwali and recovered 245-gram heroin from him.

Another accused Inayat Shah son of Ghulam Jafer resident of Chah Syed Munawar was arrested in a theft case and stolen goods were recovered from him. The arrested accused were sent behind bars after the registration of cases against them.

# Maulana Noor-ul-Huda passes away

## F.P. Report

GHAZI: Maulana Noor ul Huda, a well-known religious scholar of Haripur district and Khatib of Jamia Masjid, Mohat sector, Ghazi Hamlet, passed away yesterday after a prolonged illness. The funeral prayers and burial of the deceased were held yesterday evening at his ancestral cemetery, Ghazi Hamlet.

The deceased was suffering from liver disease and remained bedridden for a long time. Maulana Noor ul Huda was father of Shamsul Huda, Maulana Nisar Ahmed, educationist Ejaz Ahmed, civil engineer

Zia Ahmed and renowned cardiologist Dr. Tufail Ejaz of Al Noor Medical Center Ghazi Hamlet. He was also maternal uncle of senior journalist chairman Press Club Ghazi Qazi Muhammad Asif, renowned anchor MDK2 TV and senior program manager Khyber TV Qazi Arif Mehmood, member Press Club Ghazi Qazi Jamal Ahmed and Qazi Mukhtar Ahmed, age of deceased was over 90.

Late Maulana Noor ul Huda was re-settled in Ghazi Hamlet in 1968 along with his other family members after being dislocated due to construction of

world fam Tarbela Dam Project as his native village was submerged under water of Tarbela Dam.

A large number of people belonging to different sphere of life including religious, political personalities, journalist community participated in his burial ceremony and prayed that Almighty Allah Tahala may rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear that irreparable loss. They said that after the departure of Maulana Noor ul Hoda, the district Haripur was deprived of a great religious scholar.

# Five robbers arrested

FAISALABAD (INP): Police on Saturday claimed to have arrested five members of two dacoit gangs and recovered weapons, cash and other items.

A police spokesman said

police, on a tip-off, conducted a raid in Chak No 658-GB and arrested Nisar, Ali Masood and Mazhar who were involved in a number of dacoity, robbery and other cases whereas

Satiana police arrested Ejaz Ali and Hasan from Chak No 243-GB. The police recovered weapons, two motorcycles, cash, mobile phones and other items from their possession.





## Russia clashes with US over tactical nukes for Belarus

UNITED NATIONS (AP): Russia and the US clashed in the United Nations over Moscow's plans to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, which neighboring Ukraine denounced as a desperate Kremlin attempt to avoid military defeat and "threaten the world with nuclear apocalypse." China, without naming Russia, made clear its opposition to the planned deployment.

Ukraine's UN Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya called for the UN Security Council meeting following Russian President Vladimir Putin's announcement on March 25 that his country plans to deploy tactical, comparatively short-range and small-yield nuclear weapons in Belarus. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko upped the ante just before the council meeting, saying Russia might also deploy strategic nuclear weapons in Belarus, which Russian forces have used as a staging ground for the war in Ukraine.

Kyslytsya said it took only four days for Putin to violate a pledge he made to China's President Xi Jinping in a joint statement at their recent meeting in Moscow. It declared that all nuclear states should refrain from deploying nuclear weapons outside their countries and withdraw those deployed abroad. The same point was emphasized by the US and Chinese deputy UN ambassadors, among others.

"We call for the abolition of the nuclear-sharing arrangements and advocate no deployment of nuclear weapons abroad by all nuclear weapons states, and the withdrawal of nuclear weapons deployed abroad," said Geng Shuang of China. Calling nuclear weapons "the sword of Damocles hanging over our heads," Geng reiterated that China opposes armed attacks against nuclear power plants and the threat or use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine. He said "nuclear proliferation must be prevented and nuclear crisis avoided."

Beijing claims to have a neutral stance in the war, but has also stressed its "no limits friendship" with Russia. It has refused to criticize Moscow's invasion, and late last month released a peace plan calling for

a cease-fire and talks between Ukraine and Russia. Kyslytsya welcomed Beijing's stand, telling the council: "To the credit of the Chinese side, the Chinese side reminded Moscow in a very sensible manner that nuclear war cannot be won and fought, and that nuclear proliferation must be prevented."

Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said Moscow is not transferring nuclear weapons but "operational tactical missile complexes," which will be under Russian control. He insisted this was not in violation of Moscow's international obligations. Nebenzia accused the United States of destroying key arms control agreements and he repeated Putin's objection to the tactical nuclear weapons the US has deployed in other NATO countries, indicating that this violated the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the cornerstone of global disarmament.

Belarus' UN Ambassador Valentin Rybakov said the planned deployment of tactical nuclear weapons was a reaction to "the challenges and risks to national security" his country faces, citing NATO neighbors ramping up their military capacity and Western sanctions. He also criticized the US nuclear sharing with its allies. The US deputy ambassador, Robert Wood, countered that the issue of nuclear sharing within NATO was discussed during negotiations on the NPT treaty, and for close to four decades Washington heard nothing about it from Russia until after its takeover of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

Wood stressed that any allegations that the United States is not in full compliance with the nonproliferation treaty "are just patently false." He accused Russia of "attempting to manipulate the specter of nuclear conflict" to help win the war in Ukraine.

"No other country is inflicting such damage on arms control nor seeking to undermine strategic stability in Europe," Wood said. "No other country has raised the prospect of potential nuclear use in connection with the war in Ukraine. ... No country is threatening Russia or threatening President Putin."

## Harris seeks billions for climate resilience in Africa

LUSAKA (AP): Vice President Kamala Harris is pushing for \$7 billion in private-sector investments to help Africa prepare for the effects of climate change. The announcement comes as she wraps up her weeklong trip to the continent on Saturday. Harris plans to visit a farm outside Lusaka where workers are using new techniques and technology to grow more produce, part of her effort to demonstrate ways to secure food supplies despite global warming.

"The United States is committed to these types of innovative solutions to support climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience," she said during a press conference with Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema. The \$7 billion announcement is the biggest-ticket item that Harris has unveiled during

her trip, but more work will be needed to follow through.

For example, African Parks, a nonprofit group, has committed to raise \$1.25 billion over the next 7 years in order to expand its conservation program. Another organization, One Acre Fund, plans to raise \$100 million to plant 1 billion trees by the end of the decade. The politics of climate change are complicated in Africa, which has contributed far less to overall greenhouse gas emissions than richer corners of the world like the United States. According to the International Energy Agency, 43% of Africans didn't have access to electricity in 2021, and recent outages have sparked frustration.

In Ghana, she was questioned at a press conference about how the West can

demand that Africa go green and forgo using its natural resources. And she was pressed on whether wealthy nations would supply \$100 billion annually to help poor countries cope with climate change, a commitment made under the Paris climate accord. Harris allowed that it is "critically important that, as global leaders, we all speak truth about the disparities that exist in terms of cause and effect and that we address those disparities." And she said there were opportunities in the "clean energy economy" that could help generate growth in Africa.

As for the money, President Joe Biden has requested \$11 billion in his proposed budget to meet commitments in the Paris accord. "We are waiting for Congress to do its work," Harris said.

## Intensity and insults rise as lawmakers debate debt ceiling

WASHINGTON (AP): Fights over increasing the nation's borrowing authority have been contentious in Congress, yet follow a familiar pattern: Time and again, lawmakers found a way to step back from the brink before markets began to panic and the nation risked a dangerous default on its debt.

But this year's fight has a different feel, some lawmakers say. A new Republican majority in the House is itching for a spending showdown, and determined not to yield. They blame what they view as excessive federal spending for higher food and gasoline prices and the growing national debt. Led by Speaker Kevin McCarthy, they have ruled out passing a "clean" debt ceiling increase even as the White House insists such legislation be passed without conditions. It's an impasse that shows no signs of easing ahead of this summer's deadline for action.

"Very worried. Very worried," was how Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., a close McCarthy ally, described his outlook. "And frankly, I don't see how we get there at this point. There's no process set up, there's no dialogue, there's no discussion." The political conditions are comparable to 2011, when a new Republican majority swept into power after a resounding election win and was determined to confront a Democratic White House

and extract major spending cuts in return for a debt limit increase.

To resolve that stalemate, Congress passed and President Barack Obama signed the Budget Control Act. The bill temporarily allowed borrowing to resume, set new spending limits and created a bipartisan "supercommittee" to recommend at least \$1.2 trillion more in deficit reduction over 10 years. Republicans and Democrats on the panel failed to compromise, however, triggering automatic reductions in spending. But some damage was done. Standard & Poor's Ratings Services downgraded US debt for the first time that year because it lacked confidence political leaders would make the choices needed to avert a long-term fiscal crisis.

In 2013, Obama took a different tack. He made clear early on there would be no negotiations on must-pass legislation to prevent a US default, and he never wavered. A partial government shutdown, which began Oct. 1, swiftly coincided with the prospects of a default. On Oct. 16, Congress passed legislation to end the twin threats and GOP lawmakers who demanded to roll back Obama's signature health care law got nothing for their efforts. "We fought the good fight. We just didn't win," conceded then-House Speaker John Boehner.

Republicans say they are determined that Biden, who

was Obama's vice president during both of those debt ceiling battles, will have to follow the path set in 2011 — not the one set in 2013. "President Biden is not President Obama, right?" said Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa., the leader of the hard-right House Freedom Caucus. "His poll numbers are in the tank and they're going to keep going down."

The result, Perry said, is that Biden doesn't have the political standing to ignore House Republicans. "Look, there's gonna be shrapnel all around, right. Right?" Perry said. "Everybody might take some wounds from it, but he's not walking out of this thing unscathed." After a tumultuous start to the new Congress in which Republicans struggled to elect a speaker, they are taking great pains to show unity. Moderates and conservatives in the House are adamant: Biden must engage.

"Any damage in Treasury markets and the bond market, to the economy, will fall at the feet of the president of the United States because he's the one that started this entire saga saying he wanted no negotiations," said Rep. Byron Donalds, R-Fla. "He's got to meet us partway," added Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb. Democratic Rep. Gerry Connolly of Virginia said what concerns him most is that some Republicans believe the damage from a federal default is manageable, rather than to be avoided at all costs.

## 2 US citizens kidnapped in Haiti: State Department

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Two US citizens have been kidnapped in Haiti, State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel confirmed, adding that Washington is in regular contact with Haitian authorities and will continue to work with them.

Patel declined to provide further details. CNN reported last week that a Florida couple, Abigail and Jean-Dickens Toussaint, had been kidnapped on March 18 in Haiti and were being held captive under ransom demands. The couple went to Haiti to visit family and to attend a festival but were kidnapped on their bus ride from Port-au-Prince, CNN reported, citing a woman claiming to be the victims' niece.

Gangs in Haiti have grown in strength since the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moise, with large portions of the capital and much of the countryside considered lawless territory. The security situation has devolved further in recent months with routine gun fights between police officers and the gangs. Bloody turf battles have left hundreds dead and thousands displaced.

Seventeen missionaries from the US and Canada were taken hostage and held for ransom in 2021 while on a trip to Haiti organized by the Ohio-based Christian Aid Ministries. The group said ransom money was paid for the release of the captives, but a dozen had escaped on their own. The US Embassy in Haiti said that its personnel was restricted to travel only between embassy compounds until further notice, due to unpredictable police anti-gang operations taking place.

## Ex-US intel director's daughter sentenced

ROCKVILLE, Md. (AP): The daughter of former US intelligence director John Negroponte was sentenced to 35 years in prison in the fatal stabbing of a friend after a drunken argument at a Maryland home, prosecutors announced.

Sophia Negroponte, 30, of Washington, D.C., was convicted in January of second-degree murder in the 2020 death of 24-year-old Yousuf Rasmussen. Guidelines called for a sentence of 15 to 25 years, but Montgomery County Circuit Court Judge Terrence McGann went beyond those guidelines, citing a need for community protection and rehabilitation, and calling her a "struggling, anger-filled alcoholic," news outlets reported. "That rage drove Ms. Negroponte to stab her friend in the neck," McGann said.

"While nothing can ease the pain caused by this senseless loss of life, we thank Judge McGann for an appropriate prison sentence in this case," Montgomery County State's Attorney John McCarthy said in a statement. Nearly a dozen people, including Rasmussen's mother, Dr. Zeba Rasmussen, gave victim impact statements at hearing. She remembered her son as charismatic with a "huge caring heart for everybody." His father, Steve Rasmussen, called his son a gift, saying family and friends will always wonder what they lost with Rasmussen's killing.

All the kind things said about Rasmussen were true, Sophia Negroponte said at the hearing. "He was a very beautiful and loving and caring person. I am truly sorry," she said. Sophia Negroponte was one of five abandoned or orphaned Honduran children that John Negroponte and his wife adopted after he was appointed as US ambassador to the Central American country in the 1980s, according to The Washington Post.

Rasmussen and Sophia Negroponte attended the same Washington high school and had been drinking, along with another person, on the night Rasmussen was killed, McCarthy said. They argued twice that night and Rasmussen left. When Rasmussen returned to get his cellphone, Negroponte "stabbed him multiple times, one being a death blow that severed his jugular," McCarthy said.

## Spanish PM urges Xi to speak with Zelenskiy

BEIJING (Reuters): Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez encouraged Chinese President Xi Jinping to talk to the Ukrainian leadership and learn first-hand about Kyiv's peace formula to help bring an end to Russia's invasion.

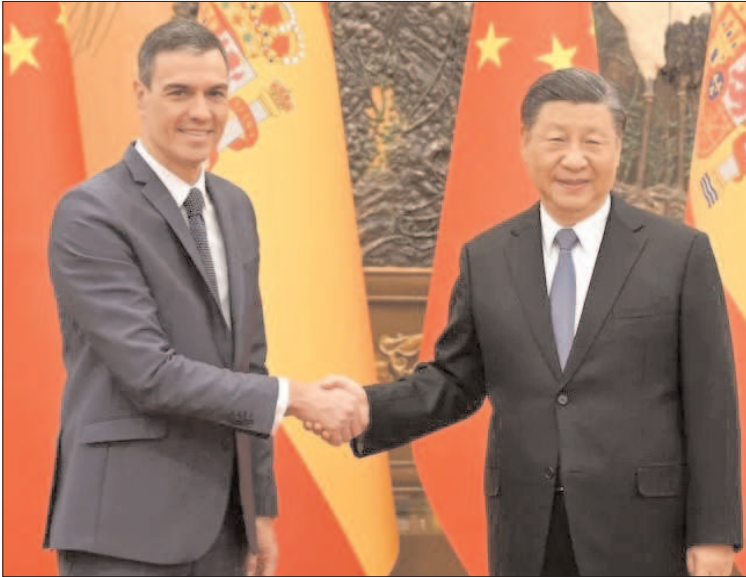
Sanchez told a news conference in Beijing he had informed Xi, who visited Moscow on March 20-21, that Spain supported the proposals made by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy. These include a demand to restore Ukraine's territory to the status quo before Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea.

"I believe it's a plan that lays the foundations for a durable peace in Ukraine and is perfectly aligned with the United Nations charter and its principles, which have been violated by (Russian President Vladimir) Putin with his invasion," he said. "I transmitted our concern over the illegal invasion of Ukraine," Sanchez said, adding that he encouraged Xi to talk to President Zelenskiy in order to get to know first-hand Kyiv's peace plan.

Last month, Beijing put forward its own 12-point position paper on a political solution to the war in Ukraine, which included a comprehensive ceasefire in the conflict. However, the paper also raised eyebrows among some EU officials in China for not stating that the aggressor in the conflict was Russia.

Sanchez praised two aspects of China's position paper - "its complete and categorical rejection of not only the use but even the threat to use nuclear weapons" and its respect for territorial integrity. Sanchez declined to say what Xi had said about the issue. Russia has said Ukraine must accept its loss of Crimea and four other regions in the south and east of the country.

According to a readout of the meeting from Chinese state broadcaster CCTV, Xi called for an end to a "Cold War mentality" and to the pressure of "extreme" sanctions, though he did not name Russia. "We



hope that all parties concerned will build a balanced, effective and sustainable European security architecture through dialogue and consultation," CCTV quoted Xi as saying. Spain, a NATO member whose foreign and security policy is closely aligned with that of the United States, is a staunch ally of Ukraine. In July it assumes the rotating presidency of the European Union's Council, which groups the bloc's 27 national governments.

Sanchez said he agreed with EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's view that relations between the EU and China were "complex" and he stressed the need for reciprocity and a level playing field between them. The absence of any official engagement between Xi and Zelensky since the war broke out has worried EU leaders, not least because it contrasts with signs of close personal ties between Xi and Putin, such as when both leaders greeted one another as "dear friend" in their most recent meeting.

Von der Leyen, who in a speech said China was becoming "more repressive at home and more

assertive abroad", is scheduled to visit Beijing herself next week alongside French President Emmanuel Macron. Sanchez urged China to seek a more balanced economic relationship with the EU and greater transparency. On bilateral commerce, Sanchez announced agreements that would allow for the export of Spanish almonds and persimmons to China.

In 2022, Spain's imports from China amounted to 49.6 billion euros (\$53.9 billion), while exports to China reached about 8 billion euros, Spanish economy ministry data showed. According to CCTV, Chinese Premier Li Qiang said Beijing wanted to expand trade and investment with Spain, strengthen industrial docking and increase cooperation on new energy and advanced materials as well as on Xi's Belt and Road Initiative. Spain, one of the world's most visited countries, also hopes to attract more Chinese tourists after the lifting of COVID restrictions there. Madrid aims to "facilitate the issuing of visas" to Chinese visitors, Sanchez said, adding that Spain would host a bilateral tourism forum in the summer.

## Last students graduate: School closures spread in ageing Japan

TEN-EI, Japan (Reuters): As Eita Sato and Aoi Hoshi walked towards their junior high school graduation ceremony, their footsteps echoed in polished halls once crowded and noisy with students. The two were the only graduates of Yumoto Junior High in a mountainous part of northern Japan - and the last. The 76-year-old school will shut its doors for good when the school year ends.

"We heard rumours about the school closure in our second year, but I didn't imagine it would actually happen. I was shocked," Eita, who like Aoi is 15, said. As Japan's birthrate plunges faster than expected, school closures have picked up pace especially in rural areas like Ten-ei, a mountainous skiing and hot spring area in Fukushima prefecture, dealing a further blow to regions already struggling with depopulation.

Falling births are an Asian regional issue, with the costs of raising children dampening birthrates in neighbouring South Korea and China. But Japan's situation is especially critical. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has pledged "unprecedented measures" to boost the birthrate,

including doubling the budget for child-related policies, and says maintaining the educational environment is crucial. But little has helped so far. Births tumbled below 800,000 in 2022, a new record low, according to government estimates and eight years earlier than expected, dealing a knockout blow to smaller public schools that are often the heart of rural towns and villages.

About 450 close every year, government data shows. Between 2002 and 2020, nearly 9,000 shut their doors forever, making it hard for remote areas to lure in new and younger residents. "I'm worried that people won't consider this area as a place to relocate to start a family if there is no junior high school," said Eita's mother Masumi, also a Yumoto graduate.

Ten-ei, a village of just under 5,000 residents with only around 10% under the age of 18, is in a quiet rural area known for its rice and sake. The Yumoto area has hot spring inns on the mountains and is dotted with ski rental shops and campsites. There are also "beware of bears" signs. The village at its peak in the 1950s had more than 10,000 residents, supported

by agriculture and manufacturing. But the area's growing inconvenience and remoteness prompted residents to leave.

Depopulation picked up speed after the March 11, 2011 disaster at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant less than 100 km (62 miles) away, with Ten-ei suffering some radioactive contamination that has since been cleaned up. The Yumoto school, a two-storey building located in the centre of the district, had some 50 graduates a year during its heyday in the 1960s. Photos of each graduating class hang near the entrance, going from black and white to colour - with the number of students visibly and suddenly dropping from around 2000. There is no picture from the last year.

Eita and Aoi, together since three, were in a five-person class through elementary school but were the only two to go on at Yumoto. Their desks sat side-by-side in the centre of a classroom designed for 20, and during their first year they "fought a lot", Eita said. But tensions eased and they adapted, trying to simulate a normal school experience. For the afterschool club activity

that is a key part of Japanese schooling they selected pair sports, mainly table tennis. On graduation day, teachers pinned corsages on the laughing graduates, usually a job for younger students.

"People are very disappointed there's no longer a source of culture," said principal Mikio Watanabe of the decision to close, taken in consultation with village residents. "The place will be quieter without children's voices." Experts warn that rural school closings will widen national disparities and put remote areas under more pressure. "The school closure means the municipality will eventually become unsustainable," said Touko Shirakawa, a sociology lecturer at Sagami Women's University.

Ten-ei will discuss repurposing the school building. In other parts of Japan, closed schools have become wineries or art museums. Aoi, who dreams of being a nursery school teacher in her hometown, will attend a different school from Eita starting in April. "I don't know if there will be any children in the village when I am a teacher," Aoi said. "But if there are, I want to come back."

## Canada migrant death toll rised to 8, after two more bodies found

AKWESASNE, Quebec (AP): The bodies of two more migrants who died trying to cross from Canada into the United States, were found, bringing the death toll to eight, including two children, police in the Mohawk Territory of Akwesasne said.

The bodies of six people, described as members of two families of Romanian and Indian descent, were found in a marshy area of the St. Lawrence River, which forms the Canada-US border. Akwesasne Mohawk Police Chief Shawn Dulude said authorities were still looking for a man, identified as Casey Oakes, 30, who was last seen operating a boat that was found next to the bodies.

A police helicopter spotted the latest two bodies in the water. "A total of eight bodies have now been recovered from the waters. All are believed to have been attempting illegal entry into the United States from Canada," Dulude said. A child discovered was a Canadian citizen and a

member of the Romanian family, Dulude said. The body of an adult woman believed to be an Indian national was also recovered.

Dulude said he didn't know if Oakes was alive or not, adding that he was a person of interest. The territory is known for being a transit point for the trafficking of humans and contraband because of its location. And in February, police in Akwesasne reported an increase in human smuggling into the Mohawk territory. "Our community has been exploited by this," said Grand Chief Abram Benedict of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne. "This is not the first time that tragedy has happened in our community like this. We've had other losses."

Weather conditions in the area were rough, said Lee-Ann O'Brien, deputy chief of the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service. O'Brien said six of the bodies were located during a search for Oakes who was reported missing. Oakes of

Akwesasne was last seen around 9:30 p.m. boarding a small boat departing from the east end of Cornwall Island, located in the St. Lawrence River and on the Ontario side of the Mohawk territory.

"This is a heartbreaking situation," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said. "We need to understand properly what happened, how it happened and do whatever we can to minimize the chances of this ever happening again." The Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service said the first body was located around 5 p.m. in a marsh. The area was searched further by a police marine unit with the help of the Canadian Coast Guard and the Hogansburg Akwesasne Volunteer Fire Department.

Air support units with the Quebec provincial police and Ontario Provincial Police also assisted. Post-mortem and toxicology tests have been ordered to determine the cause of the deaths. Akwesasne police say there have been about 80 people

trying to cross illegally into Canada or into the United States through the Mohawk territory since January, and most of them have been of Indian or Romanian descent.

Akwesasne straddles the Canada-United States border, and has territory in Quebec, Ontario and New York state. "There's always been people coming through here," Dulude said. "I've always been worried about it. It's just that now there's more attention." He said it's mostly people going south to the US and it is rare that someone comes north.

Tony Jackson, an Akwesasne resident, said the weather, when Oakes was last seen, was calm during the day but later turned rough. "The east wind around here creates a lot of waves, five feet tall, maybe taller," Jackson said. He said he believed Oakes's boat was less than six meters (20 feet) long. Crossing the river on a little boat with many people on board, "that called for disaster," he said.



**The Frontier Post****JALIL AFRIDI**

Managing Editor

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Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,  
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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

"USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747"

## Public misery and bad philontherapism

**A**CCORDING to the media, at least 12 people died and five others were injured in a stampede during a free distribution of charity inside the premises of a factory at the Naurus intersection in Karachi's SITE area on Friday. According to the details, the incident occurred while people were gathered at a dyeing factory in the city's industrial area to collect free ration and zakat which was a part of charity drives that Karachiites hold every Ramadan to help the needy. The reports suggest that the majority of the deceased were women, children, and elderly people who lost their lives due to rush and panic at the venue. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has announced Rs500,000 compensation for the families of the deceased and Rs100,000 for those injured in the incident.

The economic situation of the country has witnessed unimaginable degradation in recent years mainly due to the disastrous effect of the COVID-19 pandemic followed by the global energy crisis and war in Ukraine, while the eternal economic frailty of the country was another reason that double down the worst impact of inflation on the poor masses in Pakistan. According to the World Bank report, the global energy crisis and a long-held wave of inflation have raised the cost of living and contributed to spiraling poverty and the worst humanitarian situations prevail in most developing nations in the world. As said, about 2 million Pakistanis get below the poverty line on an annual basis while these figures have crossed 18 million in the current year.

Unfortunately, unrestricted inflation and rising poverty seriously damaged the core fabric of Pakistani society, destroyed moral values, promoted selfishness among the masses, and gave rise to corruption, crimes, beggary, fraud, and other social evils in the community. The begging has become a business while sufficient numbers of non-entitled people feel no remorse over getting undue benefits including zakat, BISP payments, and charities from the government and private organizations that not only deprived the disadvantaged segments of their rights but set bad trends in the public.

The recent unfortunate Karachi incident was one of the many stampedes that have occurred in recent weeks claiming the lives of half a dozen people and injuring several others across Pakistan, mostly occurring at free wheat flour distribution points under the government-sponsored relief schemes currently underway in the country. Those heartbroken events shocked the entire nation regarding the level of poverty and impoverishment of the public in the country. Such incidents are not only a slap on the face of the ruling elite but also a matter of shame for the government and society in that a huge number of masses live below the poverty line and could not satisfy their needs respectfully. On the other hand, the government and well-off section of society failed to support them in a dignified manner, yet organizing charity distribution events, and photo shoots became customary for the so-called public saviors, philanthropists, and social workers in this modern age. After all, free flour, Sasti Roti, langar, and Panah Gah Programs all were temporary and politically motivated initiatives aimed at boosting rulers' politics and public rating, thus no such initiative could bring an everlasting change to public life and prove to be poisonous for the national economy.

Currently, poverty has shaped into a grave challenge to the nation, and the government was unable to address this issue alone. Pakistan is a generous nation, and multiple charity organizations and well-off Pakistanis channel billions of rupees to charity work each year. Hence, a public-private partnership and the use of BISP data for the identification and compensation of rightful persons become highly essential at this point. So, this magnificent work could be accomplished in a dignified manner permanently, the needs of the poor be fulfilled smoothly and no needy get hurt or die in such regretful events in the future.

# Israel protests: Benjamin Netanyahu will have to face reality eventually

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

**A**MID protests and increasing international pressure, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday agreed to suspend his proposed judicial overhaul. While in a televised speech he said he had decided to delay the vote "in order to give time for discussion," in reality all he is doing is he is buying time to try and figure out how to solve the dilemma he is facing.

At this point in his career, in his sixth term in power, Netanyahu has one main target: staying out of jail. As a seasoned politician, he is driven by a sense of survival. He is facing accusations of fraud, breach of trust and bribery, which he denies. He needs to stay in power to stay out of jail. However, to do that, he needs to please the band of extremists in his government. And pleasing them means upsetting the street and Israel's allies.

Before Netanyahu paused his reforms, the Histadrut labor federation - the General Organization of Workers in Israel - announced a general strike. The prime minister could not handle the general discontent or the international indignation. On the other hand, he cannot afford to lose any of his extremist partners. Hence, the best way to solve this dilemma was to postpone taking a decision. Netanyahu is the king of deal-making. He is pragmatic and he does what it takes to get what he wants. Being pragmatic does not necessarily mean he is rational. Buying time will not change the choices he will face at some point in time. What he is banking on is making interim deals that can somehow become

permanent. Netanyahu is very skilled at making distinctions between those whose acquiescence he requires and those he can simply discount.

Yoav Gallant, a member of Netanyahu's Likud party who reached the rank of major general in the Israel Defense Forces before entering politics, was fired by Netanyahu for objecting

the Haganah and its offshoot, the Irgun? Probably. How will world opinion perceive such terrorism? Today is different from the early 20th century. Transgressions can easily be documented using a smartphone and spread all over the world. Will the world accept a new

biased against them, it was always there as a platform through which they could air their grievances. They do not even have the right to exist as a people, according to far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, a main pillar of Netanyahu's coalition. The Palestinians have no choice

US, which praises Israel for being an oasis of democracy in a desert of dictatorships, still stand by its ally? Will the US stand by an Israel where the rule of law is subjugated by the will of those in power and where the aim of the entire system is to preserve itself rather than serve the people. However, Netanyahu is not thinking as a statesman, he

Netanyahu's plan seems to be to hang on to power as long as he can and delay the inevitable. While hanging on to power, he tries to make deals and put on a balancing act to eliminate the negative externalities that might result from those deals.

He postponed the judicial overhaul to calm the raging streets and appease international allies. In parallel, to get the acquiescence of Ben-Gvir, he allowed him to have his militia that will go on a killing spree. Again, he can always use terror accusations against the Palestinians and a public relations campaign to attenuate the gravity of the crimes committed. This is the art of transactional politics aimed at keeping one's position and gaining time. However, Netanyahu does not seem to realize that this is not sustainable and it will blow up in his face at some point.

When this tactic no longer works, what can he do? Provoke a fight with Lebanon or Iran, similar to what Ehud Olmert did in 2006 to divert public attention away from corruption accusations? Maybe, but this option involves too many risks and did not work well for Olmert. In fact, Olmert had to resign after his adventure in Lebanon as his popularity tanked. He eventually ended up in jail in February 2016.

In short, Netanyahu is buying time using these tactics of self-preservation. However, at some point, this will no longer work and he will be forced to face a tough reality, in which he will be held accountable.

Arab News

***He is pragmatic and he does what it takes to get what he wants. Being pragmatic does not necessarily mean he is rational. Buying time will not change the choices he will face at some point in time. What he is banking on is making interim deals that can somehow become permanent. Netanyahu is very skilled at making distinctions between those whose acquiescence he requires and those he can simply discount. Yoav Gallant, a member of Netanyahu's Likud party who reached the rank of major general in the Israel Defense Forces before entering politics, was fired by Netanyahu for objecting to the judicial reform. On the other hand, he had to humor Itamar Ben-Gvir, who is an integral part of his coalition. In return for supporting the delay, Ben-Gvir will be allowed to head his own armed militia outside of the jurisdiction of the Israeli army and police. This militia will not have to abide by the normal rules of engagement. Are we now back to the times of the Haganah and its offshoot, the Irgun? Probably. How will world opinion perceive such terrorism? Today is different from the early 20th century. Transgressions can easily be documented using a smartphone and spread all over the world. Will the world accept a new Haganah? Will the world's Jewry identify with it? Probably not, and most likely they will be disgusted by it.***

to the judicial reform. On the other hand, he had to humor Itamar Ben-Gvir, who is an integral part of his coalition. In return for supporting the delay, Ben-Gvir will be allowed to head his own armed militia outside of the jurisdiction of the Israeli army and police. This militia will not have to abide by the normal rules of engagement. Are we now back to the times of

Haganah? Will the world's Jewry identify with it? Probably not, and most likely they will be disgusted by it.

Where do the Palestinians stand in all this? They will be evicted from their homes, persecuted and even killed, and there will be no functioning justice system to defend them. Though the judicial system has always been

but to resist. A third intifada? Probably.

A rational actor would have thought through all these outcomes, but Netanyahu does not seem to be one of them.

How will the US look at Israel once it legitimizes Ben-Gvir's illegitimate paramilitary force? How will Israel be different from some rogue country in South America? Can the

is thinking as a politician.

Tactical gains are what matter to him. What he can get now is what is most important. And his current most important goal is to stay out of prison. He is dividing the country, he is empowering the fanatics, he is driving away the Jewry worldwide and slowly losing the country's allies. Nevertheless, this does not seem to matter.

## How the courts will deal with indicted Trump

Jennifer Rodgers

**I**T finally happened. After multiple investigations over half a dozen years, former President Donald Trump has been indicted by a grand jury in New York, according to sources familiar with the matter. Trump fired back, calling the indictment "political persecution" and warned "this Witch-Hunt" will backfire.

Though we not yet know the details of the charges, we do know that Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg had been investigating Trump in connection with his alleged role in a hush money cover-up scheme involving adult film star Stormy Daniels during his 2016 presidential campaign. Not only is this the first time that Trump has been criminally charged, it is the first time any former president has been criminally charged. As such, we are entering uncharted territory.

It should be evident that no one is above the law, and that Trump should be held accountable for his actions in the way that any other citizen would be. These charges represent the first step toward accountability, but the journey will be long and winding. A threshold question is whether this indictment will have any impact on Trump's declared candidacy for the presiden-

cy in 2024. Legally, the answer is no.

Trump can continue as a presidential candidate while a criminal defendant, and even if the case results in conviction before the election, because the federal constitution sets the qualifications for the presidency - and it does not include anything about a criminal record or pending charges. At the Conservative Political Action Committee in March, Trump confirmed as much, saying he would stay in the race even if he were indicted by federal or state authorities while running again. Of course, running a campaign while facing charges will be politically and logistically challenging, to say the least. Any requests for delays in the litigation schedule to accommodate campaigning, debates or other election-related events will be heard and decided by the assigned judge, who controls the case calendar, but it's difficult to imagine a judge granting significant delays for this purpose. And if Trump is convicted and sentenced to prison before the election (or after winning it but before he takes office), his inability to fulfill the duties of the office may prompt efforts to remove him. For the time being, however, Trump can continue as a candidate if he so chooses.

Now that he has been indicted, what should we expect in the coming months? The first steps are for Trump to be formally arrested and brought to court to be arraigned on the indictment. During that hearing, the court will address issues like bail and the setting of a preliminary hearing date, if necessary, to determine whether prosecutors have amassed enough evidence to move forward to trial. I expect that Trump's lawyers will agree to a voluntary surrender in Manhattan, instead of forcing officials to coordinate an arrest with local law enforcement in Florida - and for Trump to be released pending trial. But this is where the agreements between prosecutors and the former president's counsel likely end. As Trump has demonstrated again and again, he is well versed in using the legal system to delay, and sometimes to evade, consequences. Given that the Manhattan indictment is one of the most perilous situations Trump has ever faced, we should anticipate that the former president will be aggressive in fighting these charges.

An early decision point for Trump and his lawyers is whether they will seek a preliminary hearing at

which prosecutors would be required to present evidential establishing probable cause-namely, a reasonable basis to believe that a crime has been committed. On the one hand, such a hearing forces the prosecutors to reveal some of their evidence, which can help the Trump team evaluate the case and make a plan for how to defend it. On the other hand, the benefit of that sneak peek is limited, because prosecutors must only present enough evidence to meet the relatively low legal threshold, which they can likely do without revealing much of the non-public evidence that has been collected.

Instead, the former president may prefer to go on the offensive right away in an effort to gain strategic advantages and shape the narrative of the case. For example, Trump could assert a long list of arguments and substantive defenses as the litigation proceeds that may extend the runway to trial. Some claims, like the suggestion recently made by Trump's lawyer that the then-presidential candidate paid Daniels not to benefit his campaign, but to avoid personal embarrassment, are questions of fact for the jury and can be resolved at

trial without the need for pretrial litigation.

But some issues may generate the need for judicial scrutiny, like Trump's expected allegations of prosecutorial misconduct and selective prosecution. Trump's possible reliance on an advice of counsel defense and Trump's likely legal challenges to the prosecutor's theory of the case. Our legal system is governed by precedent and replete with opportunities for defendants to litigate and appeal many of the issues that Trump will surely advance. In particular, Trump's likely claims relying on his status as the former president mean that the New York judges involved will be considering matters that are as yet unresolved by courts. Taken together, all of this will stretch out the time it takes for courts to deliberate and rule on these claims. Trump's scorched-earth approach very well may involve filing separate legal challenges, as happened when the Justice Department conducted its search of Mar-a-Lago for classified documents last year and Trump asked for a special master to screen any seized documents.

That move ultimately failed, but it set back the investigation for months while a special master conducted an entirely unnece-

sary review of documents before the appellate court reversed Judge Aileen Cannon's legally problematic ruling. What will also factor in is Trump's practice of litigating and appealing everything as far as he can, in order to delay and, if possible, derail, the proceedings. For example, Trump eventually lost his bid to stop his accounting firm from turning over financial records to the Manhattan District

Attorney as part of a separate criminal probe, but the litigation, which Trump appealed to the US Supreme Court, cost investigators 18 months. If Trump's delay tactics succeed in pushing the trial into 2025 and, in the meantime, he manages to win the 2024 election, expect him to argue that the case against him must be dismissed as unconstitutional based on the Justice Department's 2000 guidance that a president cannot be indicted "or tried" while in office.

When you put these factors all together, it's a recipe for significantly protracted, and legally challenging, proceedings. That's not to say that these charges will not eventually result in a trial of Trump. But while accountability may be coming, it will neither be swift nor easy.

CNN

## Daylight saving fiasco a sign of looming trouble in Lebanon

Khaled Abou Zahr

**S**ECTARIAN discussions are something I despise because they are fruitless and aimless. Yet, the current state of Lebanon and its catastrophic financial situation is charged with sectarianism and it needs to be addressed. I will first state that I was fortunate as an emigrant to have Lebanese friends in France without ever knowing or asking what their confession was.

To this day, I do not know and this ignorance is bliss. Friends are friends. I was also fortunate not to live through the horrible years of civil war, despite the fact that threats and bombs from the Syrian regime and its partners followed my late father to Europe. This week's daylight saving episode was telling regarding the high risks the country is facing.

In a split second, the political and media scene in Lebanon shifted from being described as Sunni versus Shiite into Muslim versus Christian. There is a lot to

say. In fact, just as the protests in France are not only about pensions and the age of retirement, in Lebanon it is not just a question of when to apply daylight saving time. In France, the ongoing burst of protests began following the government's use of Article 49.3 of the French Constitution to pass its pension reforms. This was interpreted as a unilateral decision by the president. However, in reality, Article 49.3 is not a unilateral decision as it allows the parliament to put the entire government to a no-confidence vote, which it narrowly survived. Yet, the accumulation of COVID-19, war in Europe and inflation have pushed French citizens to feel like they are losing their voice or control over their country.

Despite the fact that the decision was unilateral in Lebanon, there are surely similarities with the general feeling of an important part of the country's population. Here too, it is much more than just a question of day-

light saving time, it is an accumulation of factors. It is about a fear of the country vanishing, as well as the end of the specificity of Lebanon within the Middle East. It is a strong message from the Christian community. Many have described the initial decision to delay daylight saving, which was taken by the caretaker prime minister and the speaker of the parliament, who are Sunni and Shiite respectively, as clumsy. They have similarly described the way the Christian political parties and media reacted. These were mistakes that escalated quickly. I believe one should pay attention to small details, as they reveal more about the direction of the country than anything else.

As Lebanon is moving toward total decrepitude, this episode should be seen as a warning sign. In my view, the Christian community is clearly stating that it does not accept and does

not wish to be an add-on or a second-level voice in the politics of the country. Indeed, within the past decade, the politics of Lebanon have been framed by the Sunni-Shiite divide. This has meant that Christians have had to align with either one or the other to get their voices heard. The unified reaction to the daylight saving decision was a declaration against this situation. And it is understandable.

Why should the Christian community or any other community for that matter have to align with another in order to get its voice heard? No single community in Lebanon should be in the category of second-class political decision-makers. In Iraq, the Sunni population has been transformed into such a class, while in Lebanon too the Sunnis are a weakened political force. There is an urgent need to step away from this type of confessional politics. A strong

Lebanon is a Lebanon where all the communities are protected and have their future in their own hands. If there is fear of the other or a lack of representation, this cannot work. Politicians need to be held accountable and responsible. Whether we like it or not, this system encourages fear-mongering and populism instead of the principle of serving citizens. A clear example is how Gebran Bassil this week made front-page news in all the Christian media. In a flash, he went from pariah to a cleaned-up political voice.

This is why we should pay attention to little details. They have a tendency to blow up and bring chaos. And so, whether actions and reactions are considered clumsy or futile, they are a sign of dangerous times. Moreover, this incident has shown that the alliances and the political system are nothing but a masquerade. It shows that Lebanon is not a democracy but a con-

fessional system sprinkled with Western democratic displays. And so, it is not a surprise that the reaction by Lebanese Christians to this failed decision - and for the first time in large numbers - was to put forward the need for a federation. I have stated it often and agree that federalism is the best solution for a new political system.

This is the only way not to have any community feel marginalized while shifting toward accountability. Yet, this transformation must be real and not cosmetic, like it has been done in Iraq, where it is essentially a centralized system controlled by one single confessional group. Thus, this is a warning that Lebanon is a split second away from clumsily spiraling once again into violent military confrontation. This risk should be taken into account, especially as the situation in northern Syria is still fluid and unstable. Time is of the essence to save the country.



# China’s pragmatism pushing Iran to end its regional isolation

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

CHINA'S pragmatic approach and its major concentration on economic growth will likely continue to contribute to it playing an important role in diplomacy in the Middle East, as well as in enhancing peace, security and stability generally. It is worth noting that one of China's most valuable imported goods is oil. And the majority of China's imported oil comes from the Middle East. According to the World's Top Exports website, the value of crude oil exported to China totaled \$229.3 billion in 2021, up 41.4 percent since 2017 and 30 percent from 2020 to 2021.

It added that crude oil is China's second most valuable imported good after integrated electronic circuits and microassemblies. Forty-four countries supplied crude petroleum oil to mainland China in 2021, including smaller suppliers like Albania, Algeria, Bolivia, Brunei and Ivory Coast. The top five exporters (Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, Oman and Angola) provided 59.6 percent of China's crude oil imports in 2021. About half originated from nine Middle Eastern nations, ranging from the \$39.9 billion-worth provided by Saudi Arabia to the \$232.3 million-worth of unprocessed petroleum from Egypt. More fundamentally, China has strong trade and economic relationships with Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries beyond its oil imports. When it comes to Iran and Saudi Arabia, according to Deutsche Welle, China "has cultivated strong economic and political ties with both Riyadh and Tehran in recent years. Saudi Arabia is China's largest oil supplier, with trade between the two countries amounting to \$87 billion in 2021. Commerce between Iran and China, meanwhile, was worth more than \$16 billion in the same year, with Tehran depending on the Asian giant for as much as 30 percent of its foreign trade."

In other words, the more the Middle East enjoys stability, security and peace, the more China's economic interests will be preserved. This is accurate for other countries in the region too.

Furthermore, this might be partially why China brokered the important agreement between regional powers Saudi Arabia and Iran. This month's deal is a key development

impact on the region's geopolitical and economic landscapes. If the Iranian government fulfills its duties and commits to this historic deal, the region can witness a

*This is accurate for other countries in the region too. Furthermore, this might be partially why China brokered the important agreement between regional powers Saudi Arabia and Iran. This month's deal is a key development not only in terms of restoring ties between the Iranian government and Saudi Arabia, but also in reducing tensions and enhancing peace and security in the region. Improved ties between Tehran and Riyadh could have a significant impact on the region's geopolitical and economic landscapes. If the Iranian government fulfills its duties and commits to this historic deal, the region can witness a brighter future, preserving the economic, political and strategic interests of all parties involved. The Saudi Arabia-Iran deal is without doubt a diplomatic victory for China and enhances its prestige and legitimacy on the global stage. But it is also important to point out that it is not in China's economic interest to see conflict in the region or, more importantly, to witness the Iranian government being isolated and experiencing tensions with other countries in the Middle East. This is because Beijing has committed itself to a significant investment in Iran. In 2021, China and the Iranian government signed a 25-year strategic partnership deal, which is now in the early stages of implementation.*

not only in terms of restoring ties between the Iranian government and Saudi Arabia, but also in reducing tensions and enhancing peace and security in the region. Improved ties between Tehran and Riyadh could have a significant

brighter future, preserving the economic, political and strategic interests of all parties involved.

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China's investments in Iran over the 25-year term of the deal are expected to total about \$400 billion. The agreement also grants Beijing some rights and will help the Islamic Republic increase its oil and gas production. Leaked information reveals that one of the clauses is that, in return for its investment in Iran's oil, gas and petrochemicals industries, Beijing will be given priority if it wants to bid on any new project in Iran that is linked to these sectors. As a result, it is realistic to argue that, if the Iranian government is involved in long-term rivalry or conflict with other countries in the region, this could jeopardize China's investments in Tehran.

Therefore, Beijing offered the Iranian government an invaluable opportunity for the de-escalation of these tensions via diplomacy, allowing it to embrace friendship with Saudi Arabia. In a nutshell, as China increases its economic engagement in the Middle East, it will most likely step up its diplomatic engagement in the region too. The Saudi Arabia-Iran deal is the first prominent example of this.



## US, China must separate cooperation from rivalry

On the same day that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published its latest report on the urgent need for climate action, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. There, the two leaders issued a statement criticizing the West and emphasizing their intention to deepen the Sino-Russian strategic partnership.

It was a revealing coincidence, highlighting the extreme tension in today's international relations. On the one hand, preserving global public goods - such as the climate and biodiversity, as well as institutions and procedures to prevent future pandemics - requires urgent coordinated action. On the other hand, geopolitical fragmentation and the intensifying Sino-American rivalry are making coordination increasingly difficult. Such tension is not entirely unprecedented. Admittedly, geopolitical rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union did not prevent the two Cold War powers from cooperating to prevent a direct confrontation and curtail nuclear proliferation. But the hierarchy of issues was not the same back then. When the post-Second World War order was conceived, the focus was not on managing the global commons but rather on fostering economic ties through trade and investment in the hope that this would strengthen political alliances. Preventing climate change, preserving biodiversity and avoiding the depletion of high-sea fisheries were not on anyone's radar.

More surprisingly, the global commons remained a low priority even into the early 1990s, after the Soviet Union's collapse created an opportunity to rebuild the world system. Although the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro raised awareness about planetary limits, most of the focus in these years was on integrating the newcomers - China, Russia and Central and Eastern Europe - into the existing web of trade and investment agreements.

Jean Pisani-Ferry

There were talks about creating a global environmental institution, but these did not go far. The obstacle was not so much the Cold War's legacy, but rather the world's north-south divide. In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol on climate change treated Russia, Poland, Hungary and other ex-communist countries as being on par with advanced economies, but it exempted emerging economies like China and India from meeting similar emissions reduction targets on development grounds.

While balancing cooperation with geopolitical rivalries is not an entirely new challenge, most of the lessons from the past are ambiguous. While the US and the Soviet Union did avoid a nuclear confrontation, they failed to create a World Health Organization that would be strong enough to overcome geopolitical tensions and protect us from emerging pandemic diseases. On the contrary, the WHO became a field for ideological confrontation. Unless the US and China can cooperate effectively, despite their deepening rivalry, there will not be much hope of tackling global challenges. The two countries did cooperate in the past. The joint declaration issued by US President Barack Obama and Xi in November 2014 was instrumental in paving the way for the Paris climate agreement the following year. More recently, John Kerry, President Joe Biden's climate envoy, has continued to communicate with his Chinese counterpart.

Moreover, Biden's National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan has stressed that rivalry does not exclude cooperation. As he made clear upon the release of the latest US National Security Strategy, "we've come to a point where we can and simply have to tackle both geopolitical competition and shared transnational challenges on an equal plane. So, we are building a strategy fit for purpose for both competition we cannot ignore and

global cooperation without which we cannot succeed." The implication is that cooperation does not require geopolitical alignment or belief in the virtues of democracy. These are excellent principles. But will deeds match words? Recent events highlight the difficulty of threading this needle. Consider the dispute over the origins of COVID-19, which remains a bone of contention between China and the West. The US and its allies suspect that China is concealing evidence, whereas Beijing regards the demand for an independent international enquiry as an encroachment on its sovereignty. Vaccines also remain a stumbling block, with China paying a high price for having refused (on sovereignty grounds) to purchase vaccines from Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna. China has also been muddying the waters by insisting that the US give way on unrelated matters in exchange for cooperation on climate mitigation efforts.

Good intentions will never last long in an environment of mistrust. Unfortunately, no word better describes the current state of the US-China relationship. Last month, the appearance of a Chinese balloon over the US led Secretary of State Antony Blinken to cancel a planned visit to Beijing, while Democrats and Republicans in Washington are now trying to outcompete each other for hawkishness. As the recent congressional grilling of TikTok's CEO showed, neither party wants to be seen as going easy on America's top rival. The state of the global commons is too serious a matter to be held hostage to permanent political feuding. China and the US must find ways to separate cooperation from rivalry. Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin famously claimed that he would fight terror like there were no peace talks and make peace like there was no terror. To save the planet, today's leaders must take his words to heart and make a similar commitment.

## The other conflict on Europe’s doorstep

Anders Forh Rasmussen

ALL eyes are rightly fixated on Russia's war in Ukraine. But that is no excuse for ignoring another crisis that is brewing on Europe's doorstep. Tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan are rising again, raising the prospect of another war. Last week, I visited the Lachin corridor, the only road linking the ethnic Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia and the outside world. Since December, access to the corridor has been blocked by Azerbaijanis under the pretext of an environmental protest. This is clearly happening with the backing of the regime in Baku.

With the "protesters" blocking all civilian or commercial traffic into Nagorno-Karabakh, Amnesty International warns that some 120,000 ethnic Armenian residents are being deprived of essential goods and services, including life-saving medicines and health care. Under the ceasefire agreement that ended the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Azerbaijan pledged to ensure free movement along the road in both directions. Recognizing that Azerbaijan is violating its commitment by refusing to lift the blockade, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an order on February 22 demanding that Azerbaijan take all steps necessary to do so. But a month has passed, and nothing has changed. Although Russian peace-keeping forces stationed along the

corridor are supposed to protect the route, they have failed to act. Unless Europe and the wider international community pressure Azerbaijan to lift the blockade, the current humanitarian crisis could become a humanitarian catastrophe.

Azerbaijan is using the blockade and other measures to strangle Nagorno-Karabakh. Residents are often prevented from returning to their homes, and gas and electricity are regularly cut off without warning or explanation. The intent, clearly, is to make life as difficult as possible for the Armenian population, and there is a serious risk of imminent ethnic cleansing. We must not divert our gaze from what is happening. For its part, the Azerbaijani regime (and its online trolls) have continued to downplay the effects of the blockade - or even its existence. Yet they also refuse to grant international observers access to assess the situation. The first priority for the international community, then, is to send a fact-finding mission to the corridor under the auspices of the United Nations or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We must make clear that Azerbaijan's president, Ilham Aliyev, will face consequences if he continues to flout the ICJ's binding order. The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War made clear that Azerbaijan has a significant military advantage over Armenia, owing to the weapons

that it has bought from Russia, Turkey, and Israel. This fact was reiterated last September, when Azerbaijan took territory within Armenia itself - including strategic positions above the city of Jermuk - after just two days of renewed fighting.

Although Armenia is still a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the regional alliance linking Russia with five nearby former Soviet states, no support was forthcoming when it requested assistance following this attack on its sovereign territory. It was left vulnerable and alone. Making matters worse, Azerbaijan has kept its troops on Armenian territory and refused to return Armenian prisoners of war. With peace talks having stalled, there are clear warning signs that Azerbaijan believes it can achieve more through military means than through peaceful negotiations. A renewed offensive against Armenia in the coming months cannot be ruled out. With Armenia's traditional security provider, Russia, unable or unwilling to help, the European Union must play a greater role to preserve peace and stability in the region. Both European Council President Charles Michel and French President Emmanuel Macron have recognized this and devoted significant political capital to the issue. Following the renewed outbreak of hostilities in September, the EU dispatched a civilian mission to

Armenia to monitor the border with Azerbaijan.

But much more still needs to be done. The EU mission, which is currently deployed only on Armenian territory, should be rapidly scaled up to monitor the full length of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. European leaders need to press Aliyev's government to allow EU personnel on to Azerbaijani territory. Of course, an unarmed EU mission would not be able to stop hostilities; but scaling up its presence would put further pressure on Azerbaijan to choose negotiation over military confrontation. Over the last year, the EU has built increasingly close economic ties with Azerbaijan, owing to its rapid shift away from Russian gas and oil. But EU leaders need to be clear with Aliyev that he will not be allowed to act with impunity, and that Europe's short-term commercial interests will not outweigh its values or its long-term interests in maintaining peace and stability in the South Caucasus. If Azerbaijan continues to flout its international commitments and legally binding court orders from the ICJ, it must face political and economic consequences. Armenia is an emerging democracy in an immensely challenging neighborhood. With Russia's influence waning, Europe must play a bigger role in the region. This is not a form of charity. Acting now to prevent another significant conflict - or even ethnic cleansing - in our backyard is in everyone's interest.

The Japan Times

## What now for the Syrian opposition?

Ghassan Ibrahim

THE Syrian opposition is facing a dilemma that it did not expect to come about so quickly, with changes in the positions of the Arab countries and Türkiye toward the regime in Syria. Some Arab countries have started to change how they deal with the Syrian crisis, as there is no longer a unified international stance against the Assad regime's brutal handling of the war.

Arab countries have begun to resent the lack of a quick resolution to the crisis, after significantly more than a decade of fierce war that has destroyed infrastructure and displaced Syrian citizens. Many countries in the region have learned that the major international powers are not serious about finding a comprehensive solution in Syria, especially since the EU and US administrations have not been decisive in resolving the crisis. This has prompted some Arab countries and Türkiye to gradually open up to the Syrian regime at various levels and to move away from the opposition. The US and the countries of the EU continue to oppose normalization with the regime and impose severe sanctions on Damascus. Still, they do not seem willing to do more.

In light of this dynamic situation, what are the options for the Syrian opposition, which has

always relied on Arab countries and Türkiye, especially in its political and military actions against the Assad regime? It seems that the opposition will be divided into three movements regarding how to deal with the political transition in the region. The first group will bet that Arab normalization with Damascus creates an opportunity to work in Syria under Arab auspices. This opposition movement believes that Arab countries will not normalize all relations with Syria without Russian or Chinese guarantees that the regime will make concessions and be willing to cooperate with the opposition.

This could be done by forming a unity government that would unite the opposition and the regime, holding parliamentary elections and restructuring Syrian state institutions such as the security services and the army. This opposition movement will favor a new Arab political approach after the stagnation on the Syrian issue. Some Syrian opposition leaders believe the new Arab-Turkish action will not give the Syrian regime a blank check. Therefore, this paves the way for some Arab guarantees to the Syrian opposition, be it for their security and personal safety or their ability to work in the country. The second political group

believes that the normalized relationship between any Arab country or regional government and the Syrian regime would only be a bilateral deal that would have nothing to do with the future of the Syrian government, the reconstruction of Syria or even the presentation of an Arab initiative to find a solution for Syria away from coordination with the UN, US, Russia and China.

This branch of the opposition believes it should not change its policy toward the regime, but rather wait until it sees the results of Arab normalization with Bashar Assad. At the same time, however, this group will remain cautiously flexible and neutral, hoping there will be a chance for a long-term solution to the Syrian crisis. The third opposition movement is convinced that the Syrian regime will obstruct any Arab initiatives and hinder the implementation of the Turkish-Russian plan to create a decentralized and opposition-managed safe zone as a gateway to a federal state. This group believes that the Syrian regime cannot be reformed or trusted. This current will have difficulty engaging in political activities, as it will lose Arab support and may even be rejected by Türkiye, where the central hub of the Syrian opposition is

located. This group may adopt the idea of turning into an opposition in exile, operating permanently abroad, following the example of the Iranian opposition based in Paris.

This political strand may start to cooperate more closely with the US and European states in an effort to tighten sanctions against the Syrian regime. It will hope for a change in the mood of Western countries and a renewed push in Syria, especially with these countries ready to act on the Syrian crisis in response to the Russian-Ukrainian war. Regardless of all these potential political outcomes, the position of the Syrian opposition will remain unenviable because it was divided into various factions and related affiliations even before the Arab countries began to reengage with Syria. All the options facing the Syrian opposition do not allow for a free and controlled choice of which way to turn, but rather a dangerous and untested political game of weathering the storm and finding a new form of existence. It all depends on whether the region's countries or the international community can create an opportunity that could pave the way for the opposition to take power in partnership with the regime, or just keep it waiting. At the same time, what is left of Syria disintegrates.

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# Azerbaijan wants to further improve bilateral trade relations with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Azerbaijan considers Pakistan and Turkiye as its special friends and wants to further strengthen bilateral trade and economic relations with them. Azerbaijan-Turkiye bilateral trade is approximately USD 6 billion and Azerbaijan wants a similar trade volume with Pakistan that would be very beneficial for both countries.

This was said by Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan while exchanging views with the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI), said a press release issued here.

Khazar Farhadov said that direct flights between Azerbaijan and Pakistan operated by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) had improved bilateral trade three times between the two countries in 2022 and Azerbaijan Airlines will also start direct flights with Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad very soon and is

also considering to start direct flights to industrial and export centres of Pakistan, which would further contribute to increase bilateral trade between the two brotherly countries.

He said that Azerbaijan under the instructions of President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has given exemption from customs duty on import of rice from Pakistan, and the Pakistani business community should take benefit of this facility.

He said that Azerbaijan and Pakistan have formed Working Groups under Joint Ministerial Commission to increase bilateral cooperation in various sectors including agriculture, trade, banking, IT, tourism, transport, energy, health and said that ICCI should cooperate in identifying companies for these working groups so that private sectors could lead the promotion of bilateral cooperation in these sectors between the two countries. Ambassador informed

that 2023 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Heydar Aliyev, the founder of the independent state of Azerbaijan. He said that the Embassy of Azerbaijan in collaboration with ICCI is planning to organize a joint event on the founding role of Heydar Aliyev in development of Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations.

Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that Pak-Azerbaijan bilateral trade is not up to the real potential of both countries and stressed for exploring new ways of increasing trade between both countries. He emphasized creating better awareness in the private sectors of both countries about each other's markets to increase business ties.

He said that both countries are doing trade in limited items and there is a need of finding new product lines and avenues of cooperation for enhancing

trade volume between the two countries.

Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President, ICCI said that both countries should encourage regular exchange of trade delegations to explore all untapped areas of mutual cooperation.

He assured that ICCI would provide a list of companies for Working Groups to make them more effective and result-oriented.

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI welcomed the establishment of direct airlinks between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, which are very important to promote people-to-people and trade relations.

He said that ICCI would cooperate in promoting "Made in Azerbaijan" in Pakistan and hoped that the Ambassador would also cooperate in promoting "Made in Pakistan" in Azerbaijan to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Raja Imtiaz, Rizwan Cheema and others were also present at the occasion.



LARKANA: Vendors unloading watermelons from delivery truck at fruit market.

## Chase Value invites senior citizens for shopping

F.P. Report

KARACHI: During the month of Ramadan, Chase Value, a renowned department store of Pakistan, invited the senior citizens residing in Dar-ul-Sukun Karachi, to its Gulshan Branch at Rashid Minhas Road for shopping. The experience brought back shopping memories of their youth. Residents from Dar-ul-Sukun felt lively again while they shopped their heart out selecting clothes, shoes, cosmetics, jewellery and accessories from Chase Value. Gift packs were handed over to the residents at Darul Sakoon who were unable to shop at the branch for health reasons or physical disabilities.

The staff at Dar-ul-Sukun presented a souvenir to Mr. Omer Farooq (CEO - Chase Value) as a token of their love and appreciation for taking this step for the residents. Chase Value on their visit also announced a shopping trip for the staff taking care of the residents of Dar-ul-Sukun.

## Gold prices decrease by Rs.400 to Rs.208,300

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs 400 and was sold at Rs 208,300 on Saturday against its sale at Rs. 208,700 the previous day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs 343 to Rs 178,584 from Rs178,927, whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went down to Rs 163,702 from Rs 164,016. The price of per tola silver and that of ten-gram silver remained unchanged to close at Rs 2270 and Rs 1946.15 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market dipped by US\$ 12 to \$1969 against its sale at \$1981, the association reported.

## Vietnam's C. Bank to cut refinance rate

HANOI (APP): The State Bank of Vietnam on Friday said it would cut the refinancing rate by 50 basis points to 5.5 percent from Monday in the latest policy move to support economic growth. The discount rate will be kept unchanged at 3.5 percent and the overnight lending rate in the inter-bank market will remain at 6 percent, the central bank said in a statement on its website.

After the release of official data showing Vietnam's economic growth slowed to 3.32 percent in the first quarter, lower than an annual expansion of 5.03 percent in the same period a year earlier, the central bank signaled it might cut its policy rates further to support growth.

Vietnam's inflation in March down 0.23 percent from February might help give the central bank more room for the rate cuts. The central bank also said it would lower caps on interest rates of deposits in Vietnamese dong by 0.5 percentage points to between 0.5 percent and 5.5 percent for maturities below six months.

# Japan to restrict chip equipment

TOKYO (Agencies): Japan's government has announced plans to restrict exports of 23 types of semiconductor manufacturing equipment, aligning its technology trade controls with a US push to curb China's ability to make advanced chips.

The Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry said in a press release that it will impose export controls on six categories of equipment used in chip manufacturing, including cleaning, deposition, lithography and etching. It did not specify China as the target of those measures, saying equipment makers will

need to seek export permission for all regions.

"We are fulfilling our responsibility as a technological nation to contribute to international peace and stability," the ministry said, adding that its goal was to stop advanced technology from being used for military purposes. The export restrictions, which will come into force in July, are likely to affect equipment manufactured by a dozen Japanese companies, such as Nikon Corp, Tokyo Electron Ltd, Screen Holdings Co Ltd and Advantest Corp.

"We expect the impact on

domestic companies to be limited," Japan's Industry Minister Yasutoshi said at a news briefing. "We don't have one specific country in mind with these measures." Tokyo's decision, nonetheless, comes after the US in October imposed sweeping restrictions on chipmaking tool exports to China citing concerns that Beijing planned to use advanced semiconductors to enhance its military power. Washington, however, needs Japan and the Netherlands, which are key suppliers of such equipment, to join it to make those restrictions effective.

# Food and debt crises stoking instability: PEW

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Saturday said inflation and growing insecurity of basic necessities is increasing instability in Pakistan. People have been killed and injured in stampedes at sites distributing free flour under a government-backed scheme to help families struggling with soaring costs of basic staples, it said.

Thousands of bags of flour had also been looted from trucks and distribution points by people which indicates the desperation

among the masses, said Dr. Hanif Mughal, SVP of PEW in a press release.

The country is cash-strapped, inflation is very high, forex reserves are insufficient and currency is depreciating which is a perfect recipe for civil disorder, he added.

He noted that floods have exacerbated the food crisis as they destroyed large swathes of crops while affected people are still waiting for any meaningful support from the government.

An estimated 800,000

hectares of agricultural land was wiped out driving up food prices in the country which is already struggling with inflation, he added.

Hanif Mughal said that presently more than 3.4 million children face chronic hunger while malnutrition among the poor has become more prevalent across the country.

Pakistan is facing a serious food and debt crisis and water stress has become widespread impacting women and girls that are responsible for water collection.

# VW pledges to double down on EVs in China

SHANGHAI (Reuters): A senior Volkswagen AG (VOWG\_p.DE) China executive reiterated on Saturday the German automaker's commitment to quickening the pace of electrification in the world's second largest economy despite issues such as intensified competition and weak demand.

VW plans to increase the number of charging posts in China for electric vehicles to 17,000 by 2025, as it planned to invest 15 billion euros (\$16.26 billion) in the country on electric mobility

together with its three joint ventures by 2024, Stefan Mecha, chief executive of the Volkswagen brand in China, told China's EV 100 forum in Beijing.

"The market is flush with new, highly competitive players but strong competition simply motivates us to constantly innovate and improve," Mecha said.

He added that despite softer short term demand in China, the company is confident that there would be a recovery.

In February, Chinese electrified vehicle maker

BYD outsold the Volkswagen-branded cars to be the best-selling passenger car brand in the world's largest auto market for the second month in four.

Mecha also urged China to extend a purchase tax exemption on new energy vehicles (NEVs), which include both pure electric and plug-in hybrid cars, beyond this year as part of the policy support for the sector.

In September, China extended the tax exemption on such vehicles by a year to the end of 2023.

# Verizon and AT&T to get full C-Band use

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Four major US wireless carriers told the Federal Communications Commissions (FCC) late on Friday they had agreed to some voluntary actions to address aviation safety concerns and allow full use of the C-Band wireless spectrum for 5G use.

"These voluntary commitments will support full-power deployments across C-Band, and are crafted to minimize the operational impact on our C-Band operations," said the letter from Verizon (VZ.N), AT&T (T.N), T-Mobile US (TMUS.O) and UScellular (USM.N) filed with the FCC and seen by Reuters.

The agreement follows extensive discussions with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and is a major step forward, allowing carriers to increase power levels to get to full C-Band use, according to the letter and people involved in the talks.

Concerns that 5G service could interfere with airplane altimeters, which give data on a plane's height above the ground and are crucial for bad-weather landing, led to brief disruptions at some US airports last year as international carriers canceled some flights.

Last year, Verizon and AT&T voluntarily agreed to delay some C-Band 5G usage until July as air carriers worked to retrofit airplane altimeters. T-Mobile and UScellular had not begun deployment when the agreement was announced. Reuters first reported in February that the FAA, Verizon and AT&T were in talks to reach a new agreement that sought to extend some voluntary mitigations beyond July 1.

Verizon said Friday it "agreed to final voluntary commitments that will allow our company to fully use our C-band spectrum for 5G by the previously

agreed to deadline of July 1." AT&T said the "filing is the result of collaborative and productive conversations with the FAA."

Some of those commitments could last until 2028. The FAA had initially sought to extend some through up to 2033, two sources briefed on the matter.

The FCC did not immediately comment. The FAA said Friday it continues "to work closely to ensure a safe co-existence in the US 5G C-band environment." UScellular said the "agreement results from collaboration and coordination with the FAA, FCC, and our industry partners to ensure UScellular can deploy our C-band spectrum without delay."

Last month, the world's biggest airline trade body warned many airlines will be unable to meet looming US deadlines to retrofit airplane altimeters to ensure they are not susceptible to 5G wireless interference.

# 'ICBC to continue to promote international operations'

BEIJING (APP): Despite facing geopolitical risks, rising unilateralism and protectionism and strengthened requirements for compliance management this year, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) will continue to promote international operations, a senior executive of the Bank said on Saturday.

As China accelerates its opening-up policy, high-quality internationalized financial services will be needed for increasing cross-border economic and trade investment, expanding global industrial and supply chains, and promoting cross-border flows of enterprises and residents, said Guan Xueqing, board secretary of ICBC, at a news conference announcing its 2022 annual results.

As China's largest state-owned commercial lender by assets, the ICBC said it will continuously expand and deepen global operations and create new drivers

of growth.

During the process, it will ensure that operational risk is controllable, China Daily quoted Guan as saying.

"We will strengthen the linkage management of risks both domestically and overseas, enhance the compliance management capability of our overseas institutions, make proactive risk judgments, and efficiently respond to various significant uncertainties that may arise in the future," he said.

Last year was the 30th anniversary of the internationalization of ICBC.

Over the last 30 years, the bank has gradually built a global service network covering 69 countries and regions.

In the past decade, the average annual growth of its overseas assets exceeded 10 percent, and the average annual growth of its pretax profits exceeded 8 percent, Guan said.

Last year, overseas insti-

tutions of ICBC posted a pretax net profit of \$3.9 billion, up 15 percent year-on-year.

The asset quality of its overseas institutions remained in good condition, with the nonperforming loan ratio being only 0.79 percent, declining by 0.12 percentage points, Guan said.

The volume of international settlement at its domestic branches increased by 8 percent year-on-year, while the volume of its cross-border settlement grew by 5 percent.

The bank made new breakthroughs in business expansion. From last year to the beginning of this year, China's central bank appointed ICBC as the clearing bank for Laos, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Brazil. Currently, ICBC acts as a clearing bank in 11 countries.

In terms of foreign investment and trade services, the ICBC provided

strong financial support for key foreign-funded and foreign trade enterprises. The total amount of financing reached 1.17 trillion yuan (\$170.2 billion) last year, increasing by 25.8 percent year-on-year.

In terms of expanding drivers of growth, the ICBC was approved as one of the first pilot institutions for Southbound Trading under China's Bond Connect program and gained the qualifications for providing foreign exchange payment and settlement for parties to a cross-border e-commerce transaction.

These businesses are becoming the new driving force and growth points for the bank's international operations, Guan said.

Meanwhile, its front-line foreign exchange business operating capability and foreign exchange compliance management capability have significantly improved, he added.

# Stocks advance as inflation slows

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Stocks advanced Friday as data showed inflation slowing in the eurozone and the United States, and a British economy performing slightly better than thought.

With the US Federal Reserve and European Central Bank raising interest rates to tame inflation, markets were eagerly waiting for the latest inflation data to see if monetary policymakers have room to pause hikes given recent turmoil in the banking sector.

The eurozone's annual inflation rate slowed sharply to 6.9 percent in March from 8.5 percent in February, beating expectations as energy prices eased, the EU's statistics agency said.

In the United States, the PCE Price Index, the Federal Reserve's preferred measure of inflation, showed inflation slowed to an annual rate of 5.0 percent in February from 5.3 percent.

Wall Street indices jumped more than one per-

cent, while Europe's main equity indices also closed the day higher.

Investors have also been encouraged by the latest developments in the banking industry turmoil, with the industry apparently having stabilized after three US banks failed earlier this month. "We had a major test of the US financial system," said Adam Sarhan of 50 Park Investments. "It bent but didn't break."

Sarhan said the market's ability to rally at this juncture is "very bullish."

Danni Hewson, head of financial analysis at AJ Bell, said inflation remains a long way away from the two percent target set by policymakers but the considerable drop in recent

months drop "might buy them a bit of thinking time and chance to gauge whether there are any more cracks waiting to appear in the banking sector."

Expectations for how high borrowing costs will go have come down as banks are seen as likely to cut back on lending, which would mean central banks won't need to raise rates as much as previously expected.

That has helped push up global equities, which had been under pressure through February and March.

London stocks were boosted by upgraded data showing that the British economy grew 0.1 percent in the fourth quarter of last year to narrowly avoid recession. An initial reading

had output flat in the final three months of last year.

In Asia, stock markets built on gains as banking-sector worries faded and traders grew optimistic that central banks could be near the end of their rate-hiking cycle. Hong Kong stocks were boosted also by a rally in tech firms after it emerged that e-commerce giant Alibaba's logistics arm was preparing for a listing in the city.

News of the IPO by Cainiao Network Technology came after Alibaba said it intended to split into six units and go public.

Factory and services activity data suggesting that China's powerhouse economy continued to improve also lifted confidence.

# Lithium producers set price floor

BEIJING (Reuters): China's top lithium producers agreed this week to set a floor price of 250,000 yuan (\$36,380) per tonne of lithium carbonate, six people familiar with the matter said, in an effort to slow a plunge in the price of the battery raw material.

The price was agreed on Tuesday by around 10 companies including Tianqi Lithium (002466.SZ) and Ganfeng Lithium (002460.SZ) that met on the sidelines of a conference in Nanchang in southern China, said one person who attended the meeting and five others briefed on the discussions.

The people declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the topic, which was discussed in a closed-door meeting.

Ganfeng said in a response to Reuters that no discussions on a floor price had taken place.

"Ganfeng always insists that product prices should be determined by the market, and will never take the initiative to control prices to influence the market," a

company representative said in an email.

It added that no company in the industry has such capabilities.

Tianqi declined to comment.

Zhicun Lithium, one of the top lithium carbonate producers in China, was also represented at the meeting, said four of the people, but could not be reached for comment.

The move comes as lithium prices plunge on a significant slowdown in demand for electric vehicles (EV) in China, the world's largest EV market.

Spot prices have slumped by more than 60% since their peak in late November, with the decline picking up pace in recent weeks on a growing price war in China's auto market.

It is not clear how long the companies, which account for over half China's lithium carbonate output, will follow the floor price.

Spot prices dropped to 220,000 yuan a tonne on Friday, according to a weekly price assessment

by Fastmarkets, down from 260,000 yuan a week earlier.

Offers as low as 150,000 yuan were also heard in the market this week as traders sought to offload mounting stocks, said a buyer for a battery manufacturer who did not attend the meeting of lithium producers.

"Setting a floor price should strengthen the market sentiment and hold the prices from falling further," said the person who attended the meeting.

However, some buyers were sceptical that producers would stick to the floor price, given the sluggish demand.

"If we don't buy, someone will eventually drop the price," said a lithium carbonate buyer briefed on the decision. Participants at the meeting also discussed the planned launch later this year of lithium carbonate futures on the Guangzhou Futures Exchange, according to two of the people, another move that could help stabilise prices.



**In brief****STA felicitates Pakistan boys**

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Tennis Association (STA)'s President Gulzar Firoz (Tamgha-e-Imtiaz) and entire STA management Committee congratulated the Pakistan Boys Under-14 team to qualify for world group, which was taking part at Czech republic. The historic success came after 19 years, when Pakistan reached at this level, according to a communiqué here on Saturday. Gulzar Firoz also congratulated Salim Saifullah Khan, president PTF national team members and their coach for this remarkable achievement. He congratulated Mikaeel Baig and Zohaib Amir, who reached the final of Tajikistan ATF 14 Asian Ranking Championships.

**Mercedes will still 'go for it'**

SIDNEY (Agencies): George Russell was torn between realism and ambition after securing Mercedes' first front-row qualifying result of the season at the Australian Grand Prix. The 25-year-old Briton admitted it would be "very difficult to fight" for victory with Max Verstappen, who took pole position for the Red Bull team who have swept all before them so far this season. But Russell also said: "We've got to go for it, haven't we? Gotta go for the win. "Max is gonna be extremely fast. There is no hiding that. It is going to be difficult to overtake around this circuit, so the start and lap one are going to be vital, but the Red Bull has extraordinary top speed. "Let's see how we get on. We have got to do our own race, and if the opportunity is there we have to go for it." Both Russell and team-mate Lewis Hamilton, who qualified third, said their appearance at the front after another difficult start to a season had been unexpected.

**Boxer Ken dies at 77**

SCOTLAND (Agencies): Ken Buchanan, Scotland's first undisputed world champion and arguably the country's greatest boxer, has died at the age of 77. The Ken Buchanan Foundation confirmed the Edinburgh native's death on Saturday, a year after his son Mark said his father had been diagnosed with dementia. "It is with great sadness that we inform you Ken passed away peacefully in his sleep," read a statement. "RIP Ken, always a gentleman and one of the best champions we will ever see." Having turned professional in 1965, Buchanan memorably won the WBA lightweight world title by dethroning Panama's Ismael Laguna in the scorching heat of Puerto Rico in 1970. That same year, the Scot was the American Boxing Writers' Association's Fighter of the Year, ahead of Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali. He defeated Ruben Navarro in Los Angeles in 1971 to take the WBC crown and become Scotland's first undisputed world champion, a feat only matched 50 years later by Josh Taylor. Buchanan, who topped the bill six times at New York's famous Madison Square Garden arena, won his first 33 professional fights and retired in 1982 with a 61-9 record, including 27 wins by knockout. He was inducted into the international boxing hall of fame in 2000, and a statue of Buchanan was unveiled in Leith in his home city of Edinburgh last year to honour his storied boxing career.

# Liverpool humbled by Haaland-less Man City

MANCHESTER, United Kingdom (AFP/APP): Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp said his side allowed Manchester City to "do what they wanted" as the Reds were thrashed 4-1 at the Etihad on Saturday.

City did not miss the injured Erling Haaland as goals from Julian Alvarez, Kevin De Bruyne, Ilkay Gundogan and Jack Grealish moved the defending champions back to within five points of Arsenal at the top of the table.

City and Liverpool have finished as the top two in four of the past five Premier League seasons, but Liverpool's humiliation in the closing stages summed up a dreadful season for Klopp's men.

A chastening defeat leaves them still seven points adrift of the top four.

"We were not there anymore. We were completely open, too passive, too deep," said Klopp of his side's second half performance.

"Against City 14 or 15 players need to be on top

of their game. After being 3-1 down it's difficult but, apart from that, City could do what they wanted because the spaces were too big. We were lucky they only scored one more."

A groin injury meant Haaland was watching on from the stands alongside his father and former City midfielder Alfie Haaland.

But City shrugged off the absence of their 42-goal striker as Alvarez stepped up with a rare chance to start and Grealish produced arguably his best performance since joining the club for a Premier League record £100 million in 2021.

"From the first minute until the 93rd minute, it was almost the perfect performance," said Guardiola.

"Always we have fought against Liverpool. The way they defend, the way they play is so difficult for us, but today the players were magnificent."

City were forced to come from behind after Diogo Jota broke the offside trap before teeing up



Mohamed Salah to slot home his 23rd goal of the season.

The lead lasted just 10 minutes as the home side showed their quality even shorn of Haaland.

De Bruyne, Riyad Mahrez and Grealish combined to open up the Liverpool defence and

Alvarez was left with the simple task of slotting in his 13th goal of the season despite spending most of the campaign as Haaland's deputy.

It took just 53 seconds of the second half for City to edge in front thanks to another scintillating team move.

Alvarez was the creator this time as his cross-field pass freed Mahrez to race into acres of space behind the Liverpool defence.

The Algerian's cross was perfectly weighted to cut out Alisson Becker for De Bruyne to tap into an unguarded net.

If City's first two goals

were the fruit of collective brilliance, Liverpool's defending for the third summed up a miserable season for Klopp's men.

Alvarez was afforded an incredible amount of time inside the box by Fabinho to pick out a shot and, when his effort was blocked by Trent Alexander-Arnold,

Gundogan also had the space to take a touch before firing into the top corner.

Liverpool have now conceded three or more goals in nine games this season and the punishment did not end there for the visitors.

Grealish was the stand-out individual on the day and rounded it off with his first goal at the Etihad this season.

City's movement off the ball was again too good for a cumbersome Liverpool defence as Grealish and De Bruyne exchanged a one-two before the England international slotted into the far corner.

"I feel back to my normal self, feel fit and back to confidence," said Grealish. "Scoring and getting the assist, I'm buzzing."

Arsenal, who face Leeds later on Saturday, maintain the upper hand in the title race.

But City could be coming to the boil at just the right time after scoring 17 goals in their last three games and with Arsenal still to visit the Etihad later this month.

## Nowitzki, Gasol, Parker head star-studded Hall of Fame class

LOS ANGELES (AFP/APP): Dirk Nowitzki, Pau Gasol, Tony Parker, Dwyane Wade and San Antonio Spurs coach Gregg Popovich will be ushered into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame later this year, the organization confirmed on Saturday.

The star-studded class of 2023, who will be enshrined at a ceremony in August, also include trail-blazing WNBA player and coach Becky Hammon, the Hall of Fame announced.

German star Nowitzki, former Los Angeles Lakers Spanish ace Gasol and France's Parker are three of the most successful international stars ever to grace the NBA.

Parker won four NBA championships during the Spurs' dominant reign between 2003 and 2014, while Gasol was a key part of the Lakers team that won back-to-back titles in 2009 and 2010.

Nowitzki, who is sixth on the NBA's all-time scoring list with 31,560 points, was named NBA Most Valuable Player in 2007 and Finals MVP four years later after helping the Dallas Mavericks win the title. Reacting to Saturday's announcement, Nowitzki paid tribute to international players who had paved the way for his generation in the NBA.

"I think there were a few guys who blazed the way for us a little bit," Nowitzki said. "And then the next wave came with Pau, Tony and myself. And if we help

to make the game truly global and help some kids along the way that's obviously truly humbling for all of us."

Barcelona-born Gasol, meanwhile, recalled how watching the US 'Dream Team' at the 1992 Olympics staged in his hometown had helped inspire his basketball journey.

"I always had in mind the effect that the 'Dream Team '92' had on my life and how basketball and sports can affect and inspire kids' lives, so I just wanted to do that," Gasol told ESPN.

The 6ft 2in (1.88m) tall Parker reflected how people had doubted his ability to be successful in the NBA due to his height.

"Growing up the NBA dream was very far away," Parker said.

"When I was telling people my dream they were all laughing at me saying 'You're too small, you're too skinny, you will never make it in the NBA'. Now I'm the one laughing."

Wade was a three-time NBA champion with the Miami Heat in 2006, 2012 and 2013 and won finals MVP in 2006.

The 41-year-old, who retired from the NBA in 2019, also won Olympic gold with the United States in the 2008 Beijing Games.

The 74-year-old Popovich, meanwhile, is one of the NBA's elder statesmen, one of only five NBA coaches in history to have won five championships.

Popovich also led the United States to gold in the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

"Those of us who've ended up in this position -- it's incredible," Popovich said in a recorded message on ESPN on Saturday.

"It's an honor, and something that one does not think about when going through your years in this game. It's an awesome thought to think about all the players that I've had the honour to coach, who are the ones who won the games."

"I sit here amongst people who I've always been in awe of myself. So to be in this situation is kind of an out-of-body experience."

Nowitzki, Wade, Parker, Gasol and Popovich are all being inducted into the basketball pantheon at the first attempt, a rarity under the Hall of Fame's eligibility rules which reflects their stellar achievements in the sport.

Joining Popovich in the Hall of Fame will be former assistant Hammon.

Hammon is a six-time All-Star and coached the Las Vegas Aces to the WNBA Finals crown in 2022. The 46-year-old was also Popovich's assistant coach in San Antonio from 2014 -- the first woman assistant coach in the NBA. She remains the only woman to take charge of an NBA team during a regular season game after stepping in when Popovich was ejected during a clash with the Lakers in 2020.

## Tickets for Pak v NZ T20Is available from Sunday

LAHORE (APP): Tickets for the three T20 Internationals between Pakistan and New Zealand in Lahore will go on sale on Sunday, 2 April, at 11am. The two teams play on 14, 15 and 17 April at the Gaddafi Stadium.

The Pakistan Cricket Board has set affordable ticket prices, ranging from PKR250 to PKR3,000. The following are the enclosure categories and prices:

- VVIP Enclosure (Wasim Akram) – PKR3,000
- VIP Enclosures (Fazal Mahmood and Imran Khan) – PKR2,000
- Premium (Raja's and Saeed Anwar) – PKR1,000
- First class (Abdul Qadir, AH Kardar, Javed Miandad and Sarfaraz Nawaz) – PKR500
- General (Hanif Mohammad, Imtiaz Ahmed, Inzamam-ul-Haq, Majid Khan, Nazar, Quaid, Saeed Ahmed and Zaheer Abbas) – PKR250

In the first phase, which commences on Sunday, the tickets will be available online at pcb.bookme.pk and fans can buy them using original ID cards. The fans will be required to bring their original ID or B-Forms (for those under the age of 18) to gain entry in the stadium.

The physical tickets will be available in the second phase from 6 April. The details regarding sale points will be announced in due course.

The ticket details for the matches in Rawalpindi and Karachi will be announced in due course.

## Aamir appointed coach of Wapda Squash team

PESHAWAR (APP): Former Asian Games gold medalist Aamir Atlas Khan has been appointed coach of Pakistan Wapda squash team, said an office order issued by General Secretary Wapda Sports Board Muhammad Umair Aslam Malik here.

Aamir Atlas Khan, LS-I (PBS-18) in PESCO is appointed as coach Pakistan Wapda (Men) team in place of Mr. Sher Akbar, PESCO with immediate effect5 till further orders. His appointment as coach has been approved by the President Wapda Sports Board, the release said.

Nephew of former World Champion legendary Jansher Khan, Aamir Atlas Khan was born on July 30, 1990. He turned professional squash player in 2002 and being coached by his father Atlas Khan reached to his highest ever World ranking No. 14.

Aamir Atlas Khan represented Pakistan in Guangzhou, China in 2010 by taking the gold medal in the Team event and silver

medal in the singles.

Aamir Atlas Khan is the recipient of Pakistan's highest civil award (Tamgha-e-Imtiaz ). In 2007 Aamir Atlas Khan proved the most successful and has seen his rankings rise. He was a finalist in the Governor NWFP International 2007 and in the President PSF international 2007, but in both occasions he was beaten by Mansoor Zaman. In August, he went one step better by winning his first title at the CAS international, beating Malaysian Mohd Azlan Iskandar.

As of 2009, Aamir, who turned pro in 2002 is ranked 14th, his highest ranking, and was the No. 1 Pakistan squash player. In 2010, Amir Atlas Khan won a silver medal in the individual event in Asian Games in Guangzhou, China.

In the Asian Squash Championship 2013, Khan brushed aside Kuwait's Abdullah Al Mezayan in three sets to become the first Pakistani in 14 years to claim the title.

Talking to APP, soon after assuming charge of the Wapda coach, Aamir Atlas Khan said that it was a great honor to become Pakistan Wapda coach, for whom he won numerous titles at the national level.

He disclosed that during his playing career he won 65 international titles and remained Pakistan No. 1 for eight long years. He said winning the Asian Games gold medal after Jehangir Khan, Jansher Khan and Zarak Jehan, he was the fourth to win a gold medal in the Asian Team Championship and silver medal in the individual category.

"I will try my best to prepare a good fighting team for Wapda because we have players like Farhan Zaman, Nasir Iqbal, Danish Atlas and upcoming Noor Zaman who have the abilities to shine even in international squash," Aamir Atlas said. He also thanked Chairman Wapda, President Wapda Sports Board Imdad Ullah Memon for reposing confidence in him to appoint him as Wapda coach.

## Essex sign Doug Bracewell for 10-game County Championship spell



LONDON (Agencies): Essex have signed New Zealand allrounder Doug Bracewell as one of their overseas players for the upcoming County Championship. Bracewell replaces Will Sutherland, after the Australian was forced to withdraw earlier this week following the diagnosis of a back stress fracture.

Bracewell, who recently made a return to the New Zealand Test team after a

seven-year gap, will join up with Essex after next week's opening fixture against Middlesex. He will stay with the club until the end of July, and could feature in as many as 10 Championship games.

"It's great that we've been able to secure Doug for a long stint of our County Championship season," Essex's head coach Anthony McGrath, said.

"He is a player who has lots of international experience

and will bolster our squad adding strong squad depth.

"He has recently featured for New Zealand in their Test series against Sri Lanka and was in excellent form for the Central Districts throughout their 2022-23 season, so we're excited to welcome him to the club." Bracewell, 32, has been capped across all three formats by New Zealand and previously played county cricket with Northamptonshire.

## Argentina pays tribute to Spanish artist Pablo Picasso

Buenos Aires (APP): Argentina's National Museum of Fine Arts this week inaugurated the exhibition "Picasso in the Museum's Collection" to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of Spanish artist Pablo Picasso.

The works on display, dated between 1905-1959, include engravings, drawings and ceramics from his youth, as well as portraits of the significant women in his life and scenes in his workshop. Exhibition curator Paola Melgarejo told

Xinhua that there are also pieces showing his interest in the interwar political situation, as well as fantastic animals with which he identified and which today are universally recognizable Picasso symbols.

"The idea is to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Pablo Picasso's death. All the museums around the world that currently have works by Picasso are holding exhibitions," she said, adding that the museum is displaying about 30 pieces in total until June,

which are organized into five sections.

The museum's director, Andres Duprat, pointed out in a statement that "Picasso embraced art with such passion and conviction that he became the great experimenter of the 20th century."

"His formal inquiries and creations, and his technical quests consistently pushed the boundaries of art in a definitive way. It could perfectly be said that there is a before and an after Picasso in the history of art," he concluded.



**HYDERABAD:** Memon Premier League Season 1 Chief Director of Unique Group of Industries Ali Mohammad Ghangra giving trophy to winner team Memon Hunter at Unique Group Aap Industries.





## In brief

### Rana condemns attack on forces

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah on Saturday condemned the attack on security forces at Pakistan-Iran border. Paying homage to the four martyrs in the attack, he said that the sons of the soil laid down their lives to protect motherland and added that the whole nation was proud of them. "The whole country is united against terrorism and one day we will succeed to win this war against terrorism," the minister expressed his resolve. Sana prayed high ranks for the martyrs and extended his sympathies to the bereaved families.

### Police recovers drugs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Motorway Police conducted a successful operation near Chakri on Saturday and failed an attempt to smuggle a large cache of drugs from Peshawar. According to details, the drugs included 2.5 kg of opium and 11 kg of hashish. On the tip-off, the operation was conducted, it added. The Motorway police signalled a suspicious vehicle to stop between Islamabad and Chakri but the accused tried to escape. In pursuit of the suspicious vehicle, it prompted the driver to leave the vehicle stranded as he was able to flee from the spot. However, a woman and a four to five-year-old girl in the vehicle were taken into protective custody by the Motorway Police and further investigations were launched. The bat commander was present at the spot along with the team. Meanwhile, drugs were recovered from the vehicle after searching and after completing the initial investigation, the drugs were handed over to ANF Rawalpindi.

### 13 year old boy found dead

RAWALPINDI (APP): A 13-year-old boy, who was abducted for ransom, was found dead in the washroom of a house in Naseerabad area. According to a police spokesman, the boy's father had reported to the police that his son had not returned after he went out to play, and the kidnappers demanded a ransom of 10 lakhs. When the kidnapper came to collect the ransom amount, the kidnappers opened fire on the police party. During the firing, the main kidnapper was injured and later died. Police constable Fahad was also injured. While searching the house, Mujtaba's body was recovered from a washroom. According to the initial report, the boy was strangled to death. SP Potohar said that the other facilitators involved in the tragic incident will be arrested and will also be punished.

### Authorities directed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Managing Director (MD) Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi here on Saturday directed the authorities concerned to ensure 100 per cent recovery of the outstanding dues from the defaulters, Chaining a meeting held here he reviewed the revenue collection of the agency and directed the authorities including Revenue Director and Deputy Directors to disconnect connections of the defaulters. The meeting was attended by revenue officers and the staff concerned. He also appreciated the efforts of the officers who showed good performance in the revenue recovery campaign and reprimanded those whose performance was not satisfactory. He directed the authorities to continue the crackdown till recovery of the outstanding dues from the last defaulter.



ISLAMABAD: First Lady Begum Samina Alvi addressing an awareness seminar in connection with World Autism Awareness Day at a hospital.



## Division in SC bench not good for 'image of judiciary'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Saturday said the way the Supreme Court's bench was suffering from apparent "division and fragmentation" was not good for the "reputation and image of the judiciary".

In a statement, the federal minister regretted that a 9-member bench was reduced to 3 members. She was referring to the bench constituted by the Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial after a suo-motu notice related to holding elections in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

The same bench was shrunk to five in reconstitution after the outcry against certain honourable judges of the Supreme Court. Later the Supreme Court, in

an appeal filed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf challenging the postponement of elections till October 8 by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), once again constituted a five-member bench and after the recusal of the two judges was left with three judges who would continue to hold proceedings on Monday.

In the wake of the aforementioned background details, Sherry Rehman said that: "Clearly, this [newly-constituted] bench has lost its majority and impartiality. If the bench becomes controversial before the verdict, it is not justice," urging a full-court bench of the apex court to shelve any controversy.

The minister maintained that once again the request

of the full court bench by the government and bar council was rejected. "We request the apex court to reconsider the formation of the full court bench," the minister added to ensure transparency and acceptability of the verdict by all the political stakeholders.

"The solution to this crisis lies in the display of collective wisdom of the court. The decision of the 3-judge bench could not be the collective wisdom of the court," the minister viewed. To the purported division in the top court, the minister also suggested that honourable judges should sit together to remove internal divisions and disputes.

"The court should not miss this opportunity to restore its reputation and image of impartiality," Sherry Rehman contended.

### SP conducts visit to Westridge Police Station

RAWALPINDI (APP): Superintendent of Police (SP) Potohar Muhammad Waqas Khan on Saturday conducted a surprise visit to Westridge police station and checked the public service delivery in the police station. According to police spokesman, SP reviewed police station building, front desk, records, lock up to ensure the provision of all possible resources to police station.

The SP also reviewed the facilities being provided to the public and directed that merit and justice be provided to the people. Furthermore, SP directed the officials to make the surroundings clean. He made it clear that strict action would be taken against the officials who were found negligent in performing their duties. Meanwhile, Rawalpindi Police, in its crackdown against professional beggars, arrested 35 beggars to discourage the menace of begging and avoid risk of road accidents.

Beggar squads, along with their respective teams, took action against professional beggars, and detained them in different police stations of Rawalpindi city, said the Rawalpindi Police spokesperson.

### Death anniversary of Masroor observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Death anniversary of famous poet, song and story writer, Masroor Anwar was observed on Saturday.

Masroor Anwar wrote hundreds of film and national songs as well as film stories and dialogues during his career.

Born in Shimla on January 6, 1944, Masroor Anwar migrated to Pakistan after the participation of the subcontinent.

After completing of his studies, he joined Radio Pakistan as a staff artist because of his deep interest in poetry and literature.

He was hired by Iqbal Shehzad to write his first film song for his film Banjaran (1962). Then he became part of a group of four people in Karachi — Waheed Murad, Pervaz Malik, Sohail Rana and Masroor Anwar that made many big hit films together in the 1960s and 1970s.

going to set up more trucking points to supply free flour, particularly in far-flung areas, he said.

People are appreciating the free flour package of the Punjab government.

"I am personally monitoring the process of providing free flour to the citizens," he said.

Negligence on part of officials concerned would not be tolerated, he warned.

The Commissioner during the visit appreciated the volunteer services of the students to facilitate the citizens in Jhelum.

### Authorities directed to accelerate pace of work

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chhatta here on Saturday directed the authorities concerned of the National Highway Authority (NHA) to accelerate the pace of construction work on Taxila Museum Road.

A delegation of the representatives of Taxila Industrial State met with Commissioner Rawalpindi Division and apprised about the traffic jam problem being faced due to construction work of Taxila Museum Road.

The road repair work is very slow due to which huge traffic jam problem is being faced on the road and in its surrounding areas on daily basis.

## Conspiracy hatched to portray Islam as 'extremist religion'

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Saturday said that a well-thought-out conspiracy was hatched to portray Islam, which is the religion of peace, as a conservative and extremist religion.

He made these remarks while speaking at the Maleeka tul Arab conference held under the auspices of Mukhtar Organization Pakistan in connection with the death anniversary of Ummul Momineen Hazrat Khadeeja tul Kubra (S.A) held at Islamabad.

The Speaker highlighted the role of Hazrat Khadija al Kubra (SA), the wife of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), in relation to her services for the cause of Islam.

He mentioned that Hazrat Khadija (SA) as the endorser of the first revelation of Islam who had established the largest business empire in the Arab world and was renowned as Tahira, the purest lady.

However, the Speaker expressed concern that the west may not be aware of the great personality of Hazrat Khadija (SA) due to the negligence of the Muslim Ummah in promoting her role in Islamic history.

He stressed the need for Muslims to highlight the true message of Islam, which advocates for gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Speaker also called upon the Muslim Ummah to unite and work towards promoting the true image of Islam, which is based on peace, tolerance, and harmony.

"Protection of the signs and services of Mashaheer e Islam is the key to eliminating intolerance and radicalization," the speaker said.

He lauded the contribution made by Quaid e Millat e Jafariya Agha Syed Hamid Ali Shah Moosavi who played an effective role in commemorating the days attributed to Mashaheer e Islam and highlighting their pious characters.

The event was participated by renowned dignitaries of different schools of thought, poets, and political, social and religious scholars who offered extraordinary tributes to the services of Hazrat Khadeeja al Kubra (S.A).

Addressing to the conference the Secretary

General of Tehreek e Nifaz e Fiqah Jafariya Allama Bisharat Hussain Imami said that Almighty Allah praised Hazrat Khadeeja (S.A) in the Holy Quran. Hazrat Khadeeja (S.A) did not only strengthen the foundations of Islam but also trained her progeny in a way to ensure the eternal protection of Islam.

Addressing to the conference, Syed Muhammad Ali Gillani the Sajjada Nasheen of Hazrat Barim Imam Kazmi (R.A) said that alongside Zikr e Hussain (A.S), the ideology of Imam Hussain (A.S) must also be highlighted.

Divsional Kahateeb Jammam e Ahl e Sunnah Pakistan Hafiz Iqbal Rizvi said that following the pious character of Hazrat Khadeeja al Kubra (S.A) provides a guarantee for success in the world and the hereafter.

Sahibzada Usman Ghani said that every Muslim is obliged to the services of Hazrat Khadeeja al Kubra (S.A).

Peer of Mohra Shareef, Peer Mujtaba Farooq Gul Badshah said that history stands witness to the sacrifices of Hazrat Khadeeja (S.A) who sacrificed her entire wealth for Islam.

## Covid infection before vaccination lowers immunity

ISLAMABAD (APP): If you had Covid infection before you took vaccination, chances are that you might have less immunity, claimed a study.

Researchers at the Stanford University in the US found that the magnitude and quality of a key immune cell's response to vaccination with two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine were considerably lower in people with prior SARS-CoV-2 infection compared to people without prior infection.

In addition, the level of this key immune cell that targets the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein was substantially lower in unvaccinated people with Covid-19 than in vaccinated people who had never been infected.

Importantly, people who recover from SARS-CoV-2 infection and then get vaccinated are more protected than people who are unvaccinated, Medical Xpress reported. These findings, which suggest that the virus damages an important immune-cell response, were published in the journal Immunity.

Led by Mark M. Davis, Professor of microbiology and immunology at

Stanford's School of Medicine, the researchers designed a very sensitive tool to analyse how immune cells called CD4+ T cells and CD8+ T cells respond to SARS-CoV-2 infection and vaccination.

These cells coordinate the immune system's response to the virus and kill other cells that have been infected, helping prevent Covid.

The tool was designed to identify T cells that target any of dozens of specific regions on the virus's spike protein as well as some other viral regions. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine uses parts of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein to elicit an immune response without causing infection.

The investigators studied CD4+ and CD8+ T-cell responses in blood samples from three groups of volunteers. One group had never been infected with SARS-CoV-2 and received two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine. The second group had previously been infected with SARS-CoV-2 and received two doses of the vaccine. The third group had Covid-19 and was unvaccinated.

The researchers found that vaccination of people who had never been infected with SARS-CoV-2 induced robust CD4+ and CD8+ T-cell responses to the virus' spike protein. In addition, these T cells produced multiple types of cell-signalling molecules called cytokines, which recruit other immune cells -- including antibody-producing B cells -- to fight pathogens.

However, people who had been infected with SARS-CoV-2 prior to vaccination produced spike-specific CD8+ T cells at considerably lower levels -- and with less functionality -- than vaccinated people who had never been infected. Moreover, the researchers observed substantially lower levels of spike-specific CD8+ T cells in unvaccinated people with Covid than in vaccinated people who had never been infected.

Overall, these findings suggest that SARS-CoV-2 infection damages the CD8+ T cell response, an effect akin to that observed in earlier studies showing long-term damage to the immune system after infection with viruses such as hepatitis C or HIV.

## Pilgrims avoid carrying large amount of money

ISLAMABAD (APP): Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah has advised Umrah pilgrims to avoid carrying large amounts of money and jewellery while performing rituals.

The pilgrims who come to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah should not be carrying more than SR 60,000, in addition, to avoid holding gold bullion, as well as

precious stones and metals in general.

The Ministry has also warned the pilgrims against exposing themselves to financial fraud, calling them to download the bank apps from official sources, Saudi Gazette reported.

The pilgrims must not disclose their bank card information, not transfer money to unknown

sources, and should check the reliability of the electronic links before paying.

It has also called for the importance of pilgrims ignoring unknown links and messages.

The Ministry said that in the event of exposure to financial fraud or suspicion of fraud, the pilgrims must inform the bank and the competent authorities.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaz Ashraf addressing participants of "Malikatul Arab Conference" to mark death anniversary of Ummul Mominenn Hazrat Khadija tul Kubra.



Female students seek to study

KABUL (Agencies): Female students in Afghanistan have said that they are seeking to study abroad as universities continue to remain closed for women in the country, TOLO News reported on Saturday. Female students have said that they have applied for scholarships abroad for virtual and campus institutions. However, they are facing problems in travelling due to the lack of a male person to accompany them.

Coal extraction started

KABUL (Agencies): The process of coal extraction starts from a new mine in the Obe district of Herat province of Afghanistan. The provincial head of Mines and Petroleum of Herat, during the contract for the extraction of a new coal mine in Herat's Obe district, says that currently, the work of extracting 9 mines is ongoing in this province, which has provided careers to hundreds of people in addition to the income for the government.

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

## Nangarhar youth: Society needs educated women

JALALABAD CITY (TOLOnews): A group of youth in the eastern Nangarhar province called on the Islamic Emirate to allow Afghan women and girls to get an education, saying society requires educated women.

The youth who attended an annual exam for a private university in Jalalabad city asked the caretaker government to reopen secondary schools and universities for female students.

"We ask the prime minister and other officials of the Islamic Emirate to pave the way for girls' education based on the Sharia law," said Mohammad Daud, a student in Nangarhar.

"I ask the Islamic Emirate to provide the opportunity for girls to get an education as it is provided for us," said Subhanallah, a participant in the exam.

Meanwhile, officials from Nangarhar universities said they hope that the Islamic Emirate will achieve all required conditions for reopening schools and universities for women and girls and will announce a specific date for it.

"Universities are struggling with economic challenges. The Ministry of Higher Education has pledged that universities will be reopened for women in the near future," said Khair Mohammad Mohmand, head of a private university in Nangarhar.

This comes as public and private universities have remained closed for women over the past three months.

Officials of universities said the absence of female students has caused economic challenges for them.

## Afghan govt believes in electoral system: Official



KABUL (Khaama Press): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the acting Deputy Prime Minister of the Taliban in a meeting with UNAMA Chief Roza Otunbayeva has said the group believes in an "electoral system".

During the meeting, Abdul Kabir said the Taliban "want to hold an election that is based on expertise and qualification" Bakhtar news agency reported.

Neither the news agency nor the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) has provided further details in this regard so far.

Certain senior Taliban members including the Minister of Information and Culture, and Anas Haqqani, the Interior Minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani's brother attended the meeting.

Abdul Kabir reiterated the Taliban group has met every single requirement and should be recognized as the legitimate government of Afghanistan by the international community.

The Taliban senior leader speaks of fair and transparent elections as the group seized power using force and violence, and has no legal and international legitimacy.

Meanwhile, the Taliban-run administration has repeatedly asked people to show their allegiance to the group, obey the orders of the supreme leader, and accept the group's system.

Following the overtake of Afghanistan, the Taliban dissolved all elected institutions, including election commissions, and took over the government using force.

Since their return to power in August 2021, the Taliban have dissolved National Assembly, including the parliament and senate house, provincial councils, State Ministry for Elections as well as Afghanistan's Constitution.

The de facto regime has also revoked the license of political parties and denied women and girls basic rights to education, work and travel.

Abdul Karim Haidar, the Deputy Minister of Justice of Taliban last year said that Afghanistan does not need a constitution, and people's problems will be solved based on "Hanafi jurisprudence".

## WHO: 45% of ARI cases involve children under 5

KABUL (Agencies): The World Health Organization (WHO) said in a report released that 45.1 percent of cases of acute respiratory infections in Afghanistan involve children.

Since October 2022, of the total 4,353,661 ARI cases reported, representing 13.3 percent of the total population of Afghanistan, 45.1 percent have afflicted children under five years of age, the report said.

In addition, ARI cases have increased since 2022 compared to the average of the previous three years.

The report also said that in the last month of February, over 828,000 ARI cases were newly reported.

Afghanistan experienced one of the coldest winters this year in decades.

WHO's report said that following emergencies, an estimated 17 percent of impacted adults experience mild to moderate psychological disorders, including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Decades of conflict and instability have left many Afghans vulnerable to mental health problems, which are risk factors for drug abuse, the report said.

## Food aid distributed



KABUL (Agencies): The Natural Disasters Management administration distributed food aid to two hundred and eighty affected families in Kabul.

The Disaster Management Office of Kabul distributed food and non-food aid to 280 families affected by the disasters.

Each family, received Flour, macaroni, Maggi, soup, cooking oil, biscuits, sugar, baby clothes, and detergents in the process, according to the department.

### Kabul businessman slashes price of onions, potatoes

KABUL (Agencies): As the prices of onions and potatoes skyrocket in Kabul, one businessman in the city is offering customers a massive discount on the produce for the next seven days.

Seven kilograms of onions currently sells for up to 500 afghanis in Kabul markets, but businessman Mirwais Hajizada has slashed the price to 150 afghanis for 7kg.

He has also cut his price of potatoes at 100 afghanis.

"Today, you can see that there are ten trucks carrying 500 to 1,000 tons of onions and potatoes. We have decided to distribute 1,000 tons per day for seven days," Hajizada said.

Kabul residents welcomed the initiative and asked other traders to sell essential goods at reasonable prices.

"This is a very good job. This is a good price for poor people," said Mukhtar, a resident of Kabul.

Pacha Khan, a resident of Kabul city, said: "We ask other traders to reduce the prices of produce in this holy month of Ramadan."

Kabul Municipality also called on other members of the private sector to help people.

"We appreciate this initiative. We ask other businessmen to have mercy on their people and hold their hands," said Ismatullah Ansari, Deputy Director of Market Regulation Department at Kabul Municipality.

Municipality officials also warned shopkeepers in Kabul city that if anyone sells basic food items at a price higher than the price set by the department, they could run the risk of having their shops closed down.

### Explosion in Zabul kills a child, hurt three more

ZABUL (Khaama Press): A child was killed and three others injured when an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) exploded in Southern Zabul province, according to local sources.

The explosion caused by an IED of past wars resulted in the death of one child and the injury of three others in the Sarkhakan area of the Shah Joi district of Zabul province on Friday evening, Qari Zabiullah Jawhar, the provincial police spokesman said.

It is reported that a group of children from nomad families were playing next to a tractor in a field when the bomb went off, killing one and injuring three others.

On Tuesday, a similar blast claimed the lives of two children and injured four others in the northern Jawzjan province according to local sources.

In recent days, the incidents caused by the explosions of unexploded devices have increased in some parts of the country, resulting in the death injury of men, women and children.

Afghanistan reportedly is one of the most mine-contaminated countries in the world. Dozens of people, mostly children, are killed and maimed every month due to blasts of unexploded ordnances left over from the past four decades of wars and internal conflicts.

Despite the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Services (UNMAS) in direct collaboration with UNAMA and other relevant government bodies, the presence of land mines and unexploded devices poses major threats to the lives of ordinary people.

Since November 2022, Afghanistan's international partners have generously contributed to support demining in the country. These countries include Australia, Denmark, Germany, Japan, Sweden, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

## Daesh not a major threat to Afghanistan: Mujahid



KABUL (Khaama Press): The security forces of the Afghan interim government destroyed Daesh, and it has not a major threat as it was a year ago, according to Zabihullah Mujahid, a senior interim government spokesperson.

In a recent interview with Voice of America, Pashto, Mujahid said that the Afghan security forces "since August 2021, have arrested and imprisoned around 1,600 to 1,700 Islamic State militants and have killed more than 1,100."

The remarks came as the Taliban usually downplaying the presence and the threat of Islamic State Khorasan Province militants in the country.

He said that the Daesh hideout had been destroyed across the country, including Zabul, Kunar and Jawzjan provinces, and that primarily ISKP militants were supported by the previous government. Some of them escaped from the prisons during the regime change.

However, he added that the Afghan security forces either killed, arrested, or imprisoned them.

However, a top US general, Michael Kurilla, commander of US Central Command, recently claimed while speaking to Congress that ISIS is stronger today than it was in Afghanistan.

Kurilla added, "at least hundreds of thousands" of US people could be at risk from an attack by ISIS, which has the "ultimate goal of striking on the US homeland."

"ISIS-Khorasan grows emboldened, seeking to expand its ranks and inspire, enable and direct attacks in the region and beyond – with the ultimate goal of striking on the American homeland," he added.

The American General

estimated that there are at least 6,500 Daesh militants in Afghanistan, of which 4,000 are positioned close to the Tajikistan border.

Nevertheless, Taliban spokesman Mujahid denied the American claims, saying that Daesh militants had already been suppressed and their numbers had already been decreased, contrary to what US authorities had claimed to be the case.

Recently, Daesh took responsibility for the Kabul attack close to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, killing six people and injuring at least more than 12.

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The American General

## Interior Ministry: Police reach nearly 200,000 members

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Interior Affairs said on Saturday that the number of police force members has increased to nearly 200,000.

Abdul Nafay Takur, a spokesman for the ministry, said the purpose of the recruitment is to ensure public order and fight drugs and crimes.

"The number will increase if needed," he said.

Military affairs analysts said focusing on establishing well-trained and professional forces is essential.

"I think instead of quantity, they should pay attention to the quality of our security forces," said Sarwari Niazi, a military affairs analyst.

"The Ministry of Interior should invest in training of police forces," said Mohammad Zalmai Afghan



Yar, an analyst.

This comes as the chief of staff of the Islamic

Emirate's army has said

that the number of army

members will increase to

200,000 in the future from the current 150,000 forces.

## Dars: BBC education show in Afghanistan helps children banned from school

KABUL (BBC News): The BBC has launched a new education programme for children in Afghanistan who are banned from school.

It is aimed at children aged 11 to 16, including girls whose secondary education has been stopped by the ruling Taliban.

The weekly programme is called Dars, which means lesson in Dari and Pashto, Afghanistan's official languages.

It is hosted by BBC Afghan female journalists who were evacuated from Kabul during the 2021 Taliban takeover.

Each new weekly half-hour episode of Dars will air four times a day, Saturday to Friday, on the newly launched BBC News Afghanistan channel.

The programme will also be available via BBC News Pashto and BBC News Dari Facebook channels, will be part of the BBC Persian TV channel schedule, and will air on radio through the network of BBC FM transmitters in Afghanistan as well as on short-wave and medium-wave radio.

Aalia Farzan is one of the Dari language presenters.

"Every day I speak to a lot of Afghan girls who are

still in the country and they tell me they cannot go to school," she says. "They are very helpless and sometimes they seem hopeless."

The Taliban have said that schools for girls are temporarily closed until a "suitable environment" is created.

They have also said the international community's decision to freeze aid payments means they do not have the money to spend on female-only classrooms.

The BBC show is tailored to children aged between 11 and 16 and makes the most of the BBC's existing teaching content, adapting maths, history, science, and Information and Communications Technology modules from BBC Bitesize, the BBC's free online resource for pupils in the UK.

Mariam Aman is one of the programme's producers and says that adapting BBC Bitesize content for an Afghan audience went beyond translation. "Do a boy or girl living in rural Afghanistan know what pizza is when we are talking about fractions in maths or should we keep it as big round bread?"

The team also wanted to make the programme feel

like home. "Afghans are fond of chess and you would often find a chess set in most family homes," she says. "We wanted to add that cultural heritage to our programme and have things like that on set."

When BBC Afghan presenter Shazia Haya was growing up, school attendance was a source of tension.

"I had just finished 12 years of school and my older brother and father were saying: 'That's enough for you. You should get married.'"

The Pashto presenter lives with their disapproval to this day. "Even now, if you ask my father what I studied at university or what was my favourite subject in school, he doesn't know because he wasn't interested in my education, just because I'm a girl," she says.

It was the women in Shazia's family, including her mother, who encouraged her to attend university.

"That's why this new BBC programme means a lot to me," she says. "I know what the value of education is, and I know how hard it is when you don't have support."

Aalia was born in 1996,

the year the Taliban first took control of Afghanistan.

Despite an official ban on girls' education at the time, there was a glimmer of hope for her. She grew up in the northern province of Takhar where girls continued to attend class, and her father was a teacher.

But like so many Afghans, tragedy hit her family.

"My father was killed 16 years ago," she says. "He wanted me to be a journalist and I wanted to be a teacher because my father was a teacher."

"So by joining this programme, I'm fulfilling both my father's dream and my own dream."

Aalia says she often thinks of members of her extended family, especially young school-age girls, who are still in Afghanistan.

"Sometimes I put myself in their shoes, and I think that if I was in the country and I was a teenage girl who cannot go to school, who cannot go outside the house alone, who does not have any basic rights, what should I do?" she says.

"I would be very happy if someone helped me and taught me something."



# Trump indicted, expected to be arraigned next week

NEW YORK (Agencies): Former United States President Donald Trump has been indicted in relation to a New York investigation into an alleged hush-money payment made to a porn star before the 2016 presidential election. After weeks of speculation, a New York grand jury voted on Thursday to indict Trump, according to the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, making him the first former president to face criminal prosecution in US history.

Court officials have said the arraignment will take place on Tuesday, although the specific charges are not yet known and the indictment will likely be announced in the coming days. The office of Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg issued a statement saying prosecutors are working with Trump's lawyers to arrange his surrender.

It also affirmed that, for now, the charges will remain under seal. "Guidance will be provided when the arraignment [court appearance] date is selected," the district attorney's office said through a spokesperson. In a statement released through his 2024 presidential campaign, Trump called the indictment "political persecution and election interference at the highest level in history".

He said the case was part of a coordinated "witch hunt" against

him, adding that he is completely innocent. Trump was reportedly at Mar-a-Lago, the Florida estate where he has primarily resided since leaving office, when news of the indictment broke. Trump's lawyer Joe Tacopina said during an interview on NBC's "Today" show that the president planned to surrender willingly and "is not going to hole up in Mar-a-Lago".

The New York investigation centres on a \$130,000 payment that Michael Cohen, Trump's former personal lawyer and fixer, made to adult film star Stormy Daniels in the waning days of the former president's 2016 campaign. Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, said she had an affair with Trump starting in 2006. Cohen said he paid her on Trump's orders.

The former president has denied the affair and said the payment was to protect his reputation from a false accusation, insisting that he did nothing wrong. In advance of Thursday's indictment, Daniels reportedly beefed up security over a series of death threats for Trump's expected arrest. Her lawyer said in 2018 that she was physically threatened and warned to remain silent about her relationship with Trump. Several US media outlets had reported that the potential charges relate to the way Trump reimbursed Cohen, with prosecutors alleg-

ing he improperly labelled the payments as legal expenses.

If the payment is determined to be a campaign donation, it could also have violated election laws that cap contributions to political candidates at \$2,700 per individual and require them to be made public. Trump said earlier this month that he faced potential arrest over the case. He is expected to be fingerprinted and photographed when he surrenders to the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in New York early next week. Al Jazeera's Gabriel Elizondo reported from New York, but it remains unclear when that will happen. The New York police department told all uniformed officers to report for work Friday morning "as a precautionary measure", a police spokesman said. Barricades had already been erected in front of the Manhattan Criminal Courthouse where Trump is expected to be arraigned.

Trump has called on his supporters to protest in a fiery social media post that raised concerns about potential violence, especially in light of the January 6, 2021 storming of the US Capitol by a pro-Trump mob. He also appealed for more money for his legal defence, raising more than \$2m since March 18, according to his campaign. Reporting from Washington, DC, Al Jazeera's Mike Hanna said the indict-

ment comes at a surprising time, with the New York grand jury last sitting on Monday.

But, he explained, the grand jury could have agreed on the indictment before Thursday's announcement. "Then it is up to the foreperson of the jury to sign that indictment at any time that the prosecutor wishes to get it signed," Hanna said. He added that Trump's indictment has divided people in the US, with the reaction being "largely along partisan lines". On Friday, US President Joe Biden declined to comment when repeatedly asked about the indictment.

"I have no comment on Trump," he said. While Republicans generally criticised the indictment, with many, like Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy, describing it as a "weaponisation of the legal process", Democrats supported the move, saying Trump's criminal acts were catching up with him. Daniels herself celebrated Thursday's news by thanking her supporters on Twitter, quipping she does not "want to spill my champagne". Meanwhile, her lawyer, Clark Brewster, said the indictment was "no cause for joy".

"The hard work and conscientiousness of the grand jurors must be respected," he wrote. "Now, let truth and justice prevail." The Republican Party largely rallied around Trump in

the aftermath of the indictment news, with his second oldest son, Eric Trump, calling the indictment "third-world prosecutorial misconduct". "It is the opportunistic targeting of a political opponent in a campaign year," he said on Friday. For his part, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who is expected to challenge Trump for the Republican nomination in 2024, denounced the indictment as "un-American".

He added he will "not assist in an extradition request given the questionable circumstances at issue". The claim has raised questions over the legality of such a directive if were indeed to be tested. Trump has already announced plans to seek reelection in 2024, and an indictment would not preclude him from running. "Any person who's been indicted, or in fact sentenced, can still stand for president in the United States in terms of the Constitution," Hanna said. "Whether or not it galvanises his base ... is something that remains to be seen." Democrats, meanwhile, greeted news of Trump's criminal charges with a rallying cry that "no one is above the law", no matter how powerful. Democrat Adam Schiff, who played a prominent role in Trump's first impeachment trial, called the indictment "unprecedented".



"But so too is the unlawful conduct in which Trump has been engaged," he said. "A nation of laws must hold the rich and powerful accountable, even when they hold high office". Frequent targets of Trump's criticism, like Representative Ilhan Omar, also weighed in with statements. "This is just one of many criminal acts for which Donald Trump is being investigated," Omar wrote. "Make no mistake: The fact that one of the most powerful people in the world was investigated impartially and indicted is testament to the fact that we still live in a nation of laws."

## Israeli police kill a Palestinian near Al-Aqsa

JERUSALEM (Agencies): Israeli police have shot and killed a Palestinian man at an entrance to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, raising fears of further violence. The man killed on Saturday was

26-year-old Mohammad Khaled al-Osaibi from Houra, a Bedouin Arab village in southern Israel. The incident took place at about midnight near the Chain Gate, an access point to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Israeli-occupied East Jerusalem, police said.

Palestinian worshippers at the entrance to the site on Saturday said police shot the man at least 10 times, after he tried to prevent them from harassing a woman who was on her way to the holy compound. The police alleged al-Osaibi tried to take a gun from an officer and fired it in a scuffle.

Hours after the incident, the muddy stone alleyway leading to the compound was still stained with blood. Israeli police have boosted their forces in the area as tens of thousands of

Muslim worshippers from Jerusalem and the Israeli-occupied West Bank gather for Ramadan prayers at Al-Aqsa Mosque. More than 200,000 Palestinians gathered for noon prayers at the compound, which passed peacefully. Nouredine, a 17-year-old who lived in the neighbourhood and declined to give his last name for fear of reprisals, said he saw al-Osaibi confront police who stopped a female worshipper on her way to the mosque. Al-Osaibi's relationship to the woman was not clear. Nouredine said some kind of disagreement broke out between al-Osaibi and the officers before he heard a dozen shots ring out. "Nothing could justify that many shots," he said, pointing to chaotic footage he filmed that showed Palestinian vendors and worshippers screaming at the sound of bullets being fired in rapid succession. "They were all at close range."

Palestinian media widely reported al-Osaibi was a doctor who studied medi-

cine recently in Romania. Nouredine said police tried to force Palestinian vendors and worshippers out of the area after the incident, beating him and others with batons. Israeli police briefly closed the site before reopening it for dawn prayers. In previous years, Ramadan has seen Israeli police attack Palestinians gathered around Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, Islam's third-holiest site. Ramadan coincides this year with Judaism's Passover and Christian Easter.

In 2021, the expulsion of Palestinian families from their homes in Jerusalem served as a catalyst for widespread Palestinian protests across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Raids on Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli security forces during Ramadan heightened tensions further and, four days later, an 11-day Israeli assault on Gaza began, ostensibly in response to rockets fired by Hamas towards Israel.

## Mandokhail lashes out at PML-N ministers

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) MNA Qadir Mandokhail on Saturday lambasted the ruling Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) federal ministers Ishaq Dar and Rana Sanaullah over the IMF agreement and mishandling Imran Khan's arrest issue.

In an exclusive interview with a private TV channel, the PPP lawmaker, who also heads NA Committee on Affected Employees of federal government, criticised finance minister Ishaq Dar over his statement regarding 'not compromising on the country's nuclear programme' given in the Senate. Demanding a probe against PML-N senator, Qadir Mandokhail said that PPP would not compromise on the country's nuclear and missile programme.

The PPP MNA also lashed out at Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and Punjab IGP for mishandling Imran Khan's arrest issue. "I told Rana Sanaullah to handle the situation wisely, but he failed in controlling the one person and the situation got worse." In response to a question regarding Nawaz Sharif's return, Mandokhail said, "it is good that Nawaz Sharif not coming back to Pakistan as PPP getting stronger on the political front. Qadir Mandokhail also opposed the ban on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). "I am not in favor of imposing a ban on any political party, we must fight them politically".

## Court again defers Gill's indictment

ISLAMABAD (INP): A district and sessions court in the federal capital on Saturday once again deferred the indictment of PTI leader Shahbaz Gill in the sedition case. Additional Sessions Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra has put off the indictment till May 6 on the request of Mr Gill and his legal team. During the hearing, the judge asked: "You are going abroad and when will you return". The PTI leader pleaded the court to show some leniency as he needed to go abroad. Later, Judge Sipra deferred the process of framing charges against him till May 6.

It is recalled that the Lahore High Court (LHC) earlier this week allowed Shahbaz Gill to travel to the United States for four weeks. A three-member LHC bench heard the petition filed against the inclusion of Shahbaz Gill's name in the Exit Control List (ECL). The high court allowed Shahbaz Gill to travel abroad for one time and also sought a response from the federal government regarding the inclusion of Mr Gill's name in the ECL.

The sedition case was registered against the PTI stalwart after he made controversial remarks on a private news channel last year allegedly aimed at creating a divide in armed forces. He was also arrested in August last but later he was released on bail granted by the Islamabad High Court (IHC).



JERUSALEM: Israeli forces trying to arrest a Palestinian during clash in Nablus.

## Indian family among 8 found dead crossing into US from Canada

OTTAWA (Agencies): Eight people including two children were found dead in a marsh near the Canada-US border after trying to cross illegally into the United States, police said. Their bodies were discovered near a capsized boat belonging to a missing man from the Akwesasne Mohawk community, officials reported.

"A total of eight bodies have now been recovered from the waters," local police chief Shawn Dulude told a press conference. An initial six people from two families -- one of Romanian descent with Canadian passports, the other from India -- were discovered late Thursday, including one child under the age of three.

Two more people were reported found at the Friday press conference by Dulude, an infant "Canadian citizen of Romanian descent, and one adult female believed to be an Indian national." Canadian authorities believe all were attempting to enter the United States illegally from Canada.

The Mohawk tribal territory straddles the Canadian provinces of Quebec and Ontario, and the US state of New York. The capsized boat was described as "very small" for poor weather conditions including rain, sleet and strong wind. "It was not a good time to be out on the water," local deputy police chief Lee-Ann O'Brien told a news conference earlier in the day.

Dulude added that such crossings were sometimes facilitated by local people, particularly young people who are lured by the money and exploited by criminal organizations. The first body was found during an aerial search of the area. Authorities are waiting on an autopsy as well as toxicology test results to determine the cause of death.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, speaking to reporters, said: "Our hearts go out to the families of the individuals who perished. This is a heartbreaking situation." O'Brien noted a recent "increase in people passing through Akwesasne gaining

entry into the US," with 48 crossings since the start of the year. Once landing on the US side, they are typically picked up on shore and transported by vehicle into New York State, she said. Two other people have been found dead near the border in recent months while trying to cross illegally into the United States from Canada.

The two countries struck a deal on managing the growing issue of undocumented migration on their lengthy border during President Joe Biden's visit to Ottawa last week. The arrangement will see undocumented asylum seekers crossing from the United States into Canada turned back, while Canada will simultaneously expand the pathway for legal entry. The plan -- similar to a crack-down on the much more heavily used US-Mexican border -- has been criticized by migrants' rights activists. However, Biden and Trudeau are both under political pressure to relieve their badly strained immigration systems.

## Russia protests over 'provocative actions' by US forces in Syria

MOSCOW (Agencies): Russian forces in Syria have protested over what Moscow described as "provocative actions" by United States forces also deployed in the country. Russia's state news agency TASS has reported. TASS cited a senior Russian military official saying that "provocative" incidents had occurred in Syria's north-eastern province of Hassakeh where US forces have been deployed for several years, leading a coalition of local Kurdish troops battling against ISIL (ISIS) and its remnants.

"Provocative actions on the part of US armed forces units have been noted in Hassakeh province ... the Russian side lodged a protest with the coalition," Russian Rear Admiral Oleg Gurinov, head of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of the Opposing Parties in Syria, told TASS. Gurinov said US troops had twice been spotted by Russian forces in areas that lay outside their agreed zones of operation, without giving details of timing.

"During joint Russian-Turkish patrols, the movement of two patrols conducted by the so-called anti-terrorist coalition were tracked along the non-deconfliction routes near Deirun-Aga and Saramsak. The Russian side has protested to the coalition," Gurinov said, according to TASS. Russia -- which together with Turkey is carrying out joint patrols in northern Syria -- has agreed on special zones where the US-led coalition can operate as it takes on hundreds of ISIL fighters camped in desolate areas of Syria where neither

the coalition nor the Syrian army exerts full control.

The US-led coalition has been engaged in Syria for almost eight years while Russia intervened in the Syrian Civil War in 2015, tipping the balance in President Bashar Al-Assad's favour. Moscow has since expanded its military facilities in Syria with a permanent air and naval base. Last week, the US carried out multiple air attacks in Syria against what it said were Iran-aligned armed groups, which the Pentagon blamed for a previous drone attack. US officials said the attack by the armed group killed a US military contractor, injured another, and wounded about a dozen US soldiers at a coalition base in the northeast of the country near Hassakeh city.

Pro-Iranian forces in Syria warned in an online statement signed by the Iranian Advisory Committee in Syria that they would respond to the US air strikes on their positions. US military officials announced on Friday that the deployment of the George H W Bush carrier strike group would be extended after the drone by the Iranian-backed groups.

The decision likely means that the US strike group and its more than 5,000 US personnel, which are currently in the European Command operational area, will not be returning to the home port as scheduled. "The extension of the George HW Bush Carrier Strike Group, inclusive of the USS Leyte Gulf, the USS Delbert D. Black, and the USNS Arctic, allows options to

potentially bolster the capabilities of CENTCOM to respond to a range of contingencies in the Middle East," US Central Command (CENTCOM) spokesperson Colonel Joe Buccino said in a statement.

News of the extended deployment first emerged a day after the Pentagon doubled its number of US troops wounded in the drone attack in Syria to 12. The Pentagon estimated that eight people were killed during the retaliatory US air attacks against targets it claimed had links to Iran. Both the Iranian and Syrian foreign ministries slammed the US air attacks that Washington said had targeted the strategic region of Deir ez-Zor bordering Iraq.

In a statement last week, Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanani said the US "terrorist" attacks hit civilian targets and constituted a violation of international law and Syrian sovereignty. "The US claims that it is present in Syria to fight Daesh [ISIL] that itself had a major role in creating is just an excuse to continue its occupation and loot Syria's national wealth, including its energy resources and wheat," he said.

Kanani also said Iran only has military advisers on the ground in Syria at the request of its government. The Syrian foreign ministry criticised the "brutal" US attacks that it said killed several people and amounted to a violation of its territorial integrity and promised to "end the American occupation".

## PPP always been pushed to the wall: Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that he is very saddened by the sad incident during the distribution of Zakat by the factory owners in the site area in Karachi. The private company was distributing zakat, about which they did not inform any administrative authority, which led to the tragedy. He said that I will not say that the intention of the company was not right, but their method was not right. He said that those benefactors should take steps to distribute aid in a systematic and disciplined manner.

He expressed these views while addressing the press conference on Saturday. He said that the Sindh Police has registered an FIR of this incident, and the Chief Minister of Sindh has announced an aid of Rs. 5 lakhs for the families of those who died in this incident and Rs. 1 lakhs for the injured. The provincial minister said that this aid is not the compensation of any life but to help the distressed families.

He said that looking at the situation of free flour distribution in the whole of Pakistan, the Sindh government has made a coordinated strategy to deliver cash to the beneficiaries with the support of BISP instead of flour distribution in Sindh. Under which 7.8 million families will be given Rs 200 per family for the purchase of subsidised flour, and in this regard, messages have been sent to 3824145 beneficiaries on mobile phones till March 30. Out of which more than 1 million have drawn Rs. 2142564000 so far.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Sindh government is endeavoring to help people in a dignified manner instead of making them stand on the roads. He said that a subsidy of Rs.15.6 billion would be given in the month of Ramadan. If anyone feels that they are deserving, they should approach the nearest BISP centre, and they will be registered within 24 hours. He said that if the Sindh government has to spend another Rs. 5 billion in this regard, it will do so.

Sharjeel Inam Memon, while discussing the current political situation of the country, said that in the history of Pakistan, there has never been such disrespect for the constitution and law as there is today. Last month, the police were tortured in Lahore. Petrol bombs were thrown at the police. The policemen were injured, but those who were arrested on this charge got bail. He said that the policemen are responsible for security, but there is no punishment for violence against the policemen. He said that if everyone comes down to brazenness, bullying, rigging, and lawlessness and decides for himself whether to present himself arrest or not, then this society will become a society of anarchy and thuggery.

He asked whether Yasmin Rashid and



Arif Alvi denied their audio leak?, but the law remained silent on this matter. He said that the judgement of Justice Waqar Seth was that the BRT Peshawar case should go to the NAB, but a stay order is being taken on this case till today, and they are getting a stay easily. He said that I challenge the fact that there is not one person from Imran Khan's party who can defend this stay order.

He said that how long will this continue in Pakistan, how long will a political party continue to be allowed to act lawlessly, and how long will two systems continue to operate in one country? He said, "Where is the one who make Sadiq and Amin today?" He said that no time has been given to the reference of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, and why has an indefinite been given for the trial of case of Shaheed Bibi? He said that the people's party had always been pushed to the wall, but the people's party has always struggled for the supremacy of the constitution and law.

In response to a question, he said that the biggest problem facing Pakistan at present is inflation. People are not interested in what the government is doing or what the courts are doing. He said that the Pakistan People's Party has decided to build houses for the flood victims in Sindh, besides providing assistance to the flood-affected farmers for sowing crops. He said that treatment is a big problem in today's era, but the Sindh government is providing absolutely free and excellent treatment facilities to the people, which are being continuously increased.

In response to a question, he said that the decisions of the courts speak, not the remarks; we have no disagreement with anyone. The decisions of the courts should speak, so that these decisions should become an example for others. If the law is the same for all, then the country can move forward. He said that every inch of this country has to be protected, the economy of this country has to be protected, and the constitution has to be protected. It is the responsibility of all of us.