

#### Raisi to visit Syria

TEHRAN (Agencies): Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi will pay a visit to Syria, a senior Iranian official confirmed on Saturday. During Raisi's visit to Syria, the Iran-led Resistance Front's victory against the United States in West Asia following a "tense period of geopolitical change" will be celebrated, tweeted Mohammad Jamshidi, deputy chief of staff for political affairs to the Iranian president.



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#### WHO to assist Pakistan F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: World Health Organization (WHO) has assured to assist Pakistan as per its requirement to contain the monkeypox. The WHO, in a statement, said it has been working and investigating with government of Pakistan on Monkeypox, as the situation is still evolving. It assured to assist the government especially in lab testing, Points of Entry and provision of testing kits.

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# Nothing sacred than public's protection

## COAS says armed forces will never hesitate from any sacrifice to safeguard future of next generations

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir on Saturday said that Armed Forces of Pakistan would never shy away from any sacrifice to stabilize, secure and safeguard the future of our next generations.

The Army Chief made these remarks as the chief guest while addressing the Passing Out parade of cadets of 147th Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Long Course, 13th Mujahid Course, 66th Integrated Course, 6th Basic Military Training Course and 21st Lady Cadet Course held at Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Kakul, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

The Army Chief said that the people of Pakistan were central to the unity of the state. "First and the foremost is loyalty to the State of Pakistan and commitment to the Constitutional role assigned to Armed Forces of Pakistan." "To us, nothing is more sacred than the safety and security of our people and no duty is more binding than the defence of our motherland. Go out now, and deliver to the expectations of your nation," the COAS said.

The Army imbued on the vision of our Great Quaid signifying no distinction of caste, color, creed, gender or geography, he added. The COAS said the Armed Forces' efforts for peace should never be taken as a sign of weakness. The COAS said, "We have the will, capability and capacity to protect our sovereignty and territorial integrity and we are well aware of the ways and means to do it. I assure the people of Pakistan that we will never hesitate in rendering any and every sacrifice necessary for the defence of our sacred motherland."

"Brave soldiers of Armed Forces of Pakistan don't get fascinated with the numbers/ resources of their adversaries. Armed Forces of Pakistan stand firm with their strong will and determination while fulfilling the promises of Almighty Allah as true followers," the Army Chief said. General Asim Munir referred to the Quranic verse of Surah Al-Baqarah, translation of which is: "How many times it happened that a smaller force vanquished a bigger force by the Will of Allah."

"Significant effort is being made by our adversaries to affect state and societal

cohesion through multiple efforts. There is absolutely no space for spoilers of our hard earned peace," the COAS said. "There is a dire need to identify the exposed and hidden enemies. In this regard, there must be a difference between reality and deception.

"Our enemies are hell-bent upon driving a wedge between its people and Armed Forces," he added. The Army Chief vowed that the Army would ensure that the bond between the Armed Forces and the people of Pakistan was preserved and further solidified. "Stability, security and peace in Afghanistan remain fundamentals to our security.

"We will continue to provide political, moral and diplomatic support to our Kashmiri brothers," the COAS said. "Pakistan firmly stands with its Kashmiri brethren in their historic struggle for basic human rights and their legitimate quest for the right to self-determination. The international community must realize that without a just and peaceful resolution to the Kashmir issue, regional peace will forever remain elusive," he added.

The cadets from Palestine, Bahrain, Iraq, Qatar and Sri Lanka were also among the passed out cadets. The COAS reviewed the parade and gave awards to distinguished cadets. The coveted Sword of Honour was awarded to Academy Senior Under Officer Abdullah Bin Tariq and President's Gold medal to Battalion Senior Under Officer Ali Amir of 147th PMA Long Course.

The Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Overseas Gold Medal was awarded to Battalion Sports Sergeant Pasindu Dayananda from Sri Lanka. The COAS Cane was awarded to Course Under Officer Muhammad Adnan Munawar of 13th Mujahid Course, the Commandant's Canes were awarded to Course Under Officer Adil Ali of 66th Integrated Course, Course Sergeant Major Fatima Khalid of 21st Lady Cadet Course and Course Under Officer Salman Khan of 6th Basic Military Training Course. The COAS congratulated the passing out cadets and their parents on the successful completion of their training at PMA; the premier training institution. Earlier on arrival, the COAS was received by Commandant PMA.

## Imran sees 'ill intentions' behind PDM's bid

LAHORE (Agencies): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan Saturday saw the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government's "ill-intentions" behind its proposal to hold elections simultaneously after this year's budget.

The budget is traditionally presented within the first two weeks of June and the federal government has maintained that it would be too early to hold general elections the next month, stressing for holding polls later this year. The federal government and the opposition party PTI are in negotiations over a date for holding elections across the country on directions of the Supreme Court — and a final meeting is expected next week.

"[The government] is saying that first, it would pass the budget, and then

hold the election. This shows its 'ill-intention'," Khan — who was ousted as the prime minister in April last year — said during a session with PTI workers in Lahore. The deposed prime minister said his party would be ready to move forward with the negotiations if the government dissolves the national and provincial assemblies before May 14.

The Sindh and Balochistan assemblies and the National Assembly have not yet been dissolved, while the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa legislatures were dissolved in January on Khan's directions. Civil society has urged political forces to reach a consensus over the elections and end the persistent impasse, which has severely hurt Pakistan's fragile economy. And Khan is insistent that his party does not want to delay the

elections, stressing that "we will not accept polls after the budget" — as suggested by the ruling coalition.

"If the hope of elections ends, then Pakistan could face a worse situation than Sri Lanka. I am not frightening you; I am just expressing my opinion," the PTI chief told his workers. PTI's senior leaders — Fawad Chaudhry and Shah Mahmood Qureshi — had a day earlier warned of the election talks derailing if the government does not stop arresting its workers.

Hours after their warning, police and anti-corruption officials raided PTI President Parvez Elahi's residence in Lahore, but failed to arrest him despite a more than six-hour-long operation. Although the party has not yet announced exiting the talks, Khan had condemned the arrest and said "enough is enough".

## Minister briefed PM on ongoing projects

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday directed for taking effective measures to ensure improved power supply during the summer season.

The prime minister was talking to Minister for Power Division Engineer Khurram Dastagir who called on him, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The minister briefed the prime minister about the ongoing development projects in the power sector. The prime minister also directed for expeditious completion of new power transmission lines to provide all possible relief to the consumers.

Meanwhile, Members of the National Assembly (MNAs), Rao Muhammad Ajmal and Irfan Dogar separately called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

During the meeting, the matters related to their respective constituencies and the political situation were discussed, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

## Police raid at Elahi's house challenged in LHC

LAHORE (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chaudhry Parvez Elahi's son filed a petition in the Lahore High Court (LHC) against a late-night joint operation at his residence in Lahore.

On Friday night, a team of the Punjab's Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) raided Mr Elahi's house along with a heavy contingent of police to arrest. The operation continued for six hours during which police broke the main gate of his residence, using an armored vehicle but it was halted after police and ACE officials failed to find him. The police also faced resistance during the operation with ACE DG Sohail Zafar Chhattha claiming that a petrol bomb was hurled at the raiding party who came to arrest the former chief minister.

Rasikh Elahi has filed the petition in the LHC through his lawyer Amir Saeed, making the Punjab government, ACE and police respondents in the case. The petitioner argued that the raid was conducted even though the LHC had approved protective bail for his father. He pleaded the court to issue an order for removing the police from the Zahoor Elahi Road. He also sought orders to restrict the police from arresting Parvez Elahi, adding that action should be taken against the officers involved in the late-night raid. Rasikh urged the court to stop authorities from arresting his family members till decision on the petition.

## Martyrs laid to rest with full military honours

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The funeral prayers of martyrs of Lakki Marwat terrorist attack were offered and laid to rest with full military honours at their respective hometowns.

Naib Subedar Taj Mir (age 40, resident of District Nowshera), Havaldar Zakir Ahmed (age 38, resident of District Abbottabad) and Sepoy Abid Hussain (age 29, resident of District D.I. Khan) who embraced shahadat while fighting gallantly with terrorists in the night of 27/28 April 2023, were offered at their respective home towns, an ISPR news release said. A large number of serving, retired military and civil officials, relatives and people from all walks of life attended the funeral prayers.



ABBOTTABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir awarding Sword of Honor to a cadet at passing out parade of 147th Long Course at Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Kakul.

## Pakistan's purchase of Russia's discounted oil No misunderstanding with US: Masood

WASHINGTON (APP): There's no misunderstanding between the United States and Pakistan over Islamabad's move to buy discounted Russian oil, Ambassador Masood Khan has said, while underscoring that the reset Islamabad-Washington relationship is "transcending the past."

"We have placed the first order for Russian oil, and this has been done in consultation with the United States government; There's no misunderstanding between Washington and Islamabad on this count," he said in response to a question at a conference organized by the Wilson Center's South Asia Institute, a Washington-based think-tank, on the future of relations between the two countries. The questioner had suggested the energy purchase from Russia could adverse impact on Pakistan's already difficult relationship with the US.

"They (US) have suggested that you are free to buy anything below or up to the price cap (set by G-7 nations), and we have abided by that agreement," the Pakistani envoy said. "I think Washington is fine with that," Ambassador Khan added. Last December, G7 and EU countries set a price cap of \$60 per barrel on Russian oil in a move aimed at preventing Moscow from using the revenues to finance its war against Ukraine.

Earlier this year, a State Department spokesperson said that Pakistan can purchase oil from Russia at a discounted price even though it has not signed the price-cap on Russian petroleum products, pointing out that Washington recognizes the pressure governments face to secure affordable fuel.

In his address to the conference, Ambassador Masood Khan said that Pakistan's ties with the United States had suffered a "brief period of uncertainty" after the US-led foreign military withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, when the Taliban seized control of the country.

He said the relationship with the US was back on track and both sides were working to boost economic and security partnerships. Elizabeth Horst, a senior State Department official who also spoke at the Wilson Center conference Thursday, concurred. She said

the last year had helped reset the US-Pakistan relationship. The two countries held mid-level defence dialogues in Washington and a counter terrorism working group in Islamabad in February and March, respectively, she said.

In this regard, the Pakistani envoy said the two states were successfully "recalibrating and rejuvenating" their relations in the wake of changing circumstances. "The results in a short span of time are impressive," he said.

Referring to frequent high-level contacts between Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, Pak-US dialogues on health, energy, climate change, counter-narcotics, counterterrorism and defence and the recently held Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Ministerial Council meeting, the Ambassador said that these processes were producing results and defining pathways for future growth. "They are also creating a structure for an overarching, multi-dimensional dialogue", he continued.

The Ambassador said that Pakistan's Foreign Minister would be attending the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Conference in Goa early next month. "The context is multilateral, not bilateral. Let's hope that this decision goes down well to bolster diplomacy," Islamabad values Washington's encouragement to India and Pakistan to engage, he said, adding that the "US could act as a catalyst to help resolve the Jammu and Kashmir dispute which has kept the region on the brink of war."

Cautioning about the serious perils of the policy of imbalance in South Asia, Ambassador Masood Khan also urged the US to "revive its role on strategic stability in South Asia". "It is important that the US restores — for Pakistan — Foreign Military Financing and Foreign Military Sales, suspended by the previous Administration," he said. Pakistan, he said, seeks to forge strong ties with the US and make them stronger. "We do not believe our relations with China should affect them in any way.

## Regulating CJP's powers SC to resume hearing petitions challenging act

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Supreme Court will resume hearing the petitions challenging the controversial Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act 2023, seeking to regulate the powers of the chief justice of Pakistan.

An eight-member larger bench — headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Sayeed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Ayesha A Malik, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Shahid Waheed — will conduct the hearing on the case on May 2 (Tuesday).

The Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP), Supreme Court Bar Association and Pakistan Bar Council have been issued notice in this regard. Moreover, the apex court has also issued notice to nine political parties including Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

During the last hearing of the case on April 13, the top court had stopped the implementation of the act observing that if the law received the assent of the president, the bill would not be acted upon in any manner till further order. "The moment that the Bill receives the assent of the President or (as the case may be) it is deemed that such assent has been given, then from that very moment onwards and till further orders, the Act that comes into being shall not have, take or be given any effect nor be acted upon in any manner," read the 9-page interim order issued on April 13.

In its order, the bench stated that the facts and circumstances presented here are extraordinary both in import and effect. Despite the top court's stay order, the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill 2023 was notified as an act by the federal government on April 21.

PTI-backed President Dr Arif Alvi returned it twice

to the parliament, saying the law travelled "beyond the competence of parliament". However, it was notified as a law because it was deemed to have been assented to by the president (with effect from April 21, 2023) under Clause (2) of Article 75 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The bill was approved by the federal cabinet on March 28 and then passed by both houses of parliament — the National Assembly and the Senate only for the president to refuse to sign it into law. However, a joint session of parliament passed it again on April 10 with certain amendments amid a noisy protest by PTI lawmakers. It was then again referred to the president for his assent; however, he once again returned the bill without signing it. According to the Constitution, in case the president refuses to sign the bill a second time around after the joint parliament's approval his assent would have been deemed granted within 10 days.

## Toshakhana case hearing put off

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The hearing of the Toshakhana case against former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan put off till May 3 without any court proceeding on Saturday.

The court hearing of the case could not be held today as Additional Sessions Judge Hamayun Dilawar has gone on leave. Barrister Gohar Ali and Khalid Chaudhry Advocate appeared before the court to represent Imran Khan. Today was the first hearing of the Toshakhana case after its transfer to the new judge. The case was shifted to Judge Hamayun after the transfer of Judge Zafar Iqbal.

The Election Commission of Pakistan on November 22, 2022 sent the Toshakhana reference to the trial court for initiating criminal proceedings against former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan under sections 137, 170 and 167 of the Election Act, 2017. Meanwhile, a local court in Islamabad has summoned PTI Chief Imran Khan in personal capacity on May 30 in a case related to incidents of violence and arson during the PTI's long march.

Judge Mubashar Hassan Chishti heard the case on Saturday. The judge observed that authorities failed to comply with the court summons for Imran in a proper manner. He directed Imran's lawyers to ensure the PTI chief's presence in the court on May 30.

## Pak airlifts 97 nationals from Sudan

KARACHI (PPI): The C-130 aircraft of the Pakistan Air Force carrying another 97 Pakistani passengers, who have been evacuated from conflict-hit Sudan, landed in Karachi.

Foreign Office Spokesperson Muntaz Zahra Baloch announced in a Twitter post. "Third batch of 97 Pakistani nationals from Port Sudan has arrived at JIA, Karachi via Jeddah aboard PAF aircraft C-130," the post reads. Government of Pakistan will continue to facilitate the safe return of stranded Pakistanis, it added.

A day earlier, the PAF Airbus carrying 149 passengers safely landed at Karachi through Jeddah. The PAF C-130 carrying 110 Pakistani passengers would land in latter half of the day. "Air Force is making all-out efforts to repatriate stranded Pakistanis in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Pakistan Embassies in Sudan and Saudi Arabia," it said. "The rescued Pakistanis from Port Sudan New International Airport are being transported by PAF aircraft.



## Russia eager to sell petrol to Pakistan: Ambassador

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Russian Ambassador to Pakistan Danila Ganich has said that Kremlin is eager to sell petrol to Pakistan, revealing that the trade agreements between Russia and Pakistan have multiplied by five times.

In a conversation with private news channel on Saturday, the Russian ambassador said that his country was thrilled to sell energy to Pakistan. "We are happy that we are selling petrol to Pakistan and the trade pacts between the two countries have increased by five times," Mr Ganich added.

He expressed his satisfaction that Pakistani people, too, are happy with the growing trade ties between the two countries. "Both countries are increasing their trade on a solid basis, free of ulterior motives, which is the future," the ambassador noted, adding that the relations would grow stronger with the passage of time.

Mr Ganich informed that a third meeting is also going to be held between the high-level diplomatic delegations of both the countries. "We are celebrating the 75th anniversary of our relationship today," the Russian ambassador said cheerfully.

## Ahsan stresses for electoral code of conduct during political dialogues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal said on Saturday that one of the objectives of the negotiations between government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) must be the formulation of a code of conduct for the upcoming polls to evade election rigging.

Talking to a private news channel, Ahsan Iqbal said that earlier, Imran Khan in his interviews held responsible the former army chief for the dissolution of the assemblies and now he is making a fuss about the non-provision of funds from the federal government which is baseless.

"Imran Khan dissolved the assemblies not under any democratic impulse but to only sabotage the politics" Ahsan claimed that the PTI chief allegedly wants to somehow get the next elections managed by his handlers (before their retirement) Imran is aware that he did not win the previous election on his own and that he will not do it again. "Elections should be held under an interim setup after the National Assembly completes its constitutional term to acceptable for everyone."

On the question of raiding Pervaiz Elahi's house, he said that the federal government was not involved in the matter, however, anti-corruption was an independent institution of Punjab which surely took action on some concrete evidence against the worst corruption done Pervaiz Elahi.



### ایئر ہیڈ کوارٹرز (یونٹ) پشاور

### ٹھیکہ برائے صفائی

ایئر ہیڈ کوارٹرز (یونٹ) پشاور کو برائے سال 2023-24، متعلقہ رہائشی کمپ کی صفائی اور کوڑا کرکٹ اٹھانے کے لیے سربمرد درخواستیں فوری طور پر مطلوب ہیں۔ درخواستیں صحت اور دواؤں مندرجہ ذیل پتے پر 15 مئی 2023ء، بوقت 9:00 بجے تک جمع کروائیں۔ ٹینڈر راء روز 10 بجے کو ملے جائیں گے۔ تنگیں بنیاد پر کوئی بھی درخواست مسترد کی جاسکتی ہے۔

آفیسر انچارج، پرنسپل اسکوائر  
ایئر ہیڈ کوارٹرز (یونٹ) پشاور  
فون: 991-9210777-6811

EXTENSION OF DATE FOR BID SUBMISSION					
UT NO. HQCAA/1992/188/XLXN					
It is notified for the information of all concerned that the bid submission date, alongwith with following details for the subject case have been extended as mentioned below:-					
S.#	Description & UT No.	Bid Submission Date/Time	Bid Opening Date/Time/Place	Last date for issuance of Bidding Documents	Basis PKR (Price)
1.	UT.#HQCAA/1992/188/XLXN Procurement of Bird Repellent System for PCAA Airports	17-05-2023 1100 Hrs	17-05-2023 1130 Hours Log. Center (S) (Log. AIS Branch)	16-05-2023	F.O.R
All other clauses would remain the same. This corrigendum is also available on PPRA website. <a href="http://www.ppra.org.pk">www.ppra.org.pk</a> and CAA website <a href="http://www.casppakistan.com.pk">www.casppakistan.com.pk</a>					
ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR LOGISTICS (ANS) HQ CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY Phone: 021-9907-2265 Fax: 021-9924-2675					
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## CM Murad orders measures to meet rain emergency

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presiding over a meeting of local bodies of Karachi-KMC, DMCs, and district council on Saturday, directed them to take appropriate measures during the rain emergency period so that the life and property of the citizens could be secured.

The meeting was attended by Minister Local Govt Syed Nasir Shah, Advisor Law Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Sohail Rajput, Chairman P&D Hassan Naqvi, Secretary LG Najam Shah, PSCM Fayaz Jatoti, Administrator KMC Saif Rehman, MC KMC Shujaat, MD SSWMB Imtiaz Shah, MD KWSB Salahuddin MD, PD SWEEP Zubair Channa, PD

CLICK Asif Jan, administrators of DMC and district council.

The chief minister said that there was a forecast of heavy rains which could cause urban flooding, therefore monitoring of the nullahs for their smooth flow must be ensured. "Recently all the major three nullahs have been cleaned and lined, therefore there should be no problem in the disposal of rainwater into them," he said and added the connecting nullah falling in the jurisdiction of the DMCs and district councils must be maintained.

Mr Shah said that he has noticed that people were dumping debris along the embankments of the nullahs. "This is unacceptable, and I have already directed the police to

impound such vehicles and take strict action against them," he said and warned the DMCs to ensure that no vehicle could dare to download or dump debris along the embankment of the nullahs within their limits.

Minister Local Government Syed Nasir Shah briefing the chief minister said that he has already held a number of rain emergency meetings with local bodies. He assured the chief minister that local bodies were prepared enough to meet the rain emergency.

Improvement of revenue: The chief minister directed KMC and DMCs to take necessary measures to increase their revenues. "My government would keep supporting the local bodies but, in princi-

ple, the local bodies have to generate their revenues, improve their recoveries and try to be self-sufficient," he said.

Murad Ali Shah said that recovery of property tax has been handed over to the local bodies – DMCs and district council- and they have to ensure an increase in the recoveries. "If the local bodies administrations focus on the proper recoveries of property tax they would be able to meet all their financial requirements, including carrying out development works in their respective areas," he observed.

The CM also directed the water board to improve its recovery and financially stabilize the organization.



### Sharjeel Inam reacts to Imran Khan's tweet

F.P. Report

KARACHI : Sindh Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, while reacting to Imran Khan's tweet, said that when police came for arrests during PTI tenure, the leaders of Pakistan People Party had presented themselves for arrests with grace and courage.

He added that they didn't run away like you (Imran) and Pervaz Elahi. Pointing at Imran Khan, the minister said you are the declared emperor of money laundering and added that decision of the Election Commission has removed the mask of nobility and honesty from your (Imran) face. Mr. Memon said that Billions of rupees had been accumulated in Bani Gala through Gogi and Usman Buzdar. 'Robbers like you(Imran) will have to account for this historical corruption,' he asserted.

### Two girls die as hostel roof collapses

KARACHI (PPI): In a tragic incident, the roof of a private hostel caved in at Riaz Colony in Bahawalpur after a water tank installed on the rooftop burst on Saturday, which resulted in the death of two female students, while the condition of four others were said to be very critical.

The injured girls were rushed to a hospital for medical assistance. According to details, six students were trapped under the debris and a rescue operation was underway to retrieve them.

On the other side, the students of Government Sadiq College Women University Bahawalpur demanded an inquiry into the unfortunate incident.

One of the students said that the hostel's infrastructure was outdated and was not meeting the safety standards.

### Man's body found hanging from tree

ISLAMABAD (INP): Body of a man was found hanging from tree along Islamabad Expressway in Shakrial area of the federal capital on Saturday.

After getting the information, Khana Police reached the scene.

The body of 35-year-old person was shifted to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) for medico-legal formalities. The police registered a case into the incident and started search for heirs of the deceased.

### 6 killed in road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least six people were killed and 1,183 others injured in 1,120 road traffic accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

As many as 596 seriously injured people were shifted to different hospitals, while 587 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams, said a spokesman for Rescue-1122 here on Saturday.

The analysis showed that 558 drivers, 38 underage drivers, 124 pedestrians, and 504 passengers were among the victims of the road traffic crashes.

The statistics showed that 217 accidents were reported in Lahore, which affected 225 persons, placing the provincial capital at top of the list, followed by 85 in Multan with 86 victims, and at third Faisalabad with 84 accidents and 85 victims. As many as 970 motorcycles, 71 rickshaws, 122 cars, 29 vans, 10 buses, 15 trucks and 81 vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in the traffic accidents.

### SIUT conducts first child open-heart surgery

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT) on Saturday achieved another milestone after conducting the first pediatric cardiac surgical procedure on a 5-year-old baby Zainab.

The baby Zainab was suffering from a hole in the heart (atrial septal defect) that allowed the blood to mix and increase blood flow to the lungs, causing her to have frequent chest infections.

This is the first successful open-heart surgery at the newly established Paediatric Cardiology Department at SIUT with the main purpose of not only providing a new service but also developing protocols and processes to make the new division comparable to any international unit which deals with pediatric and congenital heart disease. To perform the surgery, a team of 9 doctors, 2 perfusionists (who run the heart-lung machine), and 8 nurses worked relentlessly to ensure a safe and successful surgery and post-operative care.



LAHORE: Member National Assembly Irfan Dogar calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. —APP Photo

## Political leadership's failure behind current crisis: Shahid Khaqan

LAHORE (NNI): Former Prime Minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has questioned the incumbent government's capability, saying that the political leadership's failure was the reason behind current crisis.

Addressing a seminar, titled "Re-Imagining Pakistan on Saturday, he said he did not see any positive indicator regarding the national economy. Abbasi maintained that incompetent leadership will only cause harm to the country instead of resolving the issues.

The problems of the country are increasing with each passing day, he said adding that personal enmity and hatred among the political parties are also increasing at the alarming length. Khaqan said that the country's system has failed. The failure of leadership, which includes political, judicial, and military leadership, is the main reason behind the country's numberless problems.

He opined that institutes spend time defining their constitutional boundaries nowadays. "The Constitution offers a clear scheme of things to run affairs of the state but its disrespect and violations in the domain of others have made mockery

of the entire system," he asserted.

"People are also debating whether the decision OF SC was three or four or something else." Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz senior leader Shahid Abbasi said it is a fact that the integrity of Pakistan is under threat.

"The local government system is a constitutional requirement but it is not being implemented." Abbasi maintained that members of national assembly and provincial assemblies are at odds with the local government.

"When all institutions work together, the country will develop," he said adding Today, you cannot form a cabinet of ten people who can run the system of the country. Criticizing the present electoral system, he said the elected people do not have the capacity or ability to deliver in the ministry.

The former premier said that when the capacity of politicians is lost, then the country does not run. "Our bureaucracy is needed overhauling." He observed that a secretary cannot run the system until political leadership gives a vision. "Those who win and lose or disqualify people also have a hand in the destruction of the political system." He revealed that a federal officer does not work in the federation but prefers to work in the provinces.

Ask him why a federal officer is working in a tehsil, he raised a question.

The federal secretary does not prepare a summary and give it to the Prime Minister for fear of NAB. The rules of NAB should be changed, he hinted. The minister should be responsible for all the affairs of the ministry instead of a secretary, he suggested.

Meanwhile, addressing the seminar, Miftah Ismail said that Pakistan is stuck in a worst economic situation. Now, it may take years to recover from this situation, he said adding that Pakistan has to return Rs 6000 billion in interest this year. He said that the world is no longer in the mood to give money to Pakistan. No foreign investment is in the pipeline, he added.

He lamented that Pakistan could not even reduce one percent of its population. Miftah Ismail said that the government is also a total failure in higher education and school education. "Madrasahs could not be registered nor could uniform curriculum be implemented in the country.

He said that the government could not give an end to the hunger of the population for the last 75 years. "All the successive governments failed completely in introducing a proper health and education system for the masses."



### سوی ناردرن گیس

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## دنیا جدید ہو رہی ہے

## تو ہم کیوں پیچھے رہیں

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## CTD eliminated 2 terrorists, arrested 82 suspects in April

LAHORE (APP): The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) Punjab checked over 20,000 people, arrested 82 and eliminated two terrorists across Punjab during April 2023.

A spokesman said on Saturday that the CTD Punjab registered cases against 82 suspected criminals and investigation was underway against them. The department enhanced its intelligence-based operations (IBOs) across Punjab in view of the terrorism wave in the country, adding that an investigation was started against 12 suspected persons identified in 11 IBOs, while the record checking and surveillance of the suspects on the watch list was in progress, he added.

As many as 299 combing and search operations were conducted during the month, the spokesman said and added that every possible effort was being made to eliminate the anti-state elements. He said two terrorists were killed in Rajanpur and three others, identified as Haris, Saif and Ibrar were arrested. The dead terrorists were identified as Irfanullah and Ilyas, whereas hand-grenades, detonators and explosive material were also recovered from them.

He said that 48 IBOs were conducted across Punjab in order to deal effectively with the menace of terrorism and avoid any untoward incident, in which 49 suspects were interrogated while three suspected people were arrested during operations.

Three arrested suspects included Haris Ifitikhar of al-Qaeda, Muhammad Saifullah of Daesh and Abrar Ahmad Khan of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The killed terrorists belonged to TTP.

The CTD also recovered explosives weighing 1,875 grams, an improvised explosive device IED, detonators 11, safety fuse wire 13 feet, prima card, two pistols with ammunition, a rifle, five prohibited books and cash. Moreover, 692 combing operations were conducted with the help of local police, in which 39,490 persons were checked and 142 suspects were arrested while 112 FIRs were also registered.





## Governor meets with delegations People urged to work for strengthening national economy

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has said that each and every citizen of the country should play a role to strengthen the economy of the country and maintain peace in the motherland.

He was talking to former presidents of the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sultan Chawala, Mian Naisr Hayat Magoon and Zikria Usman at Governor House on Saturday.

Former presidents of FPCCI informed the governor about problems of the business community and matters relating to the promotion of the industrial sector.

Later, a delegation of North Waziristan elders met with Governor and informed him about their problems including the amount for demolished Miranshah Bazar. The delegation was led by former MNA and Mayor of Miranshah, Moulana Zaik Zaman.

Speaking on the occasion, the governor assured cooperation to the delegation in addressing their issues and said that the provincial and federal governments are also striving for the facilitation of tribal people and to maintain peace in their areas.

The Governor also visited Raiti Bazar of the inner city and met with people.

He also listened to their problems and assured them of cooperation.



PESHAWAR: Tehsil Chairman of Fata merged area Ahmad Saeed addressing a press conference. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

## Victims of Regi Model Town approached Peshawar High Court

**Humayun Khan**

PESHAWAR: The Association of Regi Model Town victims filed writ petition seeking possession of their plots which is pending since 1993 at Peshawar High Court (PHC) while Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) along with others are made respondents.

The writ filed by Saifullah Mohib Kakakhel Advocate on behalf of victims while seeking relief for almost 17 thousand families belonging to every walk life including martyr's spouses.

The petition argued that the possession of three zones have been granted since 1993 while possession of two other zones are still pending and added that petitioners had purchased plots during their youth for construction of homes after retirement which is a dream till today.

The victims of Regi Model Town includes; professors, bureaucrats, police officers, doctors, lawyers and families of martyrs who are deprived from possession of their plots while claimed that Kukokhel are creating hurdles in construction on the available by destroying infrastructure.

The writ prayer that PHC to issue order for provision of possession to victims of Regi Model Town which is pending since long.

## Patient's photograph mandatory for treatment under Sehat Program

PESHAWAR (APP): State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan has advised health authorities to capture a picture of a patient being admitted to hospital under Sehat Sahulat Program for ensuring transparency.

According to a notification issued here on Saturday the requirement of capturing patient's photograph would be mandatory from April 25, 2023.

In order to enhance the gatekeeping mechanism and transparency in-term of patients treated under Sehat Sahulat Program, it is advised to all Health Facilitators to capture a picture of patient before the admission.

All panel hospitals are advised to arrange a webcam at the HFO Desks, for identification management and records of the patients admitted under Sehat Sahulat Program.

All Health Facilitators would ensure capturing photograph through integrated webcam at health desk and avoid use for mobile phones.

In case, patient is in ER or unable to visit the HF's counter before admission the photograph may be taken with patient's consent, however, under no circumstances admission would be allowed without capturing identity.

## Governor to participate in BKMC convocation F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali accepted invitation for participation in Bacha Khan Medical College (BKMC) convocation as chief guest.

This invitation was extended by Medical Teaching Institution (MTI) Mardan Board of Governors delegation lead by Arshad during meeting at Governor House Peshawar. MTI Mardan Professor Dr. Amjad Ali, Hospital Director Dr. Tariq Mehmood and Associate Dean BKMC Dr. Naeem-ul-Haq along with other were present during the meeting.

The delegation briefed Governor about MTI Mardan, facilities including provision of services and teaching as well as on performance of the institute.

They also briefed about arrangement for holding convocation and provision of facilities to patients at the hospital.

The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali appreciated hospital administration for provision of facilities regarding treatment and diagnosing of diseases.

He also promised his support for uplifting of facilities in hospital to facilitate patients at their doorsteps.

## PPP to celebrate Labor Day, says Bacha

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial President Pakistan Peoples' Party Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Minister of State Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha on Saturday said that the Labor Day will be celebrated in a dignified and grand manner on May 1.

In a statement issued here, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha said that directions have been issued to all concerned provincial leaders of PPP to start full preparations regarding the Labour Day.

Minister of State Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha said that the rights obtained by the long struggle and sacrifices were snatched from the laborers.

He said that the constitutional right of forming a union by the laborers was being taken away from the workers which is injustice to them. The PPP is with the workers, farmers, youth and the poor and will support them till getting their rights, he added.

In the government of Shaheed Bibi, the employees were given due shares in the national institutions, said Bacha.

Bacha said that unfortunately, the previous government could not cross any milestone for the working class and deprived them of all their basic rights.

The state minister said that under the new labor policy of their government, 400 percent of workers' salaries were increased and made permanent for millions of temporary workers.



PESHAWAR: Former presidents of FPCCI Mian Nasir Hayat Magoon, Sultan Chawala and Zikria Usman with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali.

## QWP seeks polls on same day in country

PESHAWAR (APP): Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, while opposing the idea of conducting the polls on separate days in certain provinces, on Saturday said that polls should be simultaneously held on same day throughout the country.

He said this while presiding over a meeting of party leaders at Watan Kor, headquarters of QWP, to take stock of the prevailing political situation in the country. The meeting also discussed QWP's organizational affairs in detail and called for efforts to mobilize the Party workers for the next general election.

Aftab Sherpao called for introducing electoral reforms to ensure the conduct of free and fair election.

He said that electoral reforms should be introduced to ensure the holding of a free and fair election.

The QWP leader said that the country's first digital census was in progress which was yet to be completed and the delimitation process was supposed to be carried out which needed considerable time.

Criticizing former prime minister Imran Khan, Aftab Sherpao said the PTI chairman wanted to push the country towards unrest and anarchy in a bid to sabotage the IMF-government talks, which were crucial for securing the much-needed financial help from the international money lender.

He said that the PTI leadership was bent upon

derailing the democratic setup in the country.

Imran Khan is undermining the democracy," he remarked. Condemning the attacks on police force across the province, he demanded a judicial probe into the Kabal CTD police station blasts to fix responsibility and punish whoever was involved in negligence.

Expressing concern over the poor security situation in the province, he said the PTI leadership was responsible for the worsening law and order in KP due to its flawed strategy.

He said PTI ruled KP for nine straight years, but it left the province in huge debt. He said the debt of the province had soared manifold while the provincial kitty was rendered empty.

He said that special events would also be held at the district level to express solidarity with laborers. He said that the labor bureau of the party and provincial officer bearers have also been directed to make arrangements for the day.

He said the People's Party would support labourers in their struggle to get their legal and constitutional rights and added that various steps have been introduced in the previous government of PPP for facilitation and uplift of the working class.

He said that governments of PPP not only increased the salaries of laborers by 150 percent beside them giving shares in profits and regularising their jobs.

## Peoples Labor Bureau announces to celebrate 1st May

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial President of Peoples Labor Bureau Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shah Zulqarnain has said that Labor Day would be celebrated in a suitable manner to highlight the sacrifices and services of the working class.

He said that special events would also be held at the district level to express solidarity with laborers. He said that the labor bureau of the party and provincial officer bearers have also been directed to make arrangements for the day.

He said the People's Party would support labourers in their struggle to get their legal and constitutional rights and added that various steps have been introduced in the previous government of PPP for facilitation and uplift of the working class.

He said that governments of PPP not only increased the salaries of laborers by 150 percent beside them giving shares in profits and regularising their jobs.

## CDM demands to complete work

PESHAWAR (APP): Chitral Development Movement (CDM), an organization of volunteers while expressing concerns over unfinished work on infrastructure projects including Mastoj bridge, demanded of the government to complete these projects at the earliest keeping in view the miseries and problems of the people.

Inayatullah Aseer, Senior member of CDM said that work was started Boni Mastoj road last year but the work was stopped and now it was very difficult to travel on road due to its dilapidated condition.

The CDM also demanded repairment of Mastoj Bridge and said that the bridge would collapse of work was not stated on time. They said that improvement of infrastructure was important to connect these areas with Central Asian States and to improve socio-economic conditions of Chitral people.

## Dialogue between political parties essential to get rid of current challenges

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary General, Awami National Party, Mian Iftikhar Hussain here on Saturday said that dialogue between all political parties was essential to overcome the socio-economic challenges being faced by the country.

He expressed these views while meeting with Central Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami, Sirajul Haq at JI Secretariat along with other ANP leaders including ANP's Provincial Vice President Saqibullah Khan Chamkani, Secretary

Culture Khadim Hussain and member Central Committee Arbab Mohammad Tahir.

Mian Iftikhar invited Siraj-ul-Haq to attend the All-Party Conference organized by ANP on May 3 in Islamabad titled "Present Crisis and its Solution".

He mentioned that ANP chief Asfandiyar Wali Khan had directed the conference to find solutions to the problems faced by the country and that the only way out of the current crises was through dialogue

and cooperation among all the political parties.

During the conference, discussions would take place on various issues, including the law-and-order situation, political and parliamentary crisis, national security, economic and judicial crisis and others.

He hoped that the political leadership would demonstrate political maturity and seriousness, and the All-Party Conference would help resolve political and economic issues through dialogue.

## JUI-F Chief condoles with family of late Mufti Abdul Shakoor

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Maulana Fazlur Rehman visited Palosai here on Saturday and con-

doled with the family of late Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Mufti Abdul Shakoor.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman performed the dastar (tur-

ban) of late Mufti Abdul Shakur's brother Maulana Muneer.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul of Mufti Abdul Shakoor and grant courage to bereaved family members.

Speaking on the occasion, Maulana Fazlur

Rehman said that Mufti Abdul Shakoor was the asset of the party and his services will be remembered for a long time.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that late Mufti Abdul Shakoor did not disappoint despite the party had handed over great responsibilities to him.

## Rummaging over waste dump in Peshawar, ears, tail chopped stray dog finds home in London

PESHAWAR (APP): Lying in the mid of a garbage dump, a brown and white color puppy of around one month was groaning in pain because of mutilated ears and tail that were chopped by animal dealers to increase the selling price of the canine.

The pain-filled moaning of the baby dog attracted the attention of a young passerby in Gulbahar area of Peshawar who on search found the puppy in very miserable condition due to bleeding from chopped ears and tail.

Manzar, who runs a welfare organization in the name of Pukhar, moved over the heart-breaking condition of the timid puppy and decided to do something for providing relief from extreme pain and distress to the little soul.

He contacted Zeba Masood, a US national with roots in Peshawar and founder of Lucky Animal Protection Shelter (LAPS), the only sanctuary for maltreated, beaten, injured and starving stray dogs in provincial metropolis of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Over listening pitiful condition of the pup, Zeba forthwith expressed her consent for adoption and asked Manzar to bring

the victim of cruelty to her shelter home.

"The puppy was shifted to LAPS around an year earlier and provided necessary treatment for healing of wounds and relieving of pain," informs Javed, husband of Zeba Masood who helps his spouse in care of dogs taking shelter at LAPS.

Soon after getting treatment and recovering from the trauma, ear and tail sliced puppy started showing affection towards his caretakers including Zeba, Javed recalls.

Like other members of the shelter home, the puppy got the identity of 'Rox' and became a favorite of Zeba because of being a victim of a very cruel practice, Javed told APP.

It merits a mention here that some animal dealers in Peshawar especially in Changar Abad locality near Gulbahar area are involved in cruel practice of ear cropping and tail docking to present the puppy, mostly of stray dogs, as Kochi breed of Afghanistan which has good demand in market due to its aggressive behavior and better performance in dog fighting.

Some of the puppies which develop infections due to lack of proper treatment after opera-

tion or are not being sold and became a liability for sellers, are thrown into drainage canal or waste dump for dying.

The pictures of Rox since its arrival in injured condition at LAPS were being uploaded on social media for apprising followers about the activities being taken up for help of stray dogs and also to spread message regarding the ongoing cruel practice of ear cropping and tail docking of dogs, Javed told APP.

Our followers in thousands of numbers expressed their views about the pathetic condition of Rox and positive gesture of Manzar and Zeba in protecting of the dog, he went on to say.

A few months earlier, Javed continued, they were being approached by a family from London expressing their desire of adopting Rox as their pet animal.

"The offer of Rox adoption surprised us a lot because it reflected true love for animals," Javed shared his inner feelings.

To our experience people like those animals which have good look or have pedigree of pure breed, but expressing love for a dog which is apparently

looking ugly due to removal of ears and tail and is grown up in waste dumps, is reflection of true love for animals, Javed observed.

Such affection for animals is beyond phenomenal and a source of inspiration for all those who claims to be animal lovers or lobbyist for rights of animals, he remarked.

Zeba welcomed the offer and expressed willingness in handing over of Rox to those who wanted to adopt it in London.

The procedure for shifting of Rox from Peshawar to London started and most of the paper work has been completed, Javed informed.

He said the family also expressed willingness for paying of all the expense being made in shifting of Rox from Peshawar to London including paper work, medical certificates, vaccination and air travel fare.

Shifting of Rox to London from Peshawar is expected to take place in around a month period after which the dog will find a new home and true love, he hoped.

Javed said it is a second case that a dog of LAPS is being shifted from Peshawar to

England. A couple of years earlier, a stray dog was adopted by someone in same country.

LAPS is presently providing shelter to around 275 stray dogs which were brought in poor conditions after being hit by cars, injured by people or in poor health especially due to skin disease which canine mostly contracts and are abandoned by owners.

The administration of LAPS not only provide food and shelter but also better medication through its team of veterinary doctors and a staff of around 14 members who perform duty round the clock in shifts and take care of the dogs.

It also needs to mention here that in the recent devastating floods of 2022, Zeba Masood and her husband Javed risked their own lives for safety of dogs at the shelter home which become vulnerable to inundation because of its location near embankment of Swat river.

The shelter became inundated in around eight feet deep water and both the couple arranged boats for rescue operation which continued for several days to ensure shifting of majority of the dogs to a safer location.







## In brief

### Robbers' gang busted F.P. Report

KHAR: The police busted a robber gang and recovered stolen valuables from their possession here on Saturday. According to details, SHO Khar police station, Saeed ur Rehman along with his team launched crack-down in Khar area of Bajaur. During operation, a robbers' gang while had looted batteries and solar panels from a shop in Rajgan area some 10 days earlier was busted. The police also recovered stolen batteries, solar panels and other looted valuables from possession of the detainees who were being investigated.

### Two girls die as roof collapses

BAHAWALPUR (PPI): In a tragic incident, the roof of a private hostel caved in at Riaz Colony in Bahawalpur after a water tank installed on the rooftop burst on Saturday, which resulted in the death of two female students, while the condition of four others were said to be very critical. The injured girls were rushed to a hospital for medical assistance. According to details, six students were trapped under the debris and a rescue operation was underway to retrieve them. On the other side, the students of Government Sadiq College Women University Bahawalpur demanded an inquiry into the unfortunate incident. One of the students said that the hostel's infrastructure was outdated and was not meeting the safety standards.

### 4 hurt in hand grenade attack

KHUZZAR (PPI): Four men sustained injuries after unidentified miscreants hurled hand grenade at a cylinder shop in Mini Bus Adda, Jhalawan Complex area of district Khuzdar in Balochistan province on Saturday. According to police, unidentified miscreants hurled hand grenade at a cylinder shop in Mini Bus Adda, Jhalawan Complex area of district Khuzdar, resultantly, four persons sustained injuries. The injured, identified as Abdul Hakeem, Zakarya Khan, Ghulam Murtaza and Muhammad Aslam, were shifted to Teaching Hospital, Khuzdar for treatment. Further investigation was being conducted by the concerned authorities.

### Youth shot dead

KOT MITHAN (PPI): A youth was gunned down by opponents in Kotla Nasir area of Kot Mithan for marrying the woman of his choice, police said Saturday. According to sources, there was a rivalry between two communities – Chaki and Darzi. Muhammad Habib, who belonged to the Chaki community, had married a girl of Darzi community of his own free will a month ago. The youth was living at his relative's house in Kotla Nasir after marriage. The woman's family, on the other hand, had harboured grudge against the couple for contracting free-will marriage and ever since they had been waiting for an opportunity to teach the boy a lesson. Finally, the assailants found a chance and barged into the house of the youth and opened fire at him. Eyewitnesses said that the victim was shot twice in stomach with a 30-bore pistol. The accused fled away from the scene after committing the crime. Kot Mithan Sadar police rushed to the crime scene as soon as the incident was reported and transported the body to the hospital for an autopsy. The police cited that the murder is an offshoot of a long-standing enmity between the two communities which grew even worse after couple's marriage.

# Early repairing of Mastoj Bridge demanded

## F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Mastuj Bridge, which is very important for land connecting with Upper Chitral district, is in a very dilapidated condition. Last year, a portion of this bridge was damaged due to flood, the foundation of this bridge, pillars, were badly damaged, besides, it due to the diversion of the river, the water flowed in the middle of the two parts of the bridge.

Last year road to Mastuj as well as Gilgal, Brughal, Yarkhun was also closed. This bridge was built during the regime of the former President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, and this road was also brought from the east side of the river to the west side. He also had announced and approved construction of Shandor road as work order issued and coal tar also brought by contractor which are no damaging without using.

National Highway Authority had started work on Boni Mastoj road last year, but now it was left unfinished. Due to the bad condition and roughness of the road, when a vehicle passes on it, due to mud and dust, not only the residents who living on road side suffering a lot, but passers-by also suffer from various diseases due to this dust.

Chitral Development Moment (CDM), comprising on volunteers organization raising voice for the construction of roads in Chitral, has been raising the issue from time to time for the construction of these roads. It should be built as soon as possible. According to Inayatullah Aseer, a senior member of CDM, this road is very important. If a road is built beyond Mastuj to the Central Asian states, it will not only bring us closer to these states which will connectivity be restored, but it will also change the fate of this backward region by promoting tourism and culture. He said that Gwadar route is 1800 km while Brughal route is only 200 km from Chitral to Tajikistan. As it was a silk route in past using by merchandise.

Liaquat Ali, vice president of Chamber of Commerce and Industry, says that the people of the area are very disappointed because of the unfinished work on the Mastuj road. He expressed great regret that a Chinese company had done a very good quality and strong blacktopping on Booni road, but the NHA contractor had made the paved road unpaved by raking the coal tar, but still on this unpaved road. No more blacktopping work done yet.. Now, the dust

and dirt created by the vehicles passing on this road has made miserable life of the people of the area.

Mohammad Ashraf who is a driver by profession says that he often has to pass through this road. Earlier it was the best metal road on which a Chinese company laid the best coaltar, but the National Highway Authority contractor removed it from this road. The blacktop road was turned into ruins and now it is known that the contractor has also taken his machinery from here. He said that when the construction of this road was started, it was not surveyed in view of modern requirements, went, but started the work of widening of road and construction on the same road when it was a road for mules, horses and donkeys some 50 years ago. If they construct bridges where water flowing on road It would also be safe and easy to travel.

Syed Burhan Shah Advocate is also a senior member of CDM. He was standing on the same road which NHA has converted it in a dirt road from a metal one. Due to this, people suffer from tension and various diseases. He further said that there are not only 200 villages living beyond Mastoj Bridge which is in a very bad condition but it connect Chitral to Brughal and Gilgit Baltistan, as well as the road also goes to Wakhan and Tajikistan through this bridge. He said that hundreds of vehicles pass on this bridge every day, but last year this bridge was badly harmed due to flood. He said that the concern department not repair it in time only for to keep their pockets warm, but when this bridge breaks down, they will have to rebuild a new bridge here, which will cost million of. But now it can be repaired with a few lakhs of rupees. He said that the road from Chitral to Booni and Mastuj has been done very poorly and we will soon approach the court against this contractor and the department. He said that company that works on this road did not have any plan but they get a lot of money for digging out of blacktopping portion and to collect their money they dug coaltar but did not blacktopped it again. We will definitely go to court so that we get our right. Rafiq Ahmed CDM is a general secretary. He said that we had the best road to Booni but the company turned it into ruins and left it incomplete due to which people are suffering from lung diseases and people cannot breathe due to dust and dirt.

# Dir Levis official to perform traffic duties on roads

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: In order to control the traffic rush on the roads in Lower Dir district, several personnel of the Dir Levis were assigned the task to help the traffic police in the district. The Deputy Commissioner Iftikhar Ahmed and district police officer Tariq Iqbal in this regard agreed to train the deputated staff about traffic rules. A basic traffic course in this regard started for the 50 newly deputated Dir Levis officials at the Timergara police lines here on Saturday.

The DSP headquarters Fakhre Alam Khan and traffic in-charge Khan

Nazar Khan inspected the ongoing basic traffic course. On completion of the course the personnel would be deployed on the roads for traffic duty.

**SSC examination:** The provincial nazim of Islami Jamiat Tulba (IJT), a students' wing of Jamaat-i-Islami Waseem Haider has said that about 1.5 million students are appearing in this year secondary school certificate examination and it was the responsibility of the education department and the educational boards to provide them with a conducive environment. He was talking to a group of students during his visit to Chakdara.

He said that the education department and educational boards should take all possible measures to eradicate the menace of cheating and using unfair means by students to get high marks. He said the IJT had planned to hold press conferences and carry out other awareness activities in all the district headquarters across the province to discourage cheating by students in examinations. He said the IJT would welcome any applicable suggestions from the government and other stakeholders for curbing cheating and unfair means in the prevailing examination system.

severely diluted the former. The Child Protection Unit (CPU) assessment report of 2013 reveals that 95% of the cases received were welfare oriented and 5% were protection related. The assessment led to the finding that a conceptual distinction between child protection and child welfare is required to ensure a better enforcement of children's right to protection and dignity in the country. The most unfortunate and tragic incidents reported were cases of child pornography, child trafficking and inciting child to bet or borrow which required immediate attention and called for the establishment of Children Protection Courts.

In the devolved context, each Provincial Government in Pakistan is obliged to ensure that children are protected from all forms of abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect. In pursuance of this obligation, the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa promulgated the "Child Protection & Welfare Act 2010". The statute provides for the articulation of specific criteria in support of the identification of children requiring protection in the province and the establishment of an administrative structure to ensure the delivery of the child protection mandate. The Act also provides the establishment of Children Protection Court.

In fact, the legal mandate of the Child Courts envisaged in KP is a comprehensive one as it concerns children in conflict (accused) and in contact with the law with the law (victims): under one roof, child courts consequently hold several special jurisdictions as a child protection court, a juvenile court and an anti-rape court.

The establishment of child courts relies on the theory that children are characterized by

# We have a dream

specificities and vulnerabilities that make them different from adults. To ensure that they access justice, it is essential to provide minors with a justice process that abides by the internationally recognized principles to avoid secondary trauma and victimization.

The basic concept of child courts was as follows:

- To provide an exclusive forum for the children in conflict with law or seeking the help of law to enforce their rights, and disposal of children cases on priority;
- Provision of safe and secured atmosphere to provide confidence to the children,
- Frequent and repeated follow up by the Child Court to explore possibilities of reformation and reintegration of children in conflict with the law into the society as a healthy, responsible and law-abiding citizen.
- Ensure the beautification of court rooms with paintings on the walls, colors inside and outside the court rooms which could provide a conducive atmosphere to the children in attendance;
- Segregation of children from adult accused to keep them away from all sorts of harm.
- A team of specialized, trained and mentored judges, prosecutors and police officers in and around the child courts to dispense justice with children.
- A unique aspect of this child court concept has been the applied child participatory approach to guarantee the relevance and efficiency of the courts: they were involved in the training of judges, in the selection of the court premises, in their design and launch. This was a very peculiar experience

# PHC CJ directs Bench, Bar to provide speedy justice to applicants

## F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Musarrat Hillali visited district judiciary Charsadda. Her ladyship was accompanied by three judges including Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, Justice Syed Muhammad Attique Shah and Justice Shahid Khan, on Saturday.

On arrival at Judicial Complex Charsadda her ladyship was warmly welcomed by the District & Judge Ms. Sofia Waqar Khattak and her team, Member KP Bar and Pakistan Bar Councils, Presidents and their cabinet members of District Bar and tehsil Bar Associations Charsadda.

Chief Justice inaugurated the newly established Library for the lawyers community followed by the oath taking ceremony of newly elected District Bar Association, Charsadda. Her ladyship administered oath to the new office barriers of District Bar Association Charsadda. President District Bar Association welcomed and thanked the Chief Justice and the guests of honor who graced the occasion by their presence amongst the bar members and legal fraternity. During his speech placed before her ladyship matters of common interest and relating to the bar.

The Chief Justice while addressing



to the bar expressed her deep pleasure and gratitude for honoring her ladyship. While speaking on the occasion her ladyship spoke that she has firmly believe that bar is an integral part of our judicial system and without support and assistance of the bar the purpose of administration of justice is impossible.

To ensure speedy and inexpensive justice at the doorstep to the litigant public it is important that both bar and bench play their vital roles effectively. Chief Justice also spoke of the rich values cherished by District Bar Association Charsadda and emphasized to follow the footsteps of the luminaries. In this regards her ladyship assured that we will leave no stone unturned for the resolution of the issues of common interest of both the bar and bench.

Chief Justice paid a detailed visit

# CEO stresses on character building of students

## Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFAZABAD: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Education Sohail Azhar Khan directed the heads of schools and teachers to focus on character building of students as well as academic activates so that students could prove responsible and useful citizens in practical life.

He issued these directions while visiting government model higher secondary boys and girls schools Hafizabad, on Friday. CEO checked attendance of teachers and other staff, standard of cleanliness, anti-dengue activities and discipline of schools. He also directed the teachers to give special attention on improving educational results and imparting quality education to students.

He further directed the heads of schools to improve cleanliness standard, anti-dengue activates and create awareness among students to adopt preventive measures for remaining save from dengue mosquitoes.

**Admn tighten fencing against smuggler, hoarders:** District administration tight the nose against hoarding and smuggling of wheat from the district. Monitoring vehicles at entry and exits points of the district has been further improved to ensure zero chances of wheat smuggling.

# Commissioner inspects DHQ Hospital Mardan

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner, Mardan Division and Deputy Commissioner, visited various units of the District Headquarters Teaching Hospital sections including Gynae OPD, Gynae OT, Labor Room Breastfeeding/ Child Care Unit, Physiotherapy Unit, Cardiology OPD, General OPD, Surgical OPD, Ophthalmology, Orthopedic OPD, Peds Unit, Dengue Isolation Ward, Monkey Pox Isolation Ward and Residential Colony.

During their visit they met the patients in the hospital and reviewed in details the medical facilities provided to them. On this occasion, Superintending Engineer C&W Omar Khan, Medical Superintendent DHQ Teaching Hospital Dr. Javed Iqbal, XEN C&W Abid Khan, Peds Unit In-charge Dr. Syed Mohammad Tariq, Coordinator Public Health Dr. Musad Gul along with nursing and paramedical supervisors were also present.

Commissioner Mardan Division and Deputy Commissioner visited DHQ Teaching Hospital Mardan on the occasion of establishment of Ophthalmology OPD and facilities provided by doctors to patients of eye diseases including the provision of modern machines for patients in Physiotherapy Unit. The facilities were also reviewed in details to examine their functions and capabilities. In their visit the Commissioner also got briefing on the services of Echo, ETT and ECG that how these

technologies are facilitating the patients.

On the continuous and sustainable services, the Commissioner appreciated the whole Cardiology Department and concern staff. Commissioner and DC along with Medical Superintendent Dr. Javed Iqbal also visited the under construction DHQ Teaching Hospital different under developing sections. While giving a briefing, Commissioner said that funds of 52 crores have not been framed by the provincial government due to which the developmental work is delayed.

He said that we thring our best raise the issue regarding funds to provincial government to resolve the issues regarding construction of the building. While briefing the hospital administration informed the district administration about the quality of construction and work. In response, the commissioner instructed the C&W officials to speedy the work on building according quality. Further the officers of C&W Dept Mardan were asked to complete the work with quality by solving the technical problems with other related departments including the Forest Department.

Medical Superintendent DHQ Teaching Hospital informed the officers regarding the vacancies of specialist doctors, on which Commissioner Mardan assured to take steps to solve all the problems with the higher officers. On this occasion, Coordinator Public Health Dr. Musadiq Gul gave a

briefing on the isolation ward set up for monkey pox as per the orders issued by the provincial government, on which Commissioner Mardan Division Mr. Yusuf Rahim and Deputy Commissioner Mardan Captain (R) Abdul Rehman visited the patients in the hospital and appreciated the facilities, cleanliness, dengue isolation ward, monkey pox isolation ward and the efficiency of the hospital administration.

# 350 liters adulterated milk disposed off

## F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: As many as 350 liters adulterated milk disposed-off by livestock department while two culprits were sent behind bars at Takhtbhai area of Mardan district, on Saturday.

The milk was tested with modern equipment at main Malakand road in which usage of pharma-line chemical was found in the presence of Assistant Commissioner Takhtbhai Gul Nawaz Afridi.

Meanwhile, police had arrested 45 alleged culprits including four proclaimed offenders and one facilitator while recovered ammunition from their possession. Moreover, police also recovered one Stan gun, two Kalakovs, three rifles, 14 pistols along with 422 bullets and 765 grams hashish from their possession.

Head Quarters on the pattern of the CC Peshawar. These were inaugurated by late Chief Justice, Honorable Mr. Justice Waqar Ahmed Seth and the present incumbent Honorable Mr. Justice Qaiser Rashid khan Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court. By the grace of the Almighty, Khyber Pakhtunkwa is the province with the highest number of child courts- eight to date-.

The child courts created a ray of hope in opening new horizons for effective delivery of juvenile justice and child protection. Regular third-party assessment of all child courts in Pakistan showed that child courts are working quite efficiently. The last assessment available shows that the case disposal rate of child courts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was 90 % in Bannu, 84% in Mohmand, 79% in Peshawar, 68% in Abbottabad, 68 % in Mardan, 65% in Derra Ismail Khan, 59% and 50 % in Swat and Kohat respectively. The child court in Karachi Malir was at 33% Karachi east was 80 % while Lahore was 29 % and Quetta at 14 %; 65% was the rate at the national level. The national average time to dispose of a case by the child courts was of 184 days.

"On average, cases remained active for 120 days in the pilot child courts, at the National level. In Peshawar pilot child court, cases remained active for 149 days on average. In Mardan pilot child court, so far, cases have remained active for 94 days on average. In Abbottabad pilot child court, cases are active for 103 days on average. In Mohmand pilot child court, cases are active for 72 days on average. In Kohat pilot child court, cases remained active for 115 days on average. In Derra Ismail Khan pilot child court, so far, cases have remained active

for 338 days on average. In Bannu pilot child court, cases were active for 183 days on average. In Swat pilot child court, cases were active for 106 days on average. In Lahore pilot child court, cases were active for 98 days on average. In Quetta pilot child court, cases were active for 41 days on average. In Karachi East pilot child court, cases are active for 93 days on average. In Karachi Malir pilot child court, cases were active for 260 days on average."

The national average bail-out rate was 106% with Derra Ismail Khan, Kohat and Peshawar pilot child courts recording the bail-out of 220%, 217% and 206% respectively. The said report further shows that the number of cases involving children in conflict or in contact with the law tried under the pilot child courts remained at 2,447 Total, 83% of which were male and 17% female. Numbers of children accessing justice services through the pilot child courts were 3,292. Total 76% male and 24 % female. While Number of children appearing as witness in the pilot child courts were 1,204 Total 71% male and 29%female. Children in conflict with the law tried in the pilot child courts were 1,183 Total 97% of which were males and 3 % females. Number of accused children granted bail by the pilot child courts was 1,234 Total 97% 3%. Number of accused children acquitted/ released were 255 Total 98% male and 2% female. Number of child victims appearing in the pilot child courts was 905 out of which 75% were male and 25% female. Total Number of children availing diversion was 661 of which are males were 55% and 45% females. Number of Accused Children Convicted with Minimum Punishment in line with JISA was 68. While Number of adults convicted in cases of child abuse was 23.





## Presidential battleground states weigh more election funding

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP): Ahead of the 2024 presidential election, officials in several battleground states have proposed boosting funding to add staff, enhance security and expand training within election offices that are facing heavier workloads and heightened public scrutiny.

The potential extra funding comes as many election offices are grappling with a wave of retirements and a flood of public records requests, stemming partly from lingering election distrust seeded by former President Donald Trump in his 2020 defeat. In South Carolina, host of one of the earliest presidential primaries, almost half of county election directors have resigned in the last two years, said state Election Commission Executive Director Howard Knapp.

The unprecedented turnover has created an "enormous knowledge and competency gap," Knapp said, prompting a budget request for millions of additional state dollars to boost staffing and training. Without the funds, Knapp warned the gap will grow and elections will be "severely impacted." "I can't control county directors leaving," said Knapp. He added, "What I can control is this agency's ability to deliver quality training to the counties so that it doesn't matter who is in the chair, they will have an established training program that they can take themselves and they can impart."

Elections officials, governors and lawmakers in states that hold early primaries or play pivotal roles in the presidential election, including Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina and Wisconsin, also have

proposed funding increases. In many of those states, lawmakers are still working on the final budget. Time is of the essence. Most annual state budgets take effect in July, meaning they will encompass presidential primaries occurring in the first half of 2024. Once funding is approved, election officials will need time to hire and train employees and purchase new security and voting equipment.

Georgia, where a grand jury has been investigating whether Trump and his allies illegally meddled in the 2020 election, is one of about a dozen states where lawmakers already have passed a 2024 budget. The Republican-led General Assembly added \$427,010 to hire two investigators, one administrative assistant and an executive director for the State Election Board. One state still weighing more election spending is Arizona, which became a focal point for election challenges and conspiracies after Trump narrowly lost the state in 2020.

Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs, a Democrat who previously served as secretary of state, has proposed an \$11 million increase for a new election task force. The panel, which held its first meeting earlier this month, is expected to release recommendations by November on ways to standardize election practices, update election equipment and security guidelines, and provide training to local workers.

Arizona's Democratic Secretary of State Adrian Fontes is pushing for an additional \$3.1 million in election-related spending, in part to add six employees to help train and certify election workers and a new chief information security officer to confront cyber vulnerabilities in elec-

tion systems.

There is no evidence of widespread fraud or manipulation of voting equipment in the 2020 elections. Yet distrust about US elections persists among Republicans, fueled by Trump allies who have been traveling the country highlighting theoretical vulnerabilities. In the past three years, almost every election office across the country has seen an increase in the number of public records requests, said Tammy Patrick, chief executive officer for programs at the National Association of Election Officials.

South Carolina experienced a 500% increase in election-related public records requests, driven largely by election skeptics submitting model language drafted by out-of-state conspiracy groups, Knapp said. The state election commission is seeking \$3.2 million to help establish a new training division and enhance technical support. Knapp also wants about \$1.2 million to hire seven staff members, including a public information officer to respond to media, voters and interest groups.

Voting advocates said strong training is especially important in a hostile environment where bad-faith actors may twist instances of incompetence or irregularities to undermine election integrity. Cynthia Holland, who oversees elections for Aiken County, an expansive rural county in the western part of South Carolina, said the funded training would be a "blessing." She estimated that her four-person office has spent over 100 hours since November 2020 responding to records requests. "It's enough time that it puts us behind on our work that we're supposed to be hired to do," she said.

## 200 people evacuated from Sudan to Chad: UN

GENEVA (Reuters): Chad conducted its first evacuation flights from Sudan carrying more than 200 people, including dozens of children, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said. Countries around the globe have rushed to extract foreign diplomats and citizens from the country after a conflict erupted between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, killing hundreds of people and turning residential areas into war zones.

The UN agency, which is assisting Chadian authorities with the arrivals, said in a statement that 226 people were on board two charter flights, including 39 children. The flights arrived in the capital N'Djamena. Earlier this week, a spokesperson for the agency said that hundreds of students and pilgrims were seeking evacuation, as well as 15 Chadians requiring assistance from Sudanese hospitals.

## Colorado governor signs 4 gun control bills

DENVER (AP): Colorado's governor signed four gun control bills, following the lead of other states struggling to confront a nationwide surge in violent crime and mass shootings, despite a recent US Supreme Court ruling that expanded Second Amendment rights.

Before the ink was even dry on Gov. Jared Polis' signature, gun rights groups sued to reverse two of the measures: raising the buying age for any gun from 18 to 21, and establishing a three-day waiting period between the purchase and receipt of a gun. The courts are already weighing lawsuits over such restrictions in other states. The new laws, which Democrats pushed through despite late-night filibusters from Republicans, are aimed at quelling rising suicides and youth violence, preventing mass shootings, and opening avenues for gun violence victims to sue the long-protected firearm industry. They were enacted just five months after a mass shooting at an LGBTQ club in Colorado Springs.

"Coloradoans deserve to be safe in our communities, in our schools, in our grocery stores, in our nightclubs," Polis said as he signed the measures in his office. The governor was flanked by activists wearing red shirts reading, "Moms Demand Action," students from a Denver high school recently affected by a shooting, and parents of a woman killed in the Aurora theater shooting in 2012. Supportive lawmakers and citizens alike had tears in their eyes and roared their applause as Polis signed each bill. Colorado has a history of notorious mass shootings, reaching back to the Columbine High School massacre in 1999.

Republicans decried the bills as onerous encroachments on Second Amendment rights that would impede Colorado residents' ability to defend themselves amid a rising statewide crime rate. Gun rights advocates pledged to reverse the measures. "It's a sad day for Colorado; we are becoming one of the most anti-Second Amendment states in the nation," said Rep. Mike Lynch, the Republican minority leader.

A third measure passed by the legislature will strengthen the state's red flag law, and a fourth rolls back some legal protections for the firearm industry, exposing them to lawsuits from the victims of gun violence. Lynch anticipates that the magnitude of the gun restrictions — along with other bills Democrats pushed this year — will incite a backlash in the next election, especially in swing districts that helped reinforce Democrats' majority in the legislature.

The new red flag law, also called an extreme risk protection order, empowers those working closely with youth and adults — doctors, mental health professionals, and teachers — to petition a judge to temporarily remove someone's firearm. Previously, petition power was limited mainly to law-enforcement and family members.

## South Korea's Yoon talks of nuclear threat at Harvard visit

BOSTON (AP): South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol delivered a speech and took questions at the Harvard Kennedy School in Cambridge where he spoke about the challenges facing his country including the threat of nuclear weapons from neighboring North Korea.

Yoon pointed to a new plan he unveiled with President Joe Biden for intensified nuclear deterrence to counter any North Korean threat. "If we were to accept nuclear weapons by North Korea then South Korea may have to possess nuclear weapons," Yoon said during a question-and-answer period after his speech at the Kennedy School. "This is not something we want to see happen."

Yoon went on to say that if North Korea were to use nuclear weapons "the result is quite obvious." "As long as North Korea recognizes nuclear weapons as a means of survival we have to make sure to deter the usage of such weapons so that the Republic of Korea, our neighboring countries and the entire global community can be protected," he said through a translator. The so-called Washington Declaration unveiled by Biden and Yoon calls for periodically docking US nuclear-armed submarines in South Korea for the first time in decades, bolstering training between the two countries and more.

Yoon acknowledged that "there is some opinion in our Korean society that due to increasing nuclear missile threats posed by North Korea that we need to acquire our own weapons." But he said acquiring nuclear weapons is more than just a technological problem. It is also a complex political and economic challenge. "I believe that those opinions saying that we need to have our own nuclear arsenal are not considering all these things, all these factors," he said. "The North Korean nuclear threat is not a faraway threat. It is imminent. It is at our front door. Therefore we need a very practical solution."



On a lighter note, Yoon acknowledged the cultural inroads South Korea has forged with pop groups like BTS, the television survival drama "Squid Games" and movies like the Academy Award-winning "Parasite," but declined to take any credit. "Although I'm at the head of the government, I can't say that the government has really done much to support that," he said. "It has been 100% the effort from the private sector and the market itself."

Earlier in the day, Yoon stopped at the Massachusetts Statehouse as he wrapped up his state visit to the United States. Yoon was greeted on the steps of the historic gold-domed building in Boston just after noon by Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey. The two walked up the red-carpeted steps and into the front door of the state Capitol while the flag of South Korea fluttered in the breeze on one side of the building's front lawn.

Hong Doo-jung, 25, a public sector worker from Worcester, stood across from the Statehouse with several others protesting what he said was the South Korean president's stance on unions. Hong could be heard yelling repeatedly "strikebreaker, boo" as the president ascended the stairs with Healey. Yoon and Healey then sat down for a private lunch. The stops in Boston and Cambridge come after Yoon visited Washington.

Yoon spoke to a joint meeting of Congress and praised the US-South Korea security partnership since the Korean War seven decades ago as "the linchpin safeguarding our freedom, peace and prosperity." Biden hosted a state dinner for Yoon and his wife that included big names from politics, business, sports and entertainment including actor Angelina Jolie, home improvement duo Chip and Joanna Gaines, and Olympic snowboarder Chloe Kim.

## Sudanese NHS doctor finally allowed to return to UK

KHARTOUM (BBC): An NHS doctor who felt "betrayed" after being refused a place on a UK evacuation flight from Sudan has now been given a seat. Abdulrahman Babiker was flown to Cyprus and will travel to the UK on Saturday.

He told the BBC he was delighted to be leaving the country but had mixed feelings about family left behind. He was initially turned away by officials - he has a UK work permit but only UK passport holders were being accepted. After contacting his MP and being advised to travel to Wadi Seidna air base, he made the perilous journey and then queued for 16 hours, only to be told he could not board.

"They said, 'we are really sorry, this is the guidance from the Home Office'. And a soldier took me out," he recalled. The Foreign Office had said it was prioritising UK nationals and those in Dr Babiker's situation needed to make their own way to the UK.

Khartoum International Airport has been shut for almost two weeks due to fighting between two warring factions, while the borders of neighbouring countries are hundreds of miles away from the capital. It is thought at least 24

Sudanese NHS doctors were in a similar position to Dr Babiker. He credited the apparent change in policy to the public attention his story received.

"I got so much support from my colleagues at the hospital, from friends... everyone knew the case," the Manchester Royal Infirmary doctor told the BBC. He said he was due back at work and was meant to have an interview about extending his contract on the same day he was speaking to BBC, but had spoken to his supervisor about his "situation".

While Dr Babiker said he felt "much better" now that he knew he was able to leave, he said the "risk" his family and friends are in has left him unable to sleep. Dr Babiker was allowed a seat on an evacuation flight, but it is not currently clear if there has been an explicit change in UK government policy. Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden told the BBC he was aware of the situation and said: "We are in touch with and engaging rapidly with the Sudanese Doctors' Association to see what further support we can provide for them."

He added that over 1,500 people had been evacuated so far in the UK operation, mostly British nationals or

their eligible dependents. Mr Dowden also said that UK evacuation flights from Sudan would end on Saturday at 18:00 BST. "If you present yourself and you are eligible at the airport we will make sure you get on a flight, just as we have done with everyone else." It is thought there are around 4,000 British nationals in Sudan, more than half of them having registered with the Foreign Office under evacuation plans.

UK nationals have to make their own way to the Wadi Seidna airstrip near Khartoum unescorted to get on the evacuation flights. One flight has also taken off from Port Sudan to Cyprus with evacuees on board. Dr Babiker - who has worked in Manchester for four years - was back in Sudan visiting family for Eid when violence broke out almost two weeks ago. Rival factions within the Sudanese military are battling for control, destroying large sections of the capital Khartoum in the process and killing hundreds of civilians.

A three-day ceasefire due to end was extended for another 72 hours, allowing more time for evacuation flights to leave the country and people to try and make their way to safety. Despite

this, doctors in the country say 74 people have been killed this week in the western Darfur region, and there have been reports that fighters have burnt markets, warehouses and banks in the city of El Geneina. There have also been reports of fighting between the army and rival paramilitary group - the Rapid Support Force (RSF) - in the capital.

At least 512 people have been killed in the fighting and almost 4,200 injured, although the real number of deaths could be much higher. The World Health Organization said it expected there to be "many more" deaths due to outbreaks of disease and a lack of services. Health officials say most hospitals in conflict areas are not functioning, and more than 60% of health facilities in Khartoum are inactive. There are a large number of people in Sudan with ties to the UK, partially due to historical links between the two countries. Sudan was controlled as a British colony between the 1890s and 1956, when it became independent. In 2020, the Office of National Statistics estimated there were around 35,000 people living in the UK who were born in Sudan, including 20,000 Sudanese nationals.

## China's Mars rover finds signs of recent water in sand dunes

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP): Water may be more widespread and recent on Mars than previously thought, based on observations of Martian sand dunes by China's rover. The finding highlights new, potentially fertile areas in the warmer regions of Mars where conditions might be suitable for life to exist, though more study is needed.

News comes days after mission leaders acknowledged that the Zhurong rover has yet to wake up since going into hibernation for the Martian winter nearly a year ago. Its solar panels are likely covered with dust, choking off its power source and possibly preventing the rover from operating again, said Zhang Rongqiao, the mission's chief designer.

Before Zhurong fell silent, it observed salt-rich dunes with cracks and crusts, which researchers said likely were mixed with melting morning frost or snow as recently as a few hundred thousand years ago. Their estimated date range for when the cracks and other dune features formed in Mars' Utopia Planitia, a vast plain in the northern hemisphere: sometime after 1.4 million to 400,000 years ago or

even younger. Conditions during that period were similar to now on Mars, with rivers and lakes dried up and no longer flowing as they did billions of years earlier.

Studying the structure and chemical makeup of these dunes can provide insights into "the possibility of water activity" during this period, the Beijing-based team wrote in a study published in Science Advances. "We think it could be a small amount ... no more than a film of water on the surface," co-author Xiao Guang Qin of the Institute of Geology and Geophysics said in an email. The rover did not directly detect any water in the form of frost or ice. But Qin said computer simulations and observations by other spacecraft at Mars indicate that even nowdays at certain times of year, conditions could be suitable for water to appear.

What's notable about the study is how young the dunes are, said planetary scientist Frederic Schmidt at the University of Paris-Saclay, who was not part of the study. "This is clearly a new piece of science for this region," he said in an email.

Small pockets of water

from thawing frost or snow, mixed with salt, likely resulted in the small cracks, hard crusty surfaces, loose particles and other dune features like depressions and ridges, the Chinese scientists said. They ruled out wind as a cause, as well as frost made of carbon dioxide, which makes up the bulk of Mars' atmosphere. Martian frost has been observed since NASA's 1970s Viking missions, but these light dustings of morning frost were thought to occur in certain locations under specific conditions.

The rover has now provided "evidence that there may be a wider distribution of this process on Mars than previously identified," said Trinity College Dublin's Mary Bourke, an expert in Mars geology. However small this watery niche, it could be important for identifying habitable environments, she added. Launched in 2020, the six-wheeled Zhurong — named after a fire god in Chinese mythology — arrived at Mars in 2021 and spent a year roaming around before going into hibernation last May. The rover operated longer than intended, traveling more than a mile (1,921 meters).

## More than 200 migrants die off Tunisia in just 10 days

LONDON (BBC): Coastguards have recovered the bodies of 41 migrants off the Tunisian coast as the number of people dying as they try to reach Europe from Africa soars. A senior official said more than 200 people had drowned in the last 10 days.

Tunisian morgues were running out of space and authorities were struggling to contain the surge in attempted crossings, he said. The north African country has taken over from neighbouring Libya as the main embarkation point for migrants. Parts of the Tunisian coastline are only about 150 kilometres from Lampedusa, an Italian island frequently used as a crossing point to the mainland.

"We had more than 200 bodies, well beyond the capacity of the hospital,

which creates a health problem," said Faouzi Masmoudi, justice official in the port city of Sfax where the central morgue for an area of around a million people is sited. "There is a problem with large numbers of corpses arriving on the shore. We don't know who they are or what shipwreck they came from and the number is increasing."

The UN's migration agency said that when people departing from the Libyan coast were included, a total of nearly 300 people had died over the past week-and-a-half and 824 people had died so far this year. But Tunisia is now the main departure point for people fleeing conflict and dire poverty in the Middle East and Africa. Mr Masmoudi said funerals were held "almost every day to reduce the pressure

on hospitals".

He said DNA swabs are taken from each body before they are buried to help identification processes by relatives. The retrieved bodies were in a decomposed state which suggested they were in the water for several days, a national guard official Houssein Eddine Jebabli, told Reuters news agency. He said the cumulative total of fatalities was unprecedented over such a short period.

Tunisia has become a transit point for irregular migrants, mostly sub-Saharan Africans, who seek to reach Europe by sea. There have been varying reports of the number of migrant deaths at sea, with the UN's Missing Migrants Project saying 300 people had died in the Central Mediterranean in the last 10 days alone.

ABOARD BRP MAL-ABRIGO (AP): A Chinese coast guard ship blocked a Philippine patrol vessel steaming into a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, causing a frightening near-collision in the latest act of Beijing's aggression in the strategic waterway.

The high seas face-off Sunday between the larger Chinese ship and the Philippine coast guard's BRP Malapascua near Second Thomas Shoal was among the tense moments it and another Philippine vessel encountered in a week-long sovereignty patrol in one of the world's most hotly contested waterways. The Philippine coast guard had invited a small group of journalists, including three from The Associated Press, to join the 1,670-kilometer (1,038-mile) patrol for the first time as part of a new Philippine strategy aimed at exposing China's increasingly aggressive actions in the South China Sea, where an estimated \$5 trillion in global trade transits each year.

In scorching summer heat but relatively calm

waters, the Malapascua and another Philippine coast guard vessel, the BRP Malabrigo, journeyed to the frontlines of the long-seething territorial conflicts. They cruised past a string of widely scattered Philippine-occupied and claimed islands, islets and reefs looking for signs of encroachment, illegal fishing and other threats. In areas occupied or controlled by China, the Philippine patrol vessels received radio warnings in Chinese and halting English, ordering them to immediately leave what the Chinese coast guard and navy radio callers claimed were Beijing's "undisputable territories" and issuing unspecified threats for defiance.

Hostilities peaked Sunday morning in the Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly archipelago, the most fiercely contested region in the busy sea channel. As the two patrol vessels approached the shoal's shallow turquoise waters for an underwater survey, the Chinese coast guard

repeatedly warned them by radio to leave the area, which is about 194 kilometers (121 miles) west of the Philippine island province of Palawan.

After several radio exchanges, a Chinese coast guard caller, sounding agitated, warned of unspecified adversarial action. "Since you have disregarded our warning, we will take further necessary measures on you in accordance with the laws and any consequences entailed will be borne by you," the Chinese speaker said.

A Chinese coast guard ship rapidly approached and shadowed the smaller Malapascua and the Malabrigo. When the Malapascua maneuvered toward the mouth of the shoal, the Chinese ship suddenly shifted to block it, coming as close as 36 to 46 meters (120 to 150 feet) from its bow, said Malapascua's skipper, Capt. Rodol Hernandez. To avoid a collision, Hernandez abruptly reversed his vessel's direction then shut off its engine to bring the boat to a full

stop.

Filipino personnel aboard the vessels — and journalists, who captured the tense moment on camera — watched in frightened silence. But the Malapascua steered just in time to avoid a potential disaster. Hernandez later told journalists that the "sudden and really very dangerous maneuver" by the Chinese coast guard ship had disregarded international rules on collision avoidance. He had the Philippine vessels leave the area after the encounter for the safety of the ships and personnel.

Earlier, a huge Chinese navy ship shadowed the two Philippine patrol vessels in the dark of night as they cruised near Subi, one of seven barren reefs China has transformed in the last decade into a missile-protected island base. The Chinese navy ship radioed the Philippine vessels "to immediately leave and keep out." The coast guard radioed back to assert Philippine sovereign rights to the area before steaming away.



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# Unrestricted inflation, and savageous institutions

THE government of Pakistan has approved a rise of up to 20% in retail prices of commonly used medicines and 14% for lifesaving and highly essential drugs, vital for the survival of critical patients. The Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Association (PPMA) criticized the increase and termed it much lower than had been expected by the cartel. The importers and drug manufacturers had been pressing the government for an across-the-board 39% rise for all kinds of medicines and there had been months-long discussions and deadlock between the government and the drug cartel regarding the issue. The Finance Ministry informed the PPMA that medicine prices could be reviewed again after three months if the Pakistani rupee appreciated, however, no further increase would be made under this category in the next financial year.

The people of Pakistan were struck into persistent hapless and misery over the past years, as the continuous waves of inflation had pushed the nation into extreme poverty and a state of helplessness. The headline inflation touched a historic high of 36.5% in April while all sectors of the national economy including energy, transport, food, health, hospitality, housing, recreation, and others witnessed a sharp uptick in the past two months. Apparently, the government of Pakistan itself pushed the public into extreme inflation through a series of economic measures that it undertook in accordance with the IMF's directives to grasp the staff-level agreement with the global lender. Although, the people of the country could not benefit from the dividends of the IMF's proposed bailout package but used to suffer from the acute repercussions of the so-called reforms taken by the government in this regard. According to the reports, the unprecedented inflation had pushed over 18 million Pakistanis below the poverty line while a big chunk of the country's population was compelled to reduce their meal, shortcut their essential needs in terms of healthcare, clothing, children's education, travel, and socialities.

As for as the health sector is concerned the coalition government not only sabotaged the PTI's Sehat Card Plus scheme but did not introduce its previously launched health insurance plan as an alternative to the PTI's legacy. Currently, the poor who used to get free-of-cost blood dialysis, heart surgery, radiotherapies, and other major treatment through Health cards are mourning the coalition government for snatching free treatment and squeezing life for them. As the rising inflation had already become unbearable for the poor masses, the incumbent rulers had allowed a 20% increase in prices of generic medicines, slapped Rs. 500 on a monthly basis to sui gas customers in the head of meter rent, and thousands charged from each household under lame pretexts in recent months. Meanwhile, indirect taxation, slab-based consumer rates, no accountability of government institutions, and no check over service providers had brought a cascade of inflation in the country. Unfortunately, unrestricted price hikes seriously affect all aspects of public life from agriculture to industry and education to Public health besides massively contributing to unemployment and poverty. The coalition government has struck a peculiar situation, as the next year's budget is overhead but the sitting rulers could not extend any relief to the masses to consolidate their position in the upcoming general elections because IMF's deal is still not in sight despite funding from friendly nations.

Presently, the Pakistani government has shaped into a vampire that is blatantly siphoning public blood and making their lives miserable. Although, the country is passing through a crucial period of history, but the government has put the entire burden on the public. The incumbent rulers must adopt a pro-publica doctrine by sharing the public burden, introducing more strict economic discipline, lowering government expenses, and placing a check over public and private institutions. So, the nation endures this hard time with courage, hope, and unity.

# Ukraine war: Who leaked top secret US documents - and why?

WHAT to make of the dozens of classified US Defence Department documents - maps, charts and photographs - now circulating on the internet? Complete with timelines and dozens of impenetrable military acronyms, the documents, some of them marked "top secret", paint a detailed picture of the war in Ukraine. They tell of the casualties suffered on both sides, the military vulnerabilities of each and, crucially, what their relative strengths are likely to be when Ukraine decides to launch its much-anticipated spring offensive.

How real are these printed pages, unfolded and photographed, possibly on someone's dining room table? And what do they tell us, or the Kremlin, that we did not already know? First things first: this is the biggest leak of secret American information on the war in Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion 14 months ago. Some of the documents are as much as six weeks old, but the implications are huge. Pentagon officials are quoted as saying the documents are real. Information on at least one of them appears to have been crudely altered in a later version, but out of a dump of as many as 100 documents, that seems a relatively minor detail. BBC News has reviewed more than 20 of the documents. They include detailed accounts of the training and equipment being provided to Ukraine as it puts together a dozen new brigades for an offensive that could begin within weeks. It says when the brigades will be ready and lists all the tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery pieces that are being provided by

Ukraine's Western allies.

But it notes that "equipment delivery times will impact training and readiness". One map includes a "mud-frozen ground timeline", assessing ground conditions across eastern

Paul Adams

the documents reveal internal debates those countries are having about Ukraine and other sensitive issues. Some of the documents are marked top secret, others to

figures briefed to journalists in recent weeks. In both cases, the Pentagon says it has "low confidence" in the figures, due to gaps in information, operational

Ukrainian side so they read "61k - 71.5k". All of which brings us to the question of who leaked the documents, and why? The story of how the documents found their way from the messaging platform Discord, to 4Chan

"here, have some leaked documents", before posting 10 of them. It is an unusual, but hardly unique form of leak. In 2019, ahead of the UK general election, documents relating to US-UK trade relations appeared on Reddit, 4Chan and other sites. At the time, Reddit said the unredacted documents had originated in Russia.

In another case, last year, players of the online game War Thunder repeatedly posted sensitive military documents, apparently in an effort to win arguments among themselves. The latest leak is more sensitive, and potentially damaging. Ukraine has zealously guarded its "operational security" and cannot be happy that such sensitive material has appeared at such a critical moment.

Ukraine's spring offensive could represent a make-or-break moment for the Zelensky government to alter dynamics on the battlefield and set conditions for peace talks later. In Kyiv, officials have spoken about a possible disinformation campaign by Russia. Other military bloggers have suggested the opposite: that it is all part of a Western plot to mislead Russian commanders. Crucially, there is nothing in the documents leaked so far that points to the direction or thrust of Ukraine's counter-offensive.

The Kremlin ought to have a pretty good idea already of the scope of Ukraine's preparations (although Moscow's intelligence failures have been much in evidence throughout the war), but Kyiv needs to keep its enemy guessing about how the campaign will unfold, in order to maximise the chances of success.

BBC

*It says when the brigades will be ready and lists all the tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery pieces that are being provided by Ukraine's Western allies. But it notes that "equipment delivery times will impact training and readiness". One map includes a "mud-frozen ground timeline", assessing ground conditions across eastern Ukraine as spring progresses. After a winter that has tested Ukraine's air defences to the limit, there's also a sobering analysis of Kyiv's diminishing air defence capability, as it seeks to balance its limited resources to protect civilians, critical infrastructure and its frontline troops. Not only do the leaked documents say a lot about the state of Ukraine's military - they also talk about some of Washington's other allies. From Israel to South Korea, the documents reveal internal debates those countries are having about Ukraine and other sensitive issues. Some of the documents are marked top secret, others to be shared only with America's closest intelligence allies. A lot of the detail here is familiar. There's just a lot more of it, and it's all in one place. Take casualty figures. It comes as little surprise to learn that the US estimates that between 189,500 and 223,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded. The equivalent figure for Ukraine's losses - between 124,500 and 131,000 - is also in line with ballpark security and deliberate attempts, probably by both sides, to mislead. Tellingly, this is the one place where attempts have been made to alter the documents to make it look as if Ukraine is experiencing the worst casualties.*

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A version which appeared on a pro-Russian Telegram site took the number of Ukrainians "killed in action" ("16k-17.5k") and put those on the Russian ledger, while flipping the numbers on the

and Telegram, has already been told by Aric Toler of the investigative open source intelligence group Bellingcat. Mr Toler says it has not yet been possible to uncover the original source of the leaks, but charts their appearance on a messaging platform popular with gamers in early March.

On 4 March, following an argument about the war in Ukraine on a Discord server frequented by players of the computer game Minecraft, one user wrote

# Decarbonization requires new fiscal rules

Maxkrahe, Philippa Sigl-Glockner & Janek Steitz

CLIMATE policy is at a critical juncture. The world's leading scientists see a rapidly closing window to avoid the worst ravages of global warming. With the enactment of the Inflation Reduction Act last year, the US has finally taken meaningful domestic action to reduce emissions. Now Europe is scrambling to respond.

But the narrowly technical approach prevailing in the EU - and particularly in Germany, its biggest member state - is steering Europe toward fiscal shoals and social turmoil. To chart a safer, more sustainable course, climate policy must be linked up with broader economic and especially fiscal policy. In other words, meaningful climate action requires an economy-wide strategy. To date, European governments have coalesced around an engineering response to fighting climate change. The European Commission's "Fit for 55" plan, for example, breaks down the problem into small, manageable pieces, creating targets for individual sectors and determining how much carbon reduction various solutions, taken in isolation, can achieve. The emerging response to the Inflation Reduction Act turbocharges this paradigm,

with faster planning procedures and more leeway for industrial subsidies, but does not change it.

This paradigm is not blind to social concerns. But here, too, a mindset favoring technical fixes prevails. To make carbon pricing palatable, introduce a carbon dividend. To address energy poverty, establish a means-tested monetary benefit. To assuage unemployment fears in the fossil fuel industry, create a green skills training program. The list goes on. While filling an important gap, these policies are an eerie echo of the so-called Third Way espoused in the 1990s and early 2000s. Back then, voters were told not to worry about losing their jobs to automation and globalization. New and better opportunities were on the horizon. Workers could sign up for retraining programs and welfare benefits would sustain them until they gained in-demand skills.

We know how that story ended. It turns out that well-paid jobs can disappear and be replaced by low-paid, insecure work. Entire regions can experience long-lasting decline, which is what happened in many advanced economies. Having lived through this, many workers voted

accordingly. Climate policy must not fall into the same trap. The rising tide of decarbonization, like globalization and automation before it, will not automatically lift all boats. There is certainly no trade-off between prosperity and climate protection in the long term; we can only thrive on a healthy planet. But in the transition period, moving away from fossil fuels will increase costs and economic instability, owing to higher energy prices, temporary bottlenecks, shifting trade patterns or financial instability.

Only a fundamental change of mindset can head off Third Way 2.0. Decarbonization must be accompanied by good jobs, high wages and economic security, and no region can be left behind. An economy-wide problem requires linking climate policy with broader economic and fiscal policies. Focusing exclusively on emissions reduction misses the forest for the trees. While a climate dividend may benefit low-income households, investing in education will likely lead to better jobs and higher wages across the board. Likewise, improving public sector pay and employment conditions - which, compared to other EU

countries, are relatively poor in Germany - will strengthen labor market standards. And a resurgence of regional policy, building on EU programs like the Social Climate Fund or the older Cohesion Fund, may be needed to ensure that prosperity is distributed evenly within and across countries.

An economy-wide approach may seem unnecessarily complex, but there is no shortcut. Stopping climate change will require drastic shifts in human behavior and our economies. If these imperatives collide with widespread precarity, both people and governments can quickly be overwhelmed. This became apparent during last year's cost-of-living crisis. Even in Germany, 40 percent of the population had no substantial savings to fall back on. When higher energy and food prices struck and inflation reached three to four times its normal level, the German government, like others in Europe, had no choice but to provide massive fiscal support. One need not be a fiscal hawk to recognize that launching support packages of this magnitude whenever the climate transition hits a rocky patch is unsustainable. Preemptive

action would be more efficient than relying on bailouts. Reducing economic fear and anxiety would also help to build majorities for an accelerated climate transition itself.

Achieving permanent full employment, good wages even at the bottom of the distribution, and hence economic security requires a new approach to fiscal rules. Short-term spending capacity is not the issue - fiscal rules in the EU have proven their flexibility in recent emergencies. Rather, at the European level, preemptive action requires overcoming the unhelpful obsession with national governments' debt-to-gross domestic product ratio. Instead, policymakers should focus on more relevant macroeconomic indicators like the primary fiscal balance (which excludes debt service), as well as more meaningful indicators of long-term prosperity, such as the zero-carbon readiness of the bloc's assets. In Germany, where the debt brake is constitutional, preemptive action could take the form of moving away from a largely backward-looking calculation of potential output and securing appropriate financing vehicles for municipal investments.

The goal, in other words, must be to reform fiscal

rules and structures from the European to the municipal level, thereby ensuring suitable structural budgets for the next decade. Finally, barring a return to pre-COVID-19 secular stagnation, the aim cannot be simply to pour more money into the system. Instead, in addition to improving planning processes to accelerate supply-side adjustment, the tax system must be revamped to phase out fossil fuel subsidies and manage any excess demand arising from an economy-wide approach.

Fighting climate change requires more than fast-tracking decarbonization and developing green technologies. It calls for linking climate policy to a bigger policy toolkit that enhances economic security. After the pandemic and more than a decade of anemic growth, too many people remain economically vulnerable. People everywhere require good jobs, higher incomes and the ability to cushion shocks with their own savings - at least as a first line of defense. Climate activists marching with labor unions understand this. So does US President Joe Biden, who made headlines with the soundbite, "When I think climate action, I think jobs." It is high time for the EU to follow suit.

# Stop victim-blaming Russian refugees

Konstantin Sonin

ANOTHER day, another round of criticism of Russian refugees. Since the Kremlin sent tanks over the border last year, Russians who fled abroad in protest at the war are regularly attacked for their perceived imperialism - or their apparent indifference to the terrible death and destruction in Ukraine. From exiled opposition leaders and actors to academics and commentators, anyone attacked in this way is immediately swamped by a wave of online hostility.

While some of this criticism goes too far, some of it is undoubtedly fair. Either way, it is still victim-blaming. Can you compare what Ukrainians have experienced and what Russian refugees have experienced during the war in Ukraine? No, they are from different universes. Ukrainians are slaughtered by Russian missiles and bombs; they are killed, raped and tortured by occupying forces; Ukrainian kids are kidnapped and brainwashed in

Russian captivity; Ukrainian cities and villages are destroyed. It is true that refugees from Russia have lost their homes, jobs, wealth, social connections and cannot visit their parents and relatives - but they are not being bombed, tortured or killed.

Still, Russian refugees are victims. Telling them that they are not victims is like telling a woman who has been beaten up by her husband: "It's OK, he didn't kill you." We are lesser victims, but victims nonetheless. Blaming us for what happened to them is nothing less than victim-blaming. When I was in Kyiv last month, every person I spoke to - and I spoke to dozens - had friends or relatives who volunteered to fight in 2022. Many had gone to funerals for loved ones killed in the war. In contrast, not one Russian - either abroad or in Moscow - with whom I have spoken over the last year has had a loved one die in Ukraine. And my social circles in Kyiv and

Moscow are basically the same - academics, students, journalists, intellectuals and businesspeople.

Put another way: the Russian elite's direct exposure to the war is far more limited than that of their Ukrainian counterparts. This is likely one of the reasons that some Russians become fixated on their own small tragedies and forget about the bigger tragedy unfolding in Ukraine. Still, their small tragedies are real tragedies nonetheless. Some Russian refugees are rich, some are well-connected, some are talented and have no problems finding a well-paid, permanent job abroad. Some of them look happy and sound cheerful. This does not mean they are not refugees. They are still refugees. Blaming them for being happy or carefree is like saying: "I can't believe she was abused at home. She's always looked so happy and cheerful."

I would even extend this logic to a widely despised category - very rich

Russian exiles. Of course, it's hard to feel empathy for a person sitting in London or Dubai with billions of dollars in investments and properties. Yet, some of these people have seen their lives totally ruined by the Ukraine war and its fallout. A lot of money that was made in Russia in the 2000s was not made from privatizing resources on the cheap or profiteering from state contracts (like Putin's friends). A lot of rich Russian exiles actually earned their money by building new businesses - particularly in telecommunications, retail and financial services. Some of them thought they were helping to build a new, better Russia. The war destroyed their dreams and their life's work lies in ruins - even if they still live in palaces and fly around the world in their private jets. While they might appear last in a list of victims, they are, nonetheless, victims.

Russian refugees are

easy targets. When you criticize Putin, his erstwhile supporters, his agents or useful idiots in the West, you run certain risks. Perhaps you will find yourself attacked by an army of paid trolls or suffer the vitriol of Russian internet Nazis - you may even attract the attention of the Russian state. On the other hand, when you criticize Russian refugees for doing nothing, focusing on their troubles or just looking happy, there will be no trolls, no vitriol and no attention from the Russian state. Last and by no means least, some Russian refugees do share responsibility for the current regime and the war in Ukraine. As a Russian public intellectual and as a university professor in my past life in Moscow, I feel this responsibility. Maybe if I'd written more columns, done more public lectures or spoken even more critically about Putin and his regime, it would have made a difference. Maybe not. In my experience, many Russian intellectuals in exile are thinking along similar lines

at the moment. Yet, even if they are deemed responsible for not doing enough to stop the war, they are still victims. It almost goes without saying: If you can help, you should help Ukrainians who are in far more dire need than anyone else in this war. If you have money to donate - donate to those who are defending Ukraine on the battlefield, those who are providing medical help to Ukrainian victims of the Russian invasion, those who are sustaining Ukraine's universities in these terrible times, those who support Ukrainians who have lost their homes and so on. The needs of those suffering the most come first.

But supporting and helping refugees from Russia is also a good deed. When looking at which scholars to help after the outbreak of the war, my current employer, the University of Chicago, of course prioritized Ukrainians. Yet after Ukrainians, it also offered help to Russian refugees. That is how it should be.

The Moscow Times



# Reality is Sunak’s enemy in this endless Tory campaign

Rafael Behr

**THE Conservative party has supplied Britain with as many prime ministers since 2010 as Labour managed in the whole of the 20th century. It is a tally that describes ruthless effectiveness at keeping power and a dismal record of doing anything useful with it. The high leadership turnover - four in the past four years - is a symptom of failure at everything except the art of avoiding responsibility and deflecting blame. That is the craft Rishi Sunak must master to have a chance of staying in office after the next general election.**

The biggest obstacles will be economic stagnation and degraded public services. The combination induces national despondency. Too many people feel poorer now than they did at the start of the Tories' 13-year run to believe that the remedy is more of the same. But that won't be the pitch. A benefit of changing leaders is the opportunity to pretend that a new prime minister represents a fresh start. The downside to resetting the clock is a tacit admission that previous leaders did little to justify them staying in office and a lot to make their defenestration urgent.

Sunak embodies that contradiction. He dare not govern in explicit emulation of Liz Truss, Boris Johnson, Theresa May or David Cameron, but his room for manoeuvre is circumscribed by the accumulated inheritance of their mistakes. The prime minister does have two discernible achievements to his name, both of which are corrections of grievous errors by his immediate predecessors. He put out the bonfire of financial credibility lit by Truss and he replaced Johnson's toddler tactics with adult diplomacy in relations with the European Union. That still leaves him with an unpopular fiscal policy of

rationing resources to a public sector already enfeebled by austerity, and a Brexit policy defensible only as palliation of a chronic syndrome debilitating the economy.

With a general election due before 2025, Sunak doesn't have time to build a substantial record in government. He will struggle to clear even the low bar he set for himself - five promises to be fulfilled without "tricks or ambiguity" - at the start of this year. Already there is ambiguity. Tricks will follow. When it comes to "stopping the boats" that illegally ferry migrants across the Channel, the prime minister will not commit to any measure of boat-stoppage by election time. "It is a complicated problem where there is no single, simple solution," Sunak has said, spelling out a banal truth of all migration policy that happens to be absent from the law his government is passing to meet its headline goal.

The bill is conceived more as a campaign aid than a workable policy measure. It flouts international law and mandates detention and deportations on a scale that couldn't practically be achieved even if they were legal. But the function of such a law is to demonstrate ferocity of intent to stop boats and to solicit opposition from the Labour leader, Keir Starmer, which can be narrated as softness on an issue where target voters want toughness. Once enacted, the law's secondary function kicks in: provoking a culture war skirmish with any judicial authority that dares to insist that the British state meet its obligations to respect refugees' human rights. If that authority is European, all the better. Laws written for the purpose of stirring controversy can only achieve that aim at the expense of good government. The need to

broadcast a blunt message to voters with limited appetite for policy nuance militates against sophisticated, evidence-driven solutions to problems that are, as Sunak says, complicated.

There is a normal tension between easy promises made at election time and their difficult subsequent realisation by the winning side. Democracy is supposed to manage that tension across an electoral cycle. In theory, there is a period between ballots where governments make hard choices, inflict disappointments and broker compromises. Then they return to the country after four or five years to ask whether the trade-off has been worth it.

But that slack phase of the cycle, when the screech of a campaign gives way to the hum of policy delivery, has been absent from British politics in recent years. Between 2015 and 2020 there were three general elections and a referendum. In the past eight years, Labour and the Tories have held six leadership contests between them, not counting Sunak's recent coronation. Every one of these party ballots required dishonesty from candidates about the challenges ahead. They privileged activist bases that are not representative of the mainstream electorate when setting the terms of debate.

In Scotland, the frenzy started even earlier with the 2014 independence referendum and has been sustained at a higher pitch because the Westminster cycle is punctuated with Holyrood elections. One reason the Scottish National party finds itself now in a state of financial crisis and political turmoil is over-reliance on the campaign ideal of independence as a motor force to counteract the weight of incumbency. Operating in perpetual campaign mode

allowed the SNP to defer judgment of its record on the state of Scottish schools, hospitals and transport links. Nicola Sturgeon's talents as a communicator and her iron grip on the party apparatus defied political gravity which, since her departure, has struck back. Sunak faces the same foe on a bigger scale. Unlike the SNP, Tory nationalists won their emancipatory plebiscite. But victory wasn't followed by transition out of campaign mode. The promises made to leave voters could not be honoured by the process of leaving the EU, which meant Brexit could never be declared a triumph and the hunt for saboteurs had to begin almost immediately. It has evolved into a wider campaign against anyone who dares to assert that policies born of Eurosceptic delusion might fail in practical application.

The ideological core of British Conservatism now shades into conspiracy theory - joining the dots between disparate agents of liberal and leftwing opinion in politics, media, culture and academia to make a pattern of counter-revolutionary obstruction. This is the ethos that leads Conservative MPs to assert that an independent report finding Dominic Raab guilty of bullying his staff is actually the opposite: a story of vindictive civil servants refusing submission to the robust managerial methods of a man whose practical accomplishments in three cabinet roles spanning five years add up, in a generous audit, to none. Sunak chooses to ignore the contradiction here. He wants to be the prime minister whose business is serious, problem-solving government, while also riding the campaign bus fuelled with denial of governing reality. He styles himself as the leader who brought the Conservatives down to earth, when he is their latest trick for defying gravity.



## Putin has already lost in Ukraine

Hamish De Bretton-Gordon & Tobias Ellwood

**WHEN the war in Ukraine ends, Russia will be irrelevant. Putin's army has been decimated on the fields of east Ukraine; other than Moscow's nuclear forces, Putin - or more likely his successor - will have nothing left with which to threaten the West, especially once Finland, Sweden, and Ukraine have joined the Nato bulwark.**

Even these weapons will be of no practical use. The much-vaunted Russian nuclear arsenal is impotent against the Western nuclear deterrent. Given the state of Moscow's other forces, there are genuine questions over exactly how much of it even works. And, of course, the Kremlin has shown no understanding of how to actually deploy these threats to achieve its goals. So far, it's achieved the exact opposite of what it was supposed to; Putin's threats of Armageddon have encouraged the west to arm Ukraine to the teeth and expand NATO eastwards. Russia is over, bar the shooting. Tomorrow's threat lies in Asia, and like an unseen pathogen is creeping up on us all but unnoticed by many. While Putin dominates the headlines, the recent MOD "Integrated Review Refresh" rightly identified China as the major threat to UK and NATO defence and security.

Beijing has invested vast sums in building a massive modern army, navy and air force. It is intent on a massive expansion in its stock of nuclear warheads. Its 'belt and road' initiatives, particularly across Africa, seem like a modern form of colonialism aimed at making countries reliant on the goodwill of the CCP while resources are extracted and sites for military ports identified. And, of course, there are the unconventional capabilities of the state. It now seems most likely that the Covid-19 pandemic was caused by some sort of accident at the Wuhan virology lab. The Chinese state has gone to extraordinary lengths to prevent any proper investigation which might confirm this, and other labs remain shrouded in secrecy. Some may well be conducting dangerous "gain of function" experimentation with pathogens, with potential military applications. As we saw just three years ago, these can bring a country to its knees faster than any amount of military hardware.

Hardware which, incidentally, we may well lack. Right now, Ukraine is dominating our political, military and security apparatus. Vladimir Putin is the most dangerous man in Europe, and it is right that he is stopped. But a relatively small event in Sudan, which almost passed by unnoticed, has now seen our diminutive and over-stretched military straining to get a few hundred Brits to safety in Cyprus. This should be a wake-up call; we need a military that isn't just for show, but can effectively protect these Isles.

After all, new threats will come. China has been eyeing Taiwan like a shark eyes a seal. Our two massive aircraft carriers do not seem quite the "white elephants" they did a few years ago, and it is good that we have some capabilities to lend to Western efforts in the region. But China in security terms is like an iceberg; we can all see its military expansion above the waterline, but what is happening below is vast, dangerous, and not entirely obvious.

For too long we have been happy to accept the economic benefits of trade and investment flows with China while turning a blind eye to the potent security risks this poses. The bill is now coming due. Beijing is the most worrying threat to global stability by some margin. It is now time to stop talking about China as a security threat, but to actively start to mitigate it. Fortunately for us, the strange brand of Chinese communism has capitalist economic principles at its heart. The best way to prevent oxygenated economic blood feeding Chinese expansion is to clamp the arteries that feed it; the US and European markets that funnel cash back towards Beijing. Any squeeze on Chinese market access will deny China the resources it needs to expand financially and politically. While military force will have a vital role to play, the economic juggler is what will matter most in the long run.

# Simon Rattle is right: Britain is becoming a cultural desert

Martin Kettle

**CLASSICAL music will rarely have a larger audience or a more exalted place than at the coronation next week. And yet, like so much that occurs in Westminster Abbey on 6 May, it will send a misleading message about the kind of country that Britain now is. For Simon Rattle is incontestably right in what he said this week: classical music in this country is "fighting for its existence".**

Over the decades, Arts Council England (ACE) and the BBC have done more to sustain classical music and the other performing arts than anyone. But there is nothing coincidental about ACE now taking the knife to the nation's orchestras and opera companies, and the BBC's attempt to kill off the BBC Singers and slash spending on its orchestras. As Rattle put it in his cry from the heart in London, these cuts are "rooted in political choices".

Those choices are made by government. Yes, Nicholas Serota at the Arts Council and Tim Davie at the BBC are the chief executives carrying out these cuts, and both men should have fought them far, far harder than they did. In the end, though, they are bending the knee to ministers who seem willfully indifferent to the fate of Britain's musicians and the performing arts, and who at times can appear actively hostile to them. There is absolutely nothing inevitable about the cuts and choices that Rattle denounces. No

one disputes that Britain's public finances are suffering. No one is unconcerned that the NHS and schools are on the rack too. Our country is in trouble; we all get that. But only in the arts is public spending so umbilically part of a culture war.

Countries similar to ours are making diametrically different choices. France has just increased its culture budget by 7% and now spends £3.86bn on culture, a record. Germany has also recently boosted arts spending by 7%, after the culture minister told the Bundestag that the government was "specifically strengthening the arts, culture and media in the face of the unprecedented crises of our time". By comparison, ACE now spends £446m a year in England. It is a minor miracle - no, actually, it's a major one - that classical music manages to maintain as big a presence in British life as it does. This is partly because, on classical music, we so often default to a poisonous argument about elitism when we should be talking about access and opportunity to a wonderful art form. Our Murdochised media, with its diminished arts coverage, does not help.

It wasn't always like this. The opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics depicted a capacious British culture, accessible to all and appealing in multiple registers. That's disappeared now. The gates have gone back up. This doesn't happen in other places. In many western countries, young people are given government vouchers to use on arts spending. That would be inconceivable here. But the killer is the deliberate and strategic meanness over spending. As Rattle said, musicians have long been brilliant at doing more with less. But there is a limit to what even they can manage. A survey in November found 98% of British musicians concerned about having enough income and 90% worried about being able to afford food. Many are abandoning the profession.

The government is not just turning the screw on today's musicians; it is also choking off the prospects for tomorrow's. Music and the arts are excluded from the EBacc curriculum that ministers want 90% of secondary pupils to be studying by 2025. They have no place in the attainment 8 and progress 8 measures by which schools are rated. Headteachers are under pressure to ditch subjects by which they are not judged. This may not actually be a conscious conspiracy to eradicate music, but the effect makes it look like one. The decline of music in schools inevitably means tougher times for music colleges. I am a governor at Trinity Laban Conservatoire for Music and Dance in south London. What I see and hear there is one of the joys of my life. The standards are world class, and the creativity level amazingly high. I'm proud

that a higher proportion of our students come from state schools and different ethnic backgrounds than at equivalent colleges.

But our governors' meetings these days are dominated not by music but by money - the lost income after Brexit, the freeze in student fees, the cuts to London weighting, the surge in pension costs - and the ravages of inflation. The ingenuity that goes into overcoming these problems is heroic. But it feels as if we are battling to keep the doors open for young musicians and dancers in the midst of a hurricane that continually threatens to slam them shut. There is something very wrong indeed with a country that disparages the creative arts in this way. No one is saying that symphony orchestras matter more than cancer treatment units. But the real-world consequence of government policy is that the arts in general, and classical music in particular, are being deliberately moved into a place from which the vast majority of people will effectively be barred.

The next government should have the courage to be as outraged by this as Rattle. If Keir Starmer becomes prime minister, there will be pressure on him from many quarters. But a prime minister who can play Beethoven sonatas on the piano, as Starmer reportedly can, is better equipped than most to understand why music and the arts have to remain an integral part of the better Britain that we so badly need to become.

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# Local solutions should come first in Syria

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

**SINCE Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan's visit to Damascus last week, the discourse in the international community has centered on whether or not to talk to Bashar Assad. Actually, what the international community should do is move from a normative discourse to a more practical one. It should talk to whoever makes a difference on the ground.**

The UN-backed meetings in Geneva are not representative of the people, nor can they make a difference on the ground. Assad, despite the claim he has control over 70 percent of the country, in reality has no real control over any part of the country. His army is nothing but a collection of gangs and fragments ruled by Assad-affiliated warlords that take the name "shabiha." The only two legions that have a cohesive command and control structure are the 4th Armored Division of Maher Assad, which is under Iranian control, and the Tiger Forces commanded by Suhail Al-Hassan that take orders directly from the Russian base of Hmeimim. So, even if Assad agreed to anything, would he be able to enforce it? Not really. On the other hand, the opposition that meets in Geneva, how much are they in touch with the people on the ground? Again, if they agree to anything, could they enforce it on the ground? Is the armed opposition accountable to them? Not really, the armed opposition is as fragmented as the Syrian army and is only accountable to its foreign

backers.

This is only regarding the domestic actors. If we talk about the regional and global players, the situation gets even more complicated. Can we have an agreement whereby the US, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel and Iran are all on the same page regarding Syria? Very unlikely. There is no one solution for the entirety of Syria simply because the landscape is not the same in the different parts of the country. The landscape in the northeast is different from Idlib, which is also different from the southwest and the areas bordering Lebanon. The actors are also different. Jordan is very active in the southwest because it is next to its borders, whereas it has no presence in Idlib.

In this respect, the international community should set clear, achievable goals and realize that Syria cannot be fixed and become a modern, democratic state as a result of a deal signed in Geneva. The goals should be to stabilize the security situation, ensure the safe return of refugees and jumpstart the local economy so that people can sustain themselves. Once those basic goals are achieved, then the international community can have the luxury of talking about political systems and democracy. To achieve those three basic goals, a deal needs to be brokered with actors on the ground. In fact, in this approach, at least four deals need to be brokered, each one with dif-

ferent actors.

In the southwestern Deraa region, the international actors are Israel, Jordan and Russia. Israel and Jordan need to have their borders secured. Russia is the one that brokered a deal between opposition groups and the regime in July 2018. The main group, Quwaa Shabab Al-Sunna, which was rebranded as the 8th Brigade, is still very much in charge of the security of the area, of course under Russian tutelage. Hence, the Russian-brokered deal should allow refugees to negotiate an agreement regarding their safe return. In parallel, a plan should be laid out to allow for local development with the involvement of the community. Regarding the areas around Lebanon, a deal should be clinched with the Iranians and Hezbollah to allow refugees to return. Hezbollah would want to cover its back and make sure no hostile force is at its doorstep.

As for the northeast, the Americans have a moral obligation toward their Kurdish allies, who were instrumental in pushing back against Daesh and still today guard the prisons housing extremists. However, the Americans need to apply pressure to their Kurdish partners to make sure they share power with their Arab neighbors and offer security guarantees to Turkey. As for Idlib, the main power in control here is Turkey. Idlib also has a high concentration of internally displaced people. When the Russians came to save

Assad in 2015, the armed opposition groups had the choice of either reconciling with the regime or taking the green buses to Idlib. The Russian plan was to concentrate the opposition in one place, separate it from the regime and make a truce between them. It could then broker a deal between Assad and the opposition that would stabilize the country and allow Moscow to reap the benefits of its intervention. However, events did not go as expected and Assad kept playing the Russians off against the Iranians in an attempt to remain relevant. Since then, Idlib has gathered all of the opposition to Assad. Today, they are under Turkish influence. This is why Idlib should be the last area to be handled. Once the other areas of the country are stabilized, then it can be tackled and an orderly return of internally displaced people from Idlib to all the different areas of Syria can be planned.

Given the chaotic situation the country is currently experiencing, the fragmented security situation and the lack of any legitimate representatives of the Syrian people, it is very unrealistic, even pedantic, for the international community to ask the Syrians to agree among themselves and find a settlement that will end the war and transition Syria into a democracy. So, the international community should move from the frame of mind of a comprehensive solution to a series of localized solutions. Once local solutions are found, the Syrian people themselves can find a solution for the entire country.

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# Pakistan and UAE discuss food security initiatives

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Minister of State and Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Public Communication and Digital Platforms, Fahd Haroon, met with H.E. Bakheet Al Romaithi, United Arab Emirates Consul General in Karachi. They both discussed the importance of public communication in raising awareness about food security and the impacts of climate change. The meeting centered around the UAE food program for Pakistan, initiated by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

During the meeting, Mr. Haroon also informed a visiting media delegation from the UAE about the initiatives taken by Pakistan,



particularly in the Sindh province, to combat food insecurity. The Consul General expressed satisfaction with the cooperation between the government of Sindh and UAE on the 'Emirates Humanitarian' medical campaign in Pakistan's southern Sindh province to provide health facilities to the poor.

Pakistan and UAE have a long history of friendly relations, with the UAE serving as a trusted ally for Pakistan. The UAE Pakistan Assistance Programme (UAE-PAP) reflects His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan's love for the people of Pakistan. The program has provided assistance in various social and humanitarian fields, including health, poverty alleviation, education, and disaster relief.

According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Acute Malnutrition analysis, acute

malnutrition is at a Critical level in eight districts in Sindh and at a Serious level in one district. The UAE's food assistance program aims to address this pressing issue. As per the data, the overall malnutrition prevalence in Pakistan is 38.3%, with 17.7 million stunted and 9.7 million wasted children under five years of age.

In the past, UAE has executed several humanitarian assistance programs in Pakistan, including the UAE Polio Vaccination Campaign, which vaccinated over 86 million Pakistani children under the age of five between 2014 and December 2020. UAE's assistance in the healthcare sector has helped Pakistan combat various diseases and increase life expectancy.

Pakistan and the UAE share a strong trade relationship with a significant Pakistani population resid-

ing in the UAE. According to the State Bank of Pakistan, Pakistan received \$531.4 million in remittances from the UAE in 2022. The UAE is Pakistan's biggest trading partner in the Middle East and North Africa region, with exports from the UAE to Pakistan amounting to \$7.13 billion in 2021. The main products exported from the UAE to Pakistan were refined petroleum, crude petroleum, and scrap iron. During the last 18 years, exports of the UAE to Pakistan have increased at an annualized rate of 9.57%, from \$1.38 billion in 2003 to \$7.13 billion in 2021.

Pakistan exported \$1.28 billion worth of products to the UAE in 2021, with refined petroleum, bovine meat, and rice being the primary products. The exports of Pakistan to the UAE have increased at an annualized rate of 0.74%, from \$1.12 billion in 2003 to \$1.28 billion in 2021.

The meeting between Mr. Haroon and the Consul General reflects the shared commitment of Pakistan and UAE to address food insecurity and improve the well-being of vulnerable populations.

The UAE's food assistance program, along with Pakistan's initiatives in the Sindh province, will help address the issue of malnutrition in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chairing a meeting on reforms in Energy Sector at Finance Division.

## Dar chairs meeting on reforms in Energy Sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Saturday chaired a meeting on reforms in Energy Sector.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Pasha, Secretary Finance, Secretary Petroleum, Auditor General of Pakistan, MD SSGCL, MDs, CEOs of Sui Companies and senior officers from Finance and Petroleum Divisions attended the meeting, said a press release issued here.

The meeting conversed about the ongoing issues in the Energy sector and discussed viable proposals to introduce reforms in the energy sector in order to improve cash-flow, specifically in the gas sector.

The Finance Minister urged the relevant authorities in Petroleum Division, Sui Companies and PSO to make necessary efforts to improve their liquidity as early as possible.

He emphasized that it was the priority of the government to address the issues of liquidity and performance of SOEs of the energy sector to enhance economic growth of the country.

## Jiangsu sees GDP up 4.7% in Q1

NANJING (APP): The gross domestic product of east China's Jiangsu Province grew by 4.7 percent year on year in the first quarter of 2023, exceeding 2.9 trillion yuan (about 419.7 billion US dollars), according to the provincial statistical bureau.

The added values of Jiangsu's primary, secondary, and tertiary industries in the first quarter were 63.4 billion yuan, 1.25 trillion yuan, and 1.6 trillion yuan, respectively, up 3 percent, 4.5 percent, and 5 percent year on year.

Over the period, Jiangsu's fixed-asset investment went up 5 percent year on year. Industrial investment and infrastructure investment increased by 8.3 percent and 8.7 percent year on year, respectively.

Driven by an array of measures to boost consumption, Jiangsu also saw its total retail sales of consumer goods reach 1.17 billion yuan, up 7.8 percent year on year over the first three months, with the catering sector growing by 16.2%.

# Inflation further decimates masses' purchasing power

KARACHI (PPI): The record high inflation continued to add miseries to the poverty-stricken people during the week ending on April 27 and further decimated people's purchasing power.

The weekly inflation rose by 46.82 percent year-on-year and 0.15 percent week-on-week during the seven-day period ending on April 27, reported Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) in its weekly bulletin.

The national data collecting agency attributed the increase in the sensitive price indicator (SPI) to the rise in prices of potatoes (8.22pc), chicken (1.75pc), wheat flour (1.55pc), gur (1.23pc), bread (1.13pc), and rice irri-6/9 (1.01pc).

However, the items

which witnessed a decrease in prices during the last week were tomatoes (19.20pc), Bananas (5.39pc), Onions (1.40pc), Sugar (1.19pc), LPG (1.09pc), Pulse masoor (0.98pc) and Mustard oil with a decrease of 0.39%.

For the week under review, SPI was recorded at 252.20 points against 251.83 points registered last week and 171.78 points recorded during the week ended on April 28, 2022.

Fahad Rauf, head of research at Ismail Iqbal Securities said that SPI went up moderately mainly because of an increase in the prices of potatoes and mutton.

The price trend of perishable food items during the Eid week has been

mixed, with prices of potatoes, chicken, and mutton went up and prices of tomatoes, bananas, and onions went down.

Commodities with the highest weights for the lowest quintile include Milk (17.5449pc), Electricity (8.3627pc), wheat flour (6.1372pc), sugar (5.1148pc), firewood (5.0183pc), long cloth (4.2221pc) and vegetable ghee with weightage of 3.2833pc.

Of these commodities, the price of milk and wheat flour increased; sugar decreased; whereas prices of electricity, firewood, long cloth and vegetable ghee remained unchanged. However, the prices of all these commodities went up on a yearly basis.

# Global stocks mostly up as yen tumbled

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Global stock markets mostly rose Friday following modestly positive economic data in Europe and the United States, while the yen tumbled after the Bank of Japan maintained its easing policies.

European equities ended the session in positive territory after a morning in the red, shrugging off official data confirming that the eurozone economy only just eked out growth in the first three months of the year. Wall Street followed a similar pattern, getting past early weakness to push higher for a second straight day.

"It's a little bit of a relief trade," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare, adding that investors remain "a little guarded."

The week's economic data was "okay," said O'Hare, who noted that earnings from influential technology US companies largely met expectations and in some cases exceeded them.

The Federal Reserve's favored measure, the annual personal consumption expenditures price index, eased to 4.2 percent in March from a revised 5.1 percent a month earlier, with a sharp decline recorded in energy prices, according to data released by the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

"Today's PCE data was pretty much as expected but is trending in a good direction for those hoping for

inflation to moderate," analysts for Charles Schwab said in a note.

Most analysts expect the Fed to again lift interest rates by a quarter-point on Wednesday in response to inflation. The United States on Thursday revealed that the economy had slowed more than expected in the first quarter.

Hard on its heels were Friday's official data showing the eurozone economy expanded just 0.1 percent in the first quarter over the previous three months, as high inflation and interest rates weigh on activity.

"The very small increase in (eurozone) GDP... means a technical recession has been avoided by a whisker," noted Capital Economics' chief Europe economist Andrew Kenningham. "However, the economy has essentially stalled as domestic demand has been hit hard by the energy shock followed by monetary tightening."

Germany, the EU's biggest economy, saw growth stagnate at zero percent over the previous quarter.

The yen, meanwhile, fell sharply after the Bank of Japan announced a review of its longstanding monetary easing measures, but said it would maintain them for the time being in the first policy decision under new governor Kazuo Ueda.

Ueda has previously called the BoJ's current stance "appropriate" and

warned of the risk of sudden moves, given global economic uncertainty.

Ryutaro Kono, chief economist at BNP Paribas, predicted that the central bank could drop its negative interest-rate policy towards the end of 2024 or later, when the global economy is expected to see clear recovery.

## SCCI team meets minister

SIALKOT (APP): A delegation of Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), led by Chairman Sialkot International Airport Limited (SIAL) Khawaja Masud Akhtar, visited the Punjab Small Industries Corporation (PSIC) Headquarters in Lahore and met Caretaker Provincial Minister for Industries, Commerce, Investment and Skills Development SM Tanveer. The delegation discussed constitution of the Board of Management (BoM) of PSIC Small Industries Estate-I Sialkot with the minister, who approved the names of BoM, nominated by the SCCI. A notification was also issued in this regard.

The BoM would take care of the issues being faced by the industrial units, set up at the Small Industries Estate-I Sialkot, said a spokesperson.

# ICCI, NPC to work for uplift of local economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that ICCI would work with National Press Club (NPC) for the better development of the city and uplift of the local economy.

He said this while visiting NPC, Islamabad, to congratulate its newly-elected office bearers.

He lauded the role of NPC for the welfare of the journalistic community and stressed that the government should provide better facilities to the journalists to enable them to serve the nation more effectively.

He demanded that CDA and all housing societies in Islamabad should reserve a specific quota of plots at discounted rates for the business community, journalists, lawyers and labour class. He said that NPC should cooperate in highlighting the key issues of the business community that would help in better growth of business activities.

He assured that ICCI would cooperate with NPC in resolving the issues of the journalistic fraternity.

Anwar Raza President, Azhar Jatui Senior Vice President and Khalil Ahmed Raja Secretary, NPC thanked the ICCI delegation for visiting to congratulate them.

They said that the business community is playing an important role in the economic development of the country and NPC will extend its support in highlighting their key issues.

Both sides discussed problems being faced by the economy and agreed to make joint efforts for their redress. They also agreed to maintain close liaison to promote the business and economic interests of Pakistan.

Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that both bodies are working for a common cause to serve their members and stressed for closer cooperation between them to achieve their common goals more effectively.

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG called for a think tank of business, journalistic & lawyers' communities and labor unions.

He said that the drive against corruption in Pakistan has badly damaged the image of the country, affected the economy, disappointed the youth and discouraged investment.

He stressed that such activities should be banned in the media.

Afzal Butt, President PFUIJ said that NPC and ICCI would make joint efforts for resolving the issues of the city and economy. He said that ICCI had organized a successful all-parties conference in collaboration with NPC and said that both bodies should work together in future to promote the country's national interests.

Muhammad Shabbir Malik, Raja Imtiaz Abbasi, Khalid Chaudhry, Muhammad Naveed Malik, Saif ur Rehman Khan, Babar Chaudhry and others were in the ICCI delegation. A. Nazir Charan, Ghazanfar Abbas & Myra Imran Vice Presidents, Ms. Nayyar Ali Finance Secretary, Aslam Lukra, Waqar Abbas, Tallat Farooq and Ms. Shakila Jaleel Joint Secretary, NPC and others were also present at the occasion.

# SECP announces 4th cohort under its Regulatory Sandbox

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) will be accepting applications for testing in the Regulatory Sandbox from May 02, 2023. The applications submission window shall remain open till May 31, 2023, said a press release issued here.

The Regulatory Sandbox – now successfully entering its fourth Cohort – provides

a tailored regulatory environment that allows entities to conduct limited scale live tests of innovative products, services, processes, and business models in a controlled and supervised environment.

The upcoming fourth cohort is divided into two segments: (i) Islamic Finance; and (ii) Conventional Finance.

In Islamic Finance seg-

ment, ideas related to Shariah-compliant digital finance (e.g., crowd-sourced finance, liquidity management solutions, micro- and nano-finance), shariah-compliant products (e.g., small ticket savings and sukuk fractionalization), new takaful models and digital intermediation in regulated Islamic financial services shall be preferred.

Serving the nation with one of the largest branch networks in Pakistan

UBL continues to serve its expanding customer base with a footprint of 1,343 branches (Pakistan: 1,335), deposits of over Rs. 2.1 trillion and net advances of Rs. 711 billion as at Mar'23. In 2023, the bank's focus remained on building its core deposits with a robust growth of 12% in average current deposits. As a result, the average current to total deposits ratio improved to 47.1% in Q1'23 (up from 45%) and strong CASA ratio of 90%.

UBL remains committed to playing its intermediation role within the economy, with average performing advances growing by 31% to Rs. 826 billion

mainly due to strong build up across the Corporate segments. The Bank continued its build up in business scale across the Islamic banking space as the segment loan book averaged Rs. 84 billion for Q1'23, growing by 36%.

UBL Ameen - Islamic business scaling up well with wider footprint in target markets

Islamic banking remains a key priority and UBL continues to expand within this fast-growing segment. UBL Ameen's branch network stands at 150 branches and is further supported by over 500 Islamic Banking Windows (IBWs) within commercial branches (219 IBWs in Dec'22). This has led to a 15.7% year on year growth in UBL Ameen average deposit base of Rs. 169 billion

as at Mar'23. The bank sees the Islamic segment as a tremendous growth opportunity and will continue to aggressively expand UBL Ameen's footprint.

Digital Banking - Continues to earn accolades as the market leader

The Bank maintains its focus on building its award-winning digital banking services which have been acknowledged as one of the best in Pakistan. UBL's digital services envision a word class service proposition for its banking customers, with ease and convenience across all digital channels. The bank has been recognized by national and international institutions for its Mobile banking, Payment initiatives, Augmented and Virtual

Reality financial services.

In 2023, the number of financial transactions has increased by 76% accounting for almost 20 million transactions while the value of financial transactions has grown by 91% to over Rs. 1.0 trillion YTD Mar'23. In addition, 50% of the active customers of the bank have shifted towards digital channels which is a clear indication of where the future for banking services lies.

Commenting on the results, Mr. Shazad G. Dada, President & CEO of UBL saidM "Our results are a testament of the focus we place on delivering strong shareholder value to our investors and world class service to our customers. We have performed solidly across all core segments and contin-

ued to build on our technology platforms and award-winning digital banking capabilities. Our competitive edge remains in establishing ourselves as a reliable business partner to our valued clients, leveraging our network to identify growth opportunities and on our continued investment in our human resources. In these challenging times, we have been fiscally prudent and increased our vigilance on controlling costs which are reflected in the strong improvement in our cost to income ratios. However, none of this could have been achieved without the extraordinary efforts of our 13,500+ staff. I am proud of their resilience, commitment and dedication which remains at the heart of our success."

F.P. Report

KARACHI: UBL continues its momentum with solid results with Profit After Tax of Rs. 13.9 billion for Q1'23 as against Rs. 9.5 billion for Q1'22, with a growth of 46% year on year. Earnings per share (EPS) stood at Rs. 11.36 for Q1'23 compared to Rs. 7.78 for Q1'22. The Board of Directors, in their meeting held in Islamabad on April 28, 2023, declared a consistently strong dividend payout of Rs. 11.0 per share for Q1'23. UBL maintains healthy capital levels as the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) stood at 17.6% as at Mar'23, an excess of 5.6% over regulatory minimum requirements and ROE of 28% (Mar'22: 23%).

UBL records strong

growth of 49% in top line revenues & increased vigilance on costs

The Bank's gross revenues stood at Rs. 22.0 billion, growing by 49%, driven by the buildup in the deposit base and a well-positioned investment portfolio. The Bank earned net markup income of Rs. 33.3 billion in Q1'23, up 55% year on year due to a robust growth in average earning assets and improvement in Net interest margins (NIMs) from 4.3% to 5.2% in Q1'23.

Non-Fund Income (NFI) was reported at Rs. 8.8 billion for Q1'23, contributing 21% to total gross revenues. Fee and commission income of Rs. 4.3 billion was earned in Q1'23, an increase of 11% primarily from fees from branch banking operations, income

from debit and credit card fees and doubling of income from trade and guarantee business. The Bank earned foreign exchange income of Rs. 4.3 billion for Q1'23 as against Rs. 1.3 billion last year, due to proactive balance sheet positioning and active trading.

UBL remains the preferred partner to overseas Pakistanis who continue to place their trust in UBL. As a result, the Bank recorded a market share of over 21% within the home remittances space with a net commission income of Rs. 503 million earned in Q1'23.

Despite significant inflationary pressures, UBL improved its cost to income ratio to 35% from 42% last year with a tight control on expenses and continued to focus on cost saving initia-

# UBL remains at forefront with Q1'23 PBT of Rs24.4b





In brief

Fakhar becomes fastest to score 3,000 runs

RAWALPINDI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's opening batter Fakhar Zaman completed 3,000 one-day international (ODI) runs Saturday as he batted at the Pindi Cricket Stadium against New Zealand. Zaman achieved the feat after scoring 98 runs against the Kiwis in the second ODI and in a total of 67 innings, making him the fastest Asian to score as many runs. With this feat, he has equalled another cricketer's record. Before Zaman, West Indies Shai Hope smashed 3,000 ODI runs in the same number of innings. South Africa's Hashim Amla holds the record of achieving the feat fastest in 57 innings. Pakistan skipper Babar Azam has achieved the milestone in 68 innings, West Indies great Viv Richards in 98. Zaman has been in amazing form against the Kiwis in the ongoing five-match ODI series and had smashed a century in the first fixture to lead his side to victory. In March this year during the Pakistan Super League (PSL), Zaman — while representing Lahore Qalandars — became the player to hit the most sixes (100) in the history of the tournament. Zaman has represented Pakistan in three Test matches, scoring 192 runs, 76 T20I in which he was able to amass 1,433 runs, and 67 ODIs in which he smashed more than 3,000 runs.

England seal Six Nations Grand Slam

LONDON (Agencies): England sealed a Six Nations Grand Slam in front of a record women's crowd of 58,498 at Twickenham, holding on for victory against France on a landmark day for the sport. After a nervy start, Helena Rowland broke free in midfield and Abby Dow tore down the right wing to score and further fuel the already festival-like atmosphere in the London sun. With the hosts seemingly settled, four more tries followed for a 33-0 half-time lead in England women's first standalone Test at the ground. That proved enough to secure a fifth Six Nations title in a row, but the Red Roses could not push on after the break and it was France who scored five tries to their one. The announcement of the attendance — surpassing the previous mark of 42,579 set at the 2022 World Cup final in New Zealand — breathed joy back into the air and Twickenham was on its feet dancing to celebrate at full-time. In Simon Middleton's last game as head coach, England bounced back from a heart-breaking World Cup final defeat by New Zealand less than six months ago. England deliver in first half It was a familiar line-up for a Women's Six Nations Grand Slam decider, but Twickenham gameday had a whole new feel. Travelling to the ground, a smattering of England shirts at various stations across London became a swarm on the slow march to the stadium — a sight never before seen for a women's game. Initial England nerves led to a cagey, kicking-heavy gameplan and early penalties conceded by the hosts in dangerous positions. France's Jessy Tremouliere missed a kick at goal and when she kicked the next penalty to the corner, England heaved France's maul backwards and eventually won possession on the floor. The visitors' steely attack was met with physical England defence and, against the run of play, the Red Roses got on the scoreboard in the 18th minute.

# Brighton hit Wolves for six, Palace beat West Ham in thriller



LONDON (Agencies): Brighton crushed Wolves 6-0 to improve their prospects of qualifying for Europe, while Crystal Palace effectively sealed their Premier League survival with a 4-3 win against struggling West Ham on Saturday.

Beaten on penalties by Manchester United in the FA Cup semi-finals last

weekend, Brighton can erase that painful loss if they make it into the Europa League or Europa Conference League.

The eighth placed Seagulls remain in contention to do just that after recording their biggest win of an impressive season that already includes victories over Manchester United,

Liverpool and Chelsea.

Roberto De Zerbi's side went ahead in the sixth minute at the Amex Stadium through Deniz Undav's close-range effort for his first Premier League goal.

Pascal Gross struck in the 13th and 26th minutes, the second of his goals a spectacular volley that arrowed into the top corner.

Danny Welbeck's header gave Brighton four first half goals for the first time since 2016.

The former Manchester United forced scored again shortly after the restart and Undav's second was dinked finish in the 66th minute.

At Selhurst Park, Palace moved 11 points clear of the bottom three thanks to goals from Jordan Ayew, Wilfried Zaha, Jeff Schlupp and Eberechi Eze.

Roy Hodgson's team have won four of their six matches since Hodgson returned for a second spell at the club in place of the sacked Patrick Vieira.

Tomas Soucek, Michail Antonio and Nayef Aguerd were on the scoresheet for West Ham.

But a second successive defeat leaves David Moyes' men five points above the relegation zone with daunting fixtures against Manchester City and Manchester United looming next week.

- Palace power -

West Ham were in front after just nine minutes when Michael Olise headed his attempted clearance of

Jarrod Bowen's corner straight to Soucek and the midfielder fired home from close-range.

Olise made amends for his blunder as Palace equalised six minutes later.

Cheick Doucoure found Olise and the forward's superb pass picked out Ghana forward Ayew, whose first-time finish beat Lukasz Fabianski at the near post.

Zaha was back in the Palace starting line-up for the first time in four games since Hodgson's return as manager at the start of April.

The Ivory Coast forward rewarded Hodgson's decision as he netted Palace's second goal in the 20th minute with a composed strike from another dangerous Olise cross.

West Ham's porous defence was breached again after half an hour, with Soucek carelessly losing possession on the edge of the area to Schlupp, who accepted the gift with a simple finish under the exposed Fabianski.

There was no end to the first half goal spree as

Antonio reduced the deficit with a close-range header after Soucek flicked on a corner in the 36th minute.

Eze restored Palace's two-goal advantage in the 66th minute, converting a controversial penalty awarded for Aguerd's tug on his arm.

Aguerd got one back for the Hammers in the 73rd minute, helping Soucek's header into the net from virtually on the line, but it was too late to rescue a point.

Fourth bottom Nottingham Forest suffered a late collapse in a 2-1 defeat at Brentford.

Danilo marked his 22nd birthday by lashing Forest ahead from close-range in first half stoppage-time.

But Brentford equalised in the 82nd minute when Ivan Toney's free-kick bounced past a weak attempted save from Keylor Navas.

Toney's 20th top-flight goal this season was followed by Josh Dasilva's lethal finish four minutes into stoppage-time, leaving Forest just one point above the relegation zone.

## Mark Selby maintains slender lead over Allen in world snooker semi-final



SHEFFIELD (Agencies): Four-time world champion Mark Selby maintained a slender one-frame lead over Mark Allen after the third session of their World Championship semi-final.

Selby resumed with a 7-6 overnight advantage and pulled further clear with breaks of 63 and 112 as he won the first two frames on Saturday.

However, a pumped-up Allen responded with runs of 58 and 92 as he won four of the next six to trail 11-10.

Their best-of-33 match will be played to a conclusion from 19:00 BST.

The winner will face either Luca Brecel or Si Jiahui in the best-of-35 final which begins on Sunday at 13:00.

While Chinese debutant Si leads his Belgian opponent 14-10 in a free-flowing encounter that has been brimming with audacious potting and attacking snooker, Selby and Allen's contest has been the opposite.

A number of lengthy tactical exchanges have featured throughout a fiercely contested affair between players ranked second and third in the world.

The duo, who have won five ranking titles between them this season, broke the mould in the first two frames of the morning with Selby finding some fluency among the balls to open with a half-century and then compose his second century of the match.

However, with a vociferous Crucible crowd firmly behind Allen, the Northern Irishman then won the third-longest frame of the match lasting nearly 44 minutes to reduce his deficit to two frames.

Selby restored his three-frame lead with a carefully crafted 53 heading into the mid-session interval, but then missed a green in a hard-fought 18th frame which Allen won.

A dramatic 19th frame saw the Englishman break down on 30 after missing a red to the left corner and Allen go in off the blue to allow Selby an opportunity to take the frame to a respotted black.

But he ran out of position on the blue and waited it over the bottom-corner pocket allowing the nine-time ranking-event winner to claw another frame back.

The pair then traded the final two frames of the session to leave the prospect of another epic late-night finish at the Crucible.

## Prime Minister Talent Hunt Women, Men Volleyball League begins

PESHAWAR (APP): Women and Men Volleyball Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inter-Region League under Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif Youth Talent Hunt got underway here at Agriculture University Peshawar on Saturday.

Director Distance Education University of Peshawar Dr. Noor Zada and Director Sports Hazara University Khalid Jalal Shah graced the occasion as guests and formally inaugurated the Volleyball Women and Men League wherein five teams each of the Women and Men from as many Regional including Swat, Mardan, Hazara, Bannu and Peshawar are taking part. Regional Sports Officer Bannu Shafiqatullah, Peshawar Team Manager Rahim Bibi, Mardan Team Manager Mohammad Asim and other personalities were present.

Before the start of the

matches, the players were introduced to the guests. Former Pakistan team skipper Abdur Rahim Khan and national women team skipper Urooj, the two selectors were also there to select two teams each of the Women and Men to represent the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the forthcoming coming national league.

On the first day, Hazara, Bannu, Swat, Peshawar and Mardan regions participated in women's competitions, while Mardan and Bannu's teams played in men's competitions. While the duties of the scorer were performed by Yekhi Jan, umpiring Muazullah and Anwarullah supervised the matches.

According to the results of the competition, the first women's match of the league was played between Hazara and Mardan, in which the team of Hazara region won 3-1, the score

was 25-22, 23-25, 25-20 and 25-21, while the other In the match, Bannu Region defeating Swat by 3-1, the score was 29-27, 25-23, 23-25, and 25-21.

In the third match of the female, the team of Mardan defeated Swat by 3-2, the score was 25-21, 23-25, 25-22, 19-25 and 15-13 and gained the upper hand in the first match of the men's competition. In the first match of the Men League Peshawar and Mardan Region, in which the Mardan team secured victory at 3-0, the score was 25-22, 25-23 and 25-20 while in the second match, Bannu defeated Swat Region by 3-1, the score was 25-22, 21-25, 29-27 and 25-22.

It should be noted that the winning teams of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inter-Region League Women and Men will represent the province at the National League in the next round.



RAWALPINDI: Fakhar Zaman celebrates his century with Babar Azam, Pakistan vs New Zealand, 2nd ODI.

## Pérez wins F1 sprint in Baku, Verstappen confronts Russell

BAKU (AP): Max Verstappen confronted George Russell in the pit lane following a collision as his teammate Sergio Pérez won the Azerbaijan Grand Prix sprint race on Saturday.

Red Bull remains the team to beat in Formula One, with Pérez first and Verstappen third in the sprint, but Verstappen was unhappy after Russell left a hole in his car's sidepod in the collision, hampering Verstappen's chances of taking second from Charles Leclerc of resurgent Ferrari.

Verstappen walked up to Mercedes driver Russell in the pit lane and seemed to suggest he would be similarly uncompromising when racing Russell in future following the first-lap collision. "Mate, we all have no grip, we all need to leave a little bit of space," Verstappen told Russell, who said his car lacked grip

and locked up a tire.

"Then expect next time the same, you know," Verstappen added as Russell walked away, and appeared to aim an expletive at the British driver.

Verstappen lost third place in the incident, but recovered it later at a safety car restart. Russell told British broadcaster Sky Sports he believed he had the right to pressure Verstappen for the position because he was on the inside of the corner and said he was surprised the Red Bull driver tried to hold on while on the outside.

Leclerc started on pole — as he will for the grand prix on Sunday — but was overtaken by Pérez just before the halfway point of the 17-lap sprint on the long seafront straight. The Mexican driver cruised to the win, which cuts his deficit to leader Verstappen

in the standings by two points to 13.

Leclerc held on to second, as Verstappen closed in on the final lap, to give Ferrari its first top-three finish of 2023 following a dismal start to the season. Leclerc more than doubled his points tally for the season to 13 after two retirements and a seventh-place finish from the first three races.

"One thing for sure, it shows how bad the first three races were," he said. "We deserve much more points than what I have now in the championship."

Red Bull has won all three grands prix, with Verstappen winning the opener in Bahrain and then in Australia, after Pérez came first in Saudi Arabia.

The safety car was called out because Yuki Tsunoda slid into the wall, leaving behind a tire and debris from his AlphaTauri.

## Andreeva through in Madrid Open on 16th birthday, Gauff crashes

MADRID (Agencies): Mirra Andreeva celebrated her 16th birthday by continuing her sensational run in the Madrid Open with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Magda Linette to reach the fourth round on Saturday.

World number six Coco Gauff, however, suffered a surprise third round defeat at the hands of Spaniard Paula Badosa, losing 6-3, 6-0.

Russian teenager Andreeva, ranked at a lowly 194, and who ousted 2021 US Open finalist Leylah Fernandez and world number 14 Beatriz Haddad Maia earlier in the tournament, will face world number two Aryna Sabalenka in the last 16.

Andreeva broke Polish player Linette, world number 19, for 2-0 in the first set, and although the 17th seed broke back, the Russian did it again for a 4-2 lead and served it out.

The youngster broke again in the first game of the second set and converted her second match point to break Linette again and clinch victory.

Andreeva, a wildcard, became only the third 15-year-old to win a WTA 1000 main draw match when she beat Fernandez on Wednesday.

She finished as runner-up at the junior Australian Open in January, while her next opponent Sabalenka won the women's title for her breakthrough Grand Slam.

The Belarusian beat resilient wildcard Camila Osorio 6-4, 7-5 earlier Saturday. "It was another tough battle, I expected it, it was a really great win, I'm really happy with the tennis today and this win," said Sabalenka.

Gauff, one of the two players who achieved the same feat as Andreeva at 15, was erratic in her defeat by Spanish number one Badosa. The 19-year-old American, who was runner-up at the French Open last year, broke Badosa in the first game, but the Spaniard battled back immediately to get back on serve, before breaking Gauff again for a 3-2 lead.

Gauff's forehand betrayed her as Badosa broke to love to win the first set 6-3. The second was a rout with Badosa winning 75 percent of points.

"I think I served very well, I was playing very aggressively from the baseline, tactically I think I played perfectly and I'm very happy to beat a player like Coco," said Badosa.

"I'm working very hard and it's moments like these which make it worth it." Badosa will face world number nine Maria Sakkari or compatriot Rebeka Masarova in the fourth round.

- Medvedev through - World number three Daniil Medvedev saw off Andrea Vavassori 6-4, 6-3 to reach the third round of the men's competition.

Vavassori battled his way past Andy Murray in the first round but could not oust another former world number one in the Spanish capital.

The Italian, ranked 164th, held his own against the second seed but eventually succumbed,

even though his serve and volley game troubled Medvedev.

"I think I played a very good match, solid, and saved some break points," said Medvedev after his first match at the tournament. "I managed to use my opportunities, I felt good and I'm looking forward to my next matches."

Dusan Lajovic earned a surprise win over world number nine Felix Auger-Aliassime, 6-2, 3-6, 7-6 (7/5).

The Serbian stunned 22-time Grand Slam winner and world number one Novak Djokovic on the way to winning the Banja Luka title last week, as well as beating world number six Andrey Rublev in the final.

"Today in the match I really felt like I was going in to show my game," said Lajovic, ranked 40th. "I knew I would have chances if I played my best tennis. It's really a good feeling to have this much confidence, but I need to be also very careful because it is so easy to lose confidence, especially in tennis."



MADRID: Mirra Andreeva plays a forehand against Magda Linette of Poland during their third round match.





## In brief

### Death anniversary of Munawar Zarif observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 47th death anniversary of famous Pakistani comedian and film actor Munawar Zarif observed on Saturday. According to a Private news channel, Munawar Zarif was a versatile actor and comedian best known for his work in the Pakistani cinema of the 1970s and was named "Shehenshah-i-Zarafat" by his fans in the film world. He appeared in over 321 movies and was famous for his out-of-script dialogue delivery. Munawar Zarif started his film career with a Punjabi film Dandian in 1961 and got a breakthrough from the film Hath Jori. His other famous films are Pardey Mein Rehney Do, Banarsi Thugg and Jeera Blade. He was awarded the Nigar Award for his outstanding performance in Baharo Phool Barsao, Zeenat and Ishaq Deewana. Munawar Zarif died on April 29, 1976, in Lahore.

### Killers of security guard arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Two killers of the security guard were arrested during a crackdown in the jurisdiction of RA Bazaar Police station, informed police spokesman. Police have also recovered the weapons used in crime. The accused shot and killed security guard Niaz during the incident. City Police Officer Syed Khalid Mahmood Hamdani has taken notice of the incident and ordered the immediate arrest of the accused after firing and killing the security guard during the incident in RA Bazaar area. The teams formed under the supervision of SP Potohar Muhammad Waqas Khan who traced and arrested Mohib and Wasi. The arrested accused should be sent for an identification parade. SP Potohar said that the accused will be challaned with solid evidence and will be punished.

### NHMP foils smuggling bid

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Highways and Motorway Police on Saturday foiled another attempt to smuggle wheat and seized six suspicious trucks near Chakri. The NHMP spokesperson said that 135 tons of wheat and 06 tons of flour were recovered from the trucks. After completing preliminary legal proceedings, all trucks and their drivers were handed over to District Food Authority, Chakwal. The spokesperson said that a total of 59 trucks were seized on Motorway M-1 and M-2 in order to prevent wheat smuggling during the last few days and a total of 1032 tons of wheat and 131 tons of flour were seized and handed over to the Food Authority.

### 5 bids to smuggle flour foiled

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police here on Saturday foiled five bids to smuggle 3900 bags and 25 tonnes flour. According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities of the food department along with Naserabad police conducted raids in different areas and rounded up five namely Muhammad Naem, Shoukat, Gul Badshah, Syed Ali and Shah Mehmood. He informed that the accused were trying to smuggle wheat flour bags out of Rawalpindi division. The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) and City Police Officer, Rawalpindi were strictly monitoring all the exit points of Rawalpindi district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy commissioner Irfan Memon participating in cycle rally during 1-Day to go Run & Ride rally organized by District Health office in collaboration with UNICEF at F-9 park. —APP Photo

## Elections to be held on set time & date: Mian Javed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister Mian Javed Latif on Saturday said that his government would hold general elections in the country on a fixed time and date as per the Election Commission of Pakistan.

Talking to a private news channel, he highlighted that Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's main motto was to come back in power by holding

early elections which is not possible.

The minister said that Imran should respect the institutions of the country and he must abide by the rule of law of honourable courts.

Commenting on his behaviour, the minister said that Imran Khan had always used abusive language to others so he should have looked first at what he himself and his

party members had done in their tenure.

Replying to a question Mian Javed said PTI made the country economically disabled and created a financial crisis whereas the govt always supports dialogues to resolve important state matters.

He said PTI made false cases towards PML-N and he always misguided the public in his so-called public gatherings.

## PTI, BJP same page over Bilawal upcoming India's visit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Shazia Marri has said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are same pages as Foreign Minister, Chairman Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari upcoming visit to India.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, the minister said PTI is unaware of the current political scenario and foreign affairs, adding it is doing dirty politics for reprehensible and negative motives.

She said Bilawal Bhutto Zardari would attend the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to deliver a historical address. The presence of a foreign minister in SCO would be in the best national interest of the country, she added.

Shazia Mari claimed that incompetent PTI chief Imran Khan had destroyed the image of the country internationally as he did not aware of foreign-related affairs.

## ANF recovers over 43 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), in six different operations managed to recover over 43 kg drugs, 500 intoxicated tablets, 165 grams of weed and arrested six accused including a woman, an ANF spokesman said here on Saturday.

He said ANF conducted two operations near Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza and arrested two passengers including a woman for having nine kg charras.

In the third operation, 160 grams weed was recovered from a parcel booked for New York at G.P.O Sialkot. In the fourth operation near Hashnagri Chowk Peshawar, ANF recovered 500 intoxicated tablets from the possession of an accused resident of Charsada.

ANF and FC in a joint operation conducted in Kohi Chowk, Khyber recovered 34 kg charras while in sixth operation conducted near Chiltan Market Quetta, five grams weed was recovered from a parcel booked at a private courier office. After a preliminary investigation, an accused resident of Quetta was rounded up from Quetta Club Road.

He said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

## One killed in road accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): One person was killed while another got critical injuries in a road accident in the Bahawalnagar district of Punjab, as reported on a private news channel.

According to the rescue, the tragic accident took place at Haroonabad Road where a fast-moving passenger van hit a motorcycle. The man riding the motorcycle died on the spot while the young son was severely wounded.

## PDM, PTI negotiations important for country's politics: Abdul Qadir

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Petroleum and Natural Resources Senator Abdul Qadir said that politicians should not turn political differences into personal enmity, nor should they ever close the door to negotiations as well as willingness to make the negotiations between PDM and PTI is important and positive for the country's politics.

In a statement issued on Saturday Senator Abdul Qadir said that politicians should do constructive

politics in the wider interest of the country and the nation. "Disagreement in politics is considered the beauty of democracy", he said, adding that politics is the name of tolerance and there should be harmony in institutions and not conflict as the price of conflict between politicians always has to be paid by the country and the nation.

Senator Qadir said that politicians can solve all problems through negotiation as the point of no return should never be

reached in politics because politicians could not close the doors of negotiations in politics.

He said that handling the situation of the country is the common responsibility of all of us and the first responsibility of the politicians, especially the rulers, is to solve the problems of the people of Pakistan and make their lives easier. People expect that the politicians will focus on national affairs so that the country can move forward in a dignified manner.

## NA Speaker commends exemplary professionalism of journalists

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaz Ashraf has commended the Pakistani journalistic community for their responsible and professional work, recognizing them as an essential pillar of the country.

Addressing a reception in honor of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) representatives at the Parliament House last night, Speaker credited the media for playing an instrumental role in restoring democracy by supporting politicians and ensuring the supremacy of the Constitution and Parliament.

The Speaker emphasized the Parliament's commitment to solving all

problems faced by the journalistic community while urging journalists to uphold and maintain the honour and respect of the Parliament, which belongs to all.

He stressed the importance of the Parliament as the home of 220 million people, and its supremacy as non-negotiable.

Additionally, he underscored the sanctity of the Constitution, emphasizing that its protection was a shared responsibility. Expressing his respect for the Supreme Court, the Speaker highlighted the importance of avoiding conflicts between institutions in the interest of the country.

He emphasized that only the Parliament holds

the authority to amend or rewrite the Constitution, if necessary.

The Speaker mentioned that the Parliament had passed a law granting sou moto authority to three judges instead of one, but the Supreme Court had halted its implementation.

The Speaker urged all pillars of the State to operate within their legal domains and work together for the betterment of Pakistan, especially during the country's challenging times on multiple fronts.

The Speaker also mentioned the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Constitution, where invitations were extended to representatives from all pillars of the State, including Supreme Court judges.

## Talal Chaudhry criticised for using foul language on national television

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Talal Chaudhry's press conference was criticised after it was broadcasted live on national television despite open use of foul and abusive language.

The press conference of Talal Chaudhry was broadcasted on Pakistan's National Television

(PTV), wherein the PML-N leader not only used derogatory language but also made offensive remarks about the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) female supporters.

Last month, Federal Minister and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leader Murtaza Javed Abbasi has delivered derogatory remarks

against the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial.

While addressing an inauguration event of a gas project in Tanawal, Murtaza Javed Abbasi passed derogatory remarks against CJP Justice Umar Ata Bandial and alleged that the chief justice is acting like a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) worker.

## Niazi-Saqib nexus affecting judiciary, says Ata Tarar

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Ataullah Tarar has said that the Niazi-Saqib nexus is affecting the judiciary.

Talking to the media on Saturday, he said that the conspiracy made for Imran Khan by removing Nawaz Sharif was still going on.

"The remnants of former chief justice Saqib Nisar should now leave out the matter. They have destroyed the country," he maintained.

Tarar said that Tariq Rahim and Saqib Nisar are securing the relief for Imran Khan. "They have become partners in the corruption

committed by Imran Khan. Where are the billions of rupees collected through the telethon. Where are the funds donated for the floods? The facilitation is a conspiracy against Pakistan," he added.

He demanded that an investigation of the audio leaks should be held.

## Eight outlaws arrested

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police apprehended eight outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered liquor and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directives, the Secretariat police team arrested an accused namely Ali Shah and recovered 60 liters liquor from his possession. Likewise, the Kohsar police team arrested an accused namely Jawad and recovered one wine bottle from his possession.

Similarly, the Bani Gala police team arrested an accused namely Saqib and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. The Golra police team

arrested an accused namely Ayaz and recovered one 30 bore pistol from his possession.

Moreover, the Shahzad Town police team arrested an accused namely Azaz and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession.

During the crackdown against court absconders and proclaimed offenders, the Islamabad capital police teams arrested 03 absconders from various areas of the city. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

CPO/ DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in drug peddling and possessing illegal weapons and said that the safety of the lives and property of the citizens is our prime responsibility.

The performance of police officials in this regard would be reviewed on a continuous basis, he maintained.

## IRSA releases 135,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 135,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 134,600 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1442.71 feet, which was 44.71 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. The water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 29,500 cusecs while outflow as 40,000 cusecs.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1120.60 feet, which was 70.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet.

The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 54,300 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 50,900, 44,900, 36,800 and 8,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 25,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 16,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

## Islamabad Expressway Project from PWD to Korang to be completed by June end

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman Noor ul Amin Mengal announced on his official Twitter account that the Islamabad Expressway project from PWD to Korang is set to be completed by the end of June this year.

Furthermore, he stated that the project would continue onwards to T chowk and is expected to be finished by early next year. In light of the inconvenience caused to the public during the construction period, Mengal expressed his regret.

Mengal further added that the travel time for those heading towards Kashmir, Murri, or Galiyath would soon be reduced to less than five minutes while passing through Barakahu. He also stated that the difficult phase of the project has been successfully completed.

The completion of the Islamabad Expressway project is set to provide significant relief to commuters traveling from PWD to T chowk, as well as those heading towards the northern areas of Pakistan. With the expected reduction in travel

time, the project is expected to boost economic activity in the region and improve the overall quality of life for the residents of Islamabad.

The CDA chairman's announcement has been met with positive feedback from the public, who have eagerly awaited the completion of the project. The news of the project's completion is also expected to positively impact the property market in the area, with many real estate experts predicting a surge in demand for properties located along the expressway.



72,000 mt of cotton harvested

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock said that in the past year, more than 72,000 metric tons of cotton has been harvested in the country. According to the Department of Statistics, last year, cotton was cultivated on 54,869 hectares of land in the country and 72,493 metric tons of cotton was obtained. "Balkh, Takhar, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Herat, Nimruz, Baghlan and Jawzjan had the most cotton fields last year," the ministry said.

WFP to remain in country

KABUL (Agencies): The United Nations World Food Programme, pledge to continue its mission in Afghanistan despite any political gap. Ms. Hsiao-Wei Lee, head of the United Nations World Food Programme in Afghanistan, said in the city of Berlin, Germany: that the organization has no intention of leaving Afghanistan. "Humanitarian aid is of vital importance to the majority of vulnerable people, including women, children and people with disabilities" she said.

## Practical work on TAPI project still not begun

KABUL (TOLOnews): It has been two years since the Islamic Emirate takeover of the country, but there has been no reported start to practical work on the TAPI pipeline project.

Previously, officials of the Islamic Emirate talked about beginning of practical work on this project.

Some economists believe that the lack of support from the World Bank plus regional rivalries have caused the work on the project to be suspended.

"I think that the TAPI project is involved in regional competition, either

between Pakistan and India, or between Iran and Turkmenistan, or Turkmenistan - Qatar, which is actually India's main gas donor," said Sayed Masoud, an economist.

"The reluctance of donor organizations such as the Asian Development Bank to finance this project is because the Taliban regime has not yet been recognized and another more serious and important issue is the unhealthy regional rivalry between India and Pakistan," said Mer Shikib Mer, an economist.

What is the benefit of the

TAPI project for Afghanistan?

"The TAPI pipeline will give Afghanistan the opportunity to become an important transit route for energy in the region, and with the implementation of this pipeline, the integration of Afghanistan with Central Asia and South Asia will be easier or faster," said Seyar Qurishi, an economist.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Economics said that the Islamic Emirate is trying to start the work on the TAPI project. According to the ministry, dialogue is continuing not only for the TAPI project but also for

the CASA-1000 project.

"We are hopeful that the World Bank will support the TAPI project and CASA-1000 and the countries of the region should play a role in the economic growth and development of the country," said Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy Minister of Economy. Earlier, the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum said that the technical work on the TAPI project ended and there are no problems with this project. At the same time, the land acquisition work for this project is also going on in Herat province.

## Kabul Municipality to conduct 3 major projects

KABUL (Agencies): The Economic Commission, under Deputy Prime Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Ghani Baradar, approved three construction projects proposed by Kabul Municipality.

Based on the decision of the Economic Commission, three projects that were proposed by Kabul Municipality have been approved a statement said.

These projects will be implemented in the 1th and 9th police districts of Kabul city.

The two first project include building markets for dried fruits, as well as the creation of a standard center for the exhibition of these fruits, which will be built at a cost of 388 million Afghanis.

The 3th project is the construction of a residential and commercial center, with a cost of 392 million Afghanis in the 9th police district, which will be built on an area of 1,630 square meters of land.

Lately, Kabul Municipality had submitted 49 properties for bidding through the process of public and private participation, of which three projects have been approved by the Economic Commission.

## IEA not invited to UN Doha meeting on Afghanistan, says UN

KABUL (Agencies): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has not invited the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) to a meeting that he is convening with special envoys on Afghanistan from various countries in Doha next week, a UN spokesperson said.

"The Secretary-General has not extended an invitation to the de facto authorities," said UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric, Reuters reported.

Last week the United Nations had to stress that the meeting will not focus on the possible international recognition of the IEA after comments by the deputy UN chief sparked concern and confusion.

The gathering in Qatar on Monday and Tuesday is instead intended to focus on reinvigorating "the international engagement around common objectives for a durable way forward on ... Afghanistan," Dujarric said.

Guterres' deputy, Amina Mohammed, had suggested last week that the meeting in Doha "could find those baby steps to put us back on the pathway to recognition."



The IEA seized power in August 2021 as US-led forces withdrew following 20 years of war.

In December, the 193-member UN General Assembly approved postponing, for the second time, a decision on whether to recognize the IEA by allowing them to send a United Nations ambassador to New York.

The UN Security Council unanimously con-

demned on Thursday an IEA ban on Afghan women working for the United Nations in Afghanistan and called on IEA leaders to "swiftly reverse" the decision.

The IEA says it respects women's rights in accordance with Sharia law. The Foreign Ministry said on Friday that the decision on Afghan women working for UN is an "internal social matter."

## Family of a victim forgive his son's murderer in Jawzjan



JAWZJAN (Agencies): A residents of Jawzjan forgive his son's murderer in mediation of the elders of the Islamic Emirate.

Officials of the Islamic Emirate of Aghanistan,

and a group of ethnic elders participated in the tribal meeting that was held in Chobash village of Afghanistan on this occasion, according to reporter.

The Deputy Minister of Energy and Water Mullah Abdul Qahir Haji Idris, said that except for the Prophets, peace be upon him, it is permissible to make mistakes, it is true

that the murderer is a sinner, but we have come with a group of central and local officials to the father of the victim to seek forgiveness, which contains countless virtues, to end this enmity.

The Deputy Governor of Jawzjan Province, Mawlawi Gul Mohammad Salim said "forgiveness is not a weakness, but the greatness of a man who forgive and put an end to differences and enmity.

The family of the victim demand nothing in exchange for the forgive of their son's murderer and forgive the murderer only for the sake of Allah.

It must be said that some time back, Mawlawi Gul Mohammad Salim, the deputy governor of Jawzjan province, forgive his father's murderer.

## 5 children killed in mine explosion

MAIDAN WARDAK (Khaama Press): At least five children were killed in a blast caused by an unexploded bomb on Friday afternoon in central Maidan Wardak province of Afghanistan.

The explosion occurred on Friday at around 3:30 pm as kids were playing in the village of Dasht-e-Top in the Sayed Abad district of Maidan Wardak, a province east of Kabul.

Meanwhile, two children were injured in the explosion in critical condition and were delivered to Kabul's Emergency Hospital, said Zarakullah Zeerak, the head of the public health directorate of the province.

All of the victims, according to him, were younger than 12 years old.

Meanwhile, several incidents occurred in various provinces, including Ghazni, Wardak, and Kandahar, which killed several children and injured several others.

Unexploded mines and bombs left over from previous conflicts have recently started to appear more frequently in different regions, killing and hurting men, women, and children.

Afghanistan remains one of the nations with the highest concentration of landmines in the world, killing several people each month, including children, according to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

## 30,000 Afghans expected to perform Hajj this year

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs says 30,000 people from Afghanistan are expected to perform Hajj this year, including 8,000 women.

The ministry officials said on Saturday that necessary measures have been taken to provide facilities for pilgrims. According to them, in order to better manage the Hajj ceremony, a seven-day awareness seminar has been

started for the teachers who accompany the pilgrims during this ceremony.

In this seminar, information will be provided about the guidelines and also the problems of the pilgrims so that they can perform the Hajj ceremony without any problems, the officials said.

"We organized the seminar for teachers to teach them how to do food and transportation services for the pilgrims," said Moham-

mad Ashraf Haqqani, head of religious education for the ministry.

"Flights will start from the first of Dhul Qa'dah and 3,000 pilgrims will attend the Hajj ceremony."

This comes amid pilgrims faced problems during the Hajj ceremony last year, but now the ministry says they are trying to prevent pilgrims from facing problems and will provide them with more facilities.

## Ministry denies UNS's call to lift restriction on women

KABUL (Khaama Press): The UN Security Council's demand to lift the restriction on women working for the UN in Afghanistan was denied Friday by the Taliban's Ministry of foreign affairs.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement, "The decision to restrict Afghan women from working with the UN in Afghanistan is an internal

social matter of Afghanistan that does not impact outside states," the statement said.

On Thursday, the United Arab Emirates and Japan jointly sponsored a resolution to the UN Security Council in New York that unanimously condemned the Taliban's ban on women working for the United Nations.

The Security Council

urged the Taliban officials to "swiftly reverse" a crackdown on women's and girls' rights.

According to UAE UN Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh, more than 90 countries, including those "from Afghanistan's immediate neighbourhood, the Muslim world, and all corners of the earth," co-sponsored the resolution.

The world would not

watch in silence while women in Afghanistan are marginalized from society, she said the council, adding that the resolution sent out unambiguous messages.

Since assuming power in Afghanistan, the Taliban have enacted several laws restricting women's rights. They have, therefore, limited women's access to public spaces, education, and jobs.

## Remote areas of Ghor sans proper health services



FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): Residents of remote areas of western Ghor province complain about the lack of proper health services.

On the other hand, the Public Health Department — confirming the issue — says it has taken measures to address the problem.

Abdul Basir, a resident of Allah Yar district, told Pajhwok News there is no well-equipped health centre in his area. In emergency situations, he said, they had to evacuate patients to Feroz Koh, the capital of the province.

He added: "There is a small clinic in the district and it does not have facilities, an experienced doctor and medicines. Every time we get sick, we go to the main provincial hospital."

Khudabakhsh, hailing

from the Talkhak village of Lal Aw Sarjantal district, brought his son to the Ferozkoh Civil Hospital.

"The clinic is far from our village, and it does not have enough medicine. There are no experienced doctors. Our people are really faced with a whole host of problems."

He urged the officials concerned to build a well-equipped clinic in this district.

Abdur Rahim, who belongs to Pasaband district, had a similar complaint and sought the government's attention to deal with people's health problems.

The district residents, who had to take their patients to Ferozkoh, encountered many problems traveling long dis-

tances, he grumbled.

"I don't have money to buy medicine or send my patient to another city. My son has a stomach problem. I borrowed 10,000 Afghanis and brought him here. The district clinic doesn't give visitors anything. The government should address our problems."

Fatima, another visitor to the hospital, also complains about the lack of proper health services and necessary medicines for patients. She tied the issues to the large number of patients and lack of facilities.

She said: "I have been here with my daughter for two days. It is not yet known what disease she is suffering from. Her condition is very bad. She complains of stomach compli-

cations. "During this period, I have been buying medicine with my own money. This hospital has little space. There are several patients lying on one ward. We want the central government to address our problems."

Meanwhile, officials acknowledged the province's health sector was facing shortages. However, the health personnel are working continually to treat patients and provide them with proper facilities.

Provincial Hospital Director Dr. Gul Ahmad Sahil said: "Although there are problems in terms of facilities, we have so many visitors. We are facing a shortage of beds. There are problems in different sections, but despite this, our personnel are serving the people day and night."

Public Health Director Dr. Abdul Sattar Mawafaq also called the shortage of health personnel at a provincial level a multi-year problem.

But he said they were trying to hire more professional personnel across the province to provide more efficient services to the people.

"The lack of personnel and medical facilities has been an old issue. But we have sent necessary medicines to the districts. We are trying to solve the problems as much as we can ..."

UNICEF, which delivered most of health services in Ghor, suspended its operations in the province two weeks ago.

## Herat copper industry almost extinct, warn craftsmen

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): Coppersmiths in western Herat say the ancient industry is almost extinct as people are no longer interested in purchasing their products amid lack of government's support.

They say copper industry, which is an ancient industry of Afghanistan, has been forgotten.

Ahmad Mohammadi, a coppersmith who inherited this profession from his father, said currently the copper industry was not in good condition. "As the time passes, the industry faces stagnation because no one supports it."

He said if the government supported coppersmiths and provided them with raw materials, they could achieve good results for Afghanistan through their art.

Besides Mohammadi, some other coppersmiths also complain that this industry has not been supported during the past few

years and the copper industry in Herat province has stagnated.

Abdul Latif, another man who sells copper products, confirmed his sales had drastically decreased. He said if the copper industry was not supported, the remaining coppersmiths would wind down their works soon.

He said in the past there were more than 60 shops that supplied copper products for sales in Herat province, but now only four or five such shops remained.

He said artisans who made copper dishware once had a good business in Herat and there was no house that did not use their products, but now all house had glass products and only a few restaurants used copper dishware.

Experts in culture affairs consider copper products as a part of the culture and historic identity of Herat province and say industries

like clay work, copper-smith, blacksmith and glass production have long been neglected and right now they face stagnation.

Muslim Marwi, an expert of historic and cultural issues, said the government must support these industries and such arts should be taught as a subject in textbooks up to university level.

Mawlawi Naeemul Haq Haqqani, the provincial Information and Culture Department head, said the government supported all industries including copper industry, which he called

one of the historic industries of Herat province and stressed that he would spare no effort in reviving this industry.

He said it was the government's and the nation's duty to preserve and develop the copper industry because its growth would attract foreign visitors, especially to Herat province.

Exact history of the coppersmith profession in Afghanistan is not clear, but culture experts and writers believe it dates back to Timurid and Ghaznavid periods.





# Afghan women protesters urge against foreign recognition of Taliban

KABUL (Agencies): A group of Afghan women protested in Kabul on Saturday, defying a crackdown on dissent to urge foreign nations not to formally recognise the Taliban government ahead of a UN summit next week. Protesters opposing creeping curbs on women's rights have been beaten or detained since the Taliban surged back to power in 2021 and security forces have fired into the air to disperse some rallies.

However, small groups of women have continued to stage sporadic gatherings. Around 25 women marched through a residential area in the Afghan capital on Saturday ahead of a summit in Doha that the United Nations says will discuss a "durable way forward" for the country. "Recognition of Taliban — violation of women's rights," the women chanted during the march, which lasted no longer than 10 minutes and passed without confrontation with security forces.

Other chants included "Afghan people, hostages of Taliban" and "We

will fight, we will die, we will take our rights". No nation has yet acknowledged the government as legitimate since the Taliban returned to power after US forces withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021. A previous Taliban government that ruled from 1996 to 2001 was only granted formal recognition by Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

Diplomats, NGOs and aid agencies are deeply divided over the issue. Some believe the international community might cajole Taliban authorities into reversing curbs on women's rights by dangling the prospect of recognition. Others say even discussing it grants the Taliban government some legitimacy at a time when they are squeezing women out of public life. UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said last week the Doha meeting starting on Monday could see envoys discuss "baby steps" on a path to recognition, albeit with conditions.

"There are some who believe this

can never happen. There are others that say, well, it has to happen," Mohammed said in a talk at Princeton University. "The Taliban clearly want recognition ... and that's the leverage we have." The United Nations has announced that the "de facto authorities" of Afghanistan have not been invited to the Doha conference.

"Recognition is not an issue," a spokesman for the world body said on Friday. Protester Shamail Tawana Nasiri, 26, told AFP that any discussion of formal recognition "will give the Taliban motivation". "For those of us who are oppressed, and our rights taken away, it increases our concerns," she said. The United Nations will also provide an update on aid operations, which have been hampered by a Taliban government order barring Afghan women from working for the world body, at Monday's meeting. It has said it faces an "appalling choice" over whether to maintain its huge operation in the country of 38 million people.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Energy Khurram Dastgir called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## Syria: Israeli strikes hit province of Homs

BEIRUT (AP): Suspected Israeli airstrikes targeted the Syrian province of Homs early Saturday, state media reported. Syria's state news agency, SANA, citing military officials, said that three civilians were wounded in the strike and that a civilian fuel station caught fire and a number of fuel tankers and trucks were burned.

It reported that Syrian air defenses responded to Israeli missiles in the sky over Homs and shot down some of them. The pro-government Sham FM radio said fires broke out south of the city of Homs as a result of the strikes and "successive explosions sounded from the area. The Britain-based opposition war monitor Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Israeli missiles had destroyed an ammunition depot belonging to the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah at a military airport in the countryside of Homs.

The observatory said it was the second time Israel targeted the site in a month. On April 2, state media reported Israeli airstrikes hit several sites in Homs, wounding five soldiers. The observatory said two Hezbollah members were killed by the earlier attack. There was no immediate statement from Israeli authorities on the strikes,

Israel, which has vowed to stop Iranian entrenchment next door, has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets in government-controlled parts of neighboring Syria in recent years, but rarely acknowledges them. Earlier this year, suspected Israeli strikes in Syria intensified, culminating in an exchange on the border April 8, when the Israeli military said its forces attacked targets in Syria after six rockets were launched from southern Syria toward the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

On Monday, Syrian pro-government media said Israel shelled targets in southern Syria near the Golan Heights, causing unspecified material damage.

## Audio-tapes of bribe for tickets expose PTI: Atta

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Interior Attaullah Tarar said on Saturday that evidence in the form of audiotapes of getting bribe for grant of tickets to the candidates had exposed the real face of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and its belief in justice.

Addressing a press conference here at Model Town, he said that from the party chief to other senior leaders, everyone had been found involved in bribery, as disclosed in the audiotapes, making rounds on the social media. The PTI claimed itself to be a party based on justice, but its entire leadership was involved in minting money for award of party tickets, he added. He said it was a serious matter and should be investigated.

The SAPM said conspiracies had been hatched against Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) from day one, and the recent audio-leaks had strengthened its stance about wrong and unjustified disqualification of Nawaz Sharif on the basis of only an Iqama. He demanded that investigations should be held into the audio-tapes, so that facts could be brought to

the fore and action could be taken against conspirators.

Atta Tarar regretted that the nation paid huge price for disqualification of Nawaz Sharif in Panama case, as the speedy process of development in the country was stopped after that. The PML-N government started various mega projects in 2013, and overcame various challenges including load-shedding. People faced tough situation after 2018, as nothing was done for their welfare by the PTI government, except for looting the national resources mercilessly, he said.

The SAPM said the PML-N believed in supremacy of the law and justice for everyone, as nobody was above the law. The PML-N leadership faced jails and courts for years in fabricated cases, registered against them during the PTI regime, though nothing was proved against anyone. He said the PTI leaders including its chief were avoiding the courts to appear in cases registered by investigation agencies.

To a question, Atta Tarar alleged that Moonis Elahi was involved in corruption of billions of rupees in Lahore masterplan, and now he was sitting abroad to avoid investigation against him and other lead-

ers, who were involved in corrupt practices. He said reckless corruption was committed in the Punjab province during the PTI government, where Ahsan Jamil Gujjar and his wife Farah Gogi were acting as the front persons. He said a puppet chief minister Usman Buzdar was appointed on the recommendation of Imran Khan's wife.

To another query, he said the PTI was not a political party as they were brainwashing the youth and misguiding the nation through social media campaigns, being run inside and outside the country.

He said the coalition government, led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, was working tirelessly to steer the country out of the current challenges. He said the federal government had reached agreement with Russia for import of oil on cheaper rates. He thanked the governments of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates for expressing their trust in the present government and extending financial support to help the country out in current situation. The SAPM said that the present leadership was rebuilding its relations with the brotherly countries, which were damaged by the previous PTI government.

## Erdogan returns from campaign absence

ISTANBUL (Agencies): Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has appeared in public for the first time in three days after a stomach infection kept him off the campaign trail before key presidential and parliamentary polls on May 14.

Smiling and dressed in a red windbreaker, the 69-year-old leader walked out on the stage of an Istanbul aviation festival and tossed out flowers to flag-waving supporters. He arrived to the event on Saturday with his close ally, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, and Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah.

Both countries have fought wars using Turkey's combat drones, which will feature prominently at the weekend aviation event.

Erdogan had been laying low since getting sick live on television on Tuesday night. Turkey's Health Minister Fahrettin Koca has said Erdogan is suffering from gastroenteritis. The digestive problem is easily treated and usually clears up in a few days. However, it has disrupted Erdogan's attempts to seize momentum in the run-up to Turkey's most important election in generations in approximately two weeks. Erdogan looked healthy addressing the crowd with a microphone in his hand, describing government efforts to help the victims of a massive February earthquake that claimed more than 50,000 lives. But he refrained from addressing his absence or the health scare.

Erdogan's illness came at

one of the more vulnerable moments of his two-decade rule. Most polls show Erdogan slightly behind the main opposition alliance's candidate

Kemal Kilicdaroglu. His conservative party's control of parliament through an alliance with ultra-nationalist group Nationalist Movement Party is also under threat. Kilicdaroglu has formed the type of broad-based coalition that Erdogan had mastered in crafting over 20 years. The opposition alliance includes some of Erdogan's former allies, liberals, conservatives and nationalists. Turkey's pro-Kurdish party also announced backing for Kilicdaroglu although it is not officially in the opposition alliance.

## NK insults Biden, slams defense deal with Seoul

SEOUL (AP): The powerful sister of North Korea's leader says her country would stage more provocative displays of its military might in response to a new US-South Korean agreement to intensify nuclear deterrence to counter the North's nuclear threat, which she insists shows their "extreme" hostility toward Pyongyang.

Kim Yo Jong also lobbied personal insults toward US President Joe Biden, who after a summit with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Wednesday stated that any North Korean nuclear attack on the US or its allies would "result in the end of whatever regime" took such action.

Biden's meeting with Yoon in Washington came amid heightened tensions in the Korean Peninsula as the pace of both the North Korean weapons demonstrations and the combined US-South Korean military exercises have increased in a cycle of tit-for-tat. Since the start of 2022, North Korea has test-fired around 100 missiles, including multiple demonstrations of intercontinental ballistic missiles designed to reach the US mainland and a slew of short-range launches the North described as simulated nuclear strikes on South Korea.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is widely expected to up the ante in coming weeks or months as he continues to accelerate a campaign aimed at cementing the North's status as a nuclear power and eventually negotiating US economic and security concessions from a position of strength. During their summit, Biden and Yoon announced new nuclear deterrence efforts that call for periodically docking US nuclear-armed submarines in South Korea for the first time in decades and bolstering training between the two countries.

They also committed to plans for bilateral presidential consultations in the event of a North Korean nuclear attack, the establishment of a nuclear consultative group and improved sharing of information on nuclear and strategic weapons operations.

In her comments published on state media, Kim Yo Jong said the US-South Korean agreement reflected the allies' "most hostile and aggressive will of action" against the North and will push regional peace and security into "more serious danger." Kim, who is one of her brother's top foreign policy officials, said the summit further strengthened the North's conviction to enhance its nuclear arms capabilities.

## As battle for Sudan continues, deaths top 400

KHARTOUM (AP): Gunfire and heavy artillery fire persisted Saturday in parts of Sudan's capital Khartoum, residents said, despite the extension of a cease-fire between the country's two top generals, whose battle for power has killed hundreds and sent thousands fleeing for their lives.

The civilian death toll jumped Saturday to 411 people, according to the Sudan Doctors' Syndicate, which monitors casualties. The fighting has wounded another 2,023 civilians so far, the group added, although the true toll is expected to be much higher. In the city of Genena, the provincial capital of war-ravaged West Darfur, intensified violence has killed 89 people. Fighters have moved into homes and taken over stores and hospitals as they battle in the densely populated streets, the syndicate said. Khartoum, a city of some 5 million people, has been transformed into a front line in the grinding conflict between Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, the commander of Sudan's military, and Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, who leads the powerful paramilitary group known as the Rapid Support Forces. The outbreak of violence has dashed once-euphoric hopes for a democratic transition in Sudan after a popular uprising helped oust former dictator Omar al-Bashir.

Foreign countries continued to evacuate their citizens while thousands of Sudanese fled across borders. Britain said it was ending its evacuation flights Saturday, after demand for spots on the planes had declined. The United Arab Emirates announced Saturday it had started evacuating its citizens along with nationals of 16 other countries. Over 50,000 refugees — mostly women and children — have crossed over to Chad, Egypt, South Sudan and the Central African Republic, the United Nations said, raising fears of wider instability in the region. Ethnic fighting and turmoil has scarred South Sudan and the Central African Republic for years while a 2021 coup has derailed Chad's own democratic transition.

Those who escape Khartoum face more obstacles on their route to safety. The overland journey to Port Sudan, where ships then evacuate people via the Red Sea, has proven long and risky. Hatim el-Madani, a former journalist, said that paramilitary fighters were stopping refugees at roadblocks outside Khartoum, demanding they hand over their phones and valuables. "There's an outlaw, bandit-like nature to the RSF," he said, referring to Dagalo's Rapid Support Forces. "They don't have a supply line in place. That could get worse in the coming days."

Airlifts from the country have also posed challenges, with a Turkish evacuation plane even hit by gunfire outside Khartoum on Friday. On Saturday — despite a cease-fire extended under heavy international pressure early Friday — clashes continued around the presidential palace, headquarters of the state broadcaster and a military base in Khartoum, residents said. The battles sent thick columns of black smoke billowing over the city skyline.

In a few areas near the capital, including in Omdurman, some reported that shops were reopening as the scale of fighting dwindled. But in other areas, terrified residents hunkered down reported explosions thundering around them and fighters ransacking houses. Now in its third week, the fighting has left swaths of Khartoum without electricity and running water. The Sudanese Health Ministry put the latest overall death toll at 528, with 4,500 wounded.

Those sheltering at home are running out of food and basic supplies. Residents in the city of Omdurman, west of Khartoum, have been waiting at least three days to get fuel — complicating their escape plans. The U.N. relief coordinator, Martin Griffiths, said that U.N. offices in Khartoum, as well as the cities of Genena and Nyala in Darfur had been attacked and looted. Genena's main hospital was also leveled in the fighting, Sudan's health ministry said.

"This is unacceptable — and prohibited under international law," Griffiths said. Over the past 15 days, the generals have failed to deal a decisive blow to the other in their struggle for control of Africa's third largest nation. The military has appeared to have the upper hand in the fighting, with its monopoly on air power, but it has been impossible to confirm its claims of advances.

"Soon, the Sudanese state with its well-grounded institutions will rise as victorious, and attempts to hijack our country will be aborted forever," the Sudanese military said Saturday. Both sides in the conflict have a long history of human rights abuses. The RSF was born out of the Janjaweed militias, which were accused of widespread atrocities when the government deployed them to put down a rebellion in Sudan's western Darfur region in the early 2000s. A unit of Sudan's armed forces, known as the Central Reserve Police, have been sanctioned by the United States for grave human rights violations against Sudan's pro-democracy protesters.

## Sherry says Pakistan to face above-normal rainfall

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Saturday said Pakistan has been placed among the 20 countries where above-normal rainfall was predicted this year.

According to the report of the Global Information and Early Warning System of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Pakistan was included in the list of 20 countries at risk of heavy rains, the federal minister took to Twitter to share the important update on future weather predictions indicating heavy rainfall.

Senator Rehman said the return of the El Nino (scientific term of weather system) ocean trend forecast for June this year was similar to the country's local forecasts. She added that the return of the El Nino oceanic phenomenon could trigger severe environmental events worldwide, including higher-than-normal rainfall, floods, droughts and threats of malnutrition.

"Pakistan is among the 20 countries where above-normal rainfall is predicted. These 20 countries include America, Turkey, Iran and others. The third return of the El Niño ocean trend in the last 2 years is a cause for

concern," Sherry Rehman said. "We are already in the recovery phase after last year's rains and flood disasters. We have to be prepared to deal with extreme environmental events. Due to the ongoing rains across the country till May 5, the Meteorological Department and NDMA expressed concern that there may be damage to standing crops, recently harvested crops and new sowing," Sherry Rehman added. The Minister underscored that the government had issued instructions to the concerned institutions to the public and farmers to take precautionary measures and remain alert.

## Pelosi says Ukraine, democracy 'must win'

WASHINGTON (AP): "We thought we could die." The Russian invasion had just begun when Nancy Pelosi made a surprise visit to Ukraine, the House speaker then the highest-ranking elected US official to lead a congressional delegation to Kyiv. Pelosi and the lawmakers were ushered under the cloak of secrecy into the capital city, an undisclosed passage that even to this day she will not divulge.

"It was very, it was dangerous," Pelosi told The Associated Press before Sunday's one-year anniversary of that trip. "We never feared about it, but we thought we could die because we're visiting a serious, serious war zone," Pelosi said. "We had great protection, but nonetheless, a war — theater of war." Pelosi's visit was as unusual as it was historic, opening a fresh diplomatic channel between the US and Ukraine that has only deepened with the prolonged war. In the year since, a long list of congressional leaders, senators and chairs of powerful committees, both Democrats and Republicans, followed her lead, punctuated by President Joe Biden's own visit this year.

The steady stream of arrivals in Kyiv has served to amplify a political

and military partnership between the US and Ukraine for the world to see, one that will be tested anew when Congress is again expected this year to help fund the war to defeat Russia. "We must win. We must bring this to a positive conclusion — for the people of Ukraine and for our country," Pelosi said. "There is a fight in the world now between democracy and autocracy, its manifestation at the time is in Ukraine."

With a new Republican majority in the House whose Trump-aligned members have balked at overseas investments, Pelosi, a Democrat, remains confident the Congress will continue backing Ukraine as part of a broader US commitment to democracy abroad in the face of authoritarian aggression. "Support for Ukraine has been bipartisan and bicameral, in both houses of Congress by both parties, and the American people support democracy in Ukraine," Pelosi told AP. "I believe that we will continue to support as long as we need to support democracy... as long as it takes to win." Now the speaker emerita, an honorary title bestowed by Democrats, Pelosi is circumspect about her role as a US emissary abroad. Having visited

87 countries during her first in office, many as the trailblazing first woman to be the House speaker, she set a new standard for pointing the gavel outward as she focused attention on the world beyond US shores.

In her office tucked away at the Capitol, Pelosi shared many of the honors and mementos she has received from abroad, including the honorary passport she was given on her trip to Ukraine, among her final stops as speaker. It's a signature political style, building on Pelosi's decades of work on the House Intelligence committee, but one that a new generation of House leaders may — or may not — chose to emulate. The new Speaker Kevin McCarthy hosted Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library this month, the Republican leader's first foray as leader into foreign affairs.

Democrat Hakeem Jeffries took his own first trip abroad to as House minority leader, leading congressional delegations last week to Ghana and Israel. Pelosi said it's up to the new leaders what they will do on the global stage. "Other speakers have understood our national security — we take an oath to protect and defend — and so

we have to reach out with our values and our strength to make sure that happens," she said.

"I just want to say that this, for me, was the most logical thing to do," Pelosi said. When Pelosi arrived in Kyiv, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stood outside to meet the US officials, a photo that ricocheted around the world a show of support for the young democracy fighting Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion. "The courage of the president in greeting us on the street rather than us just meeting him in his office was yet again another symbol of the courage of the people of Ukraine," she said.

Pelosi told Zelenskyy in a video released at the time "your fight is a fight for everyone." A year on, with no end to the war in sight, Pelosi said: "I would have hoped that it would have been over by now." Pelosi's travel abroad has not been without political challenges, and controversy. During the Trump era she acted as an alternative emissary overseas, reassuring allies that the US remained a partner despite the Republican president's "America First" neo-isolationist approach to foreign policy. Last year, in one of her final trips as speaker,

Pelosi touched down with a delegation in Taipei, crowds lining the streets to cheer her arrival, a visit with the Taiwanese president that drew a sharp rebuke from Beijing, which counts the island as its own.

"Cowardly," she said about the military exercises China launched in the aftermath of her trip. Pelosi offered rare praise for McCarthy's own meeting with Tsai, particularly its bipartisan nature and the choice of venue the historic Reagan library. "That was really quite a message and quite an optic to be there. And so I salute what he did," she said.

In one of her closing acts as House speaker in December, Pelosi hosted Zelenskyy for a joint address to Congress. The visit evoked the one made by Winston Churchill, the prime minister of Britain, at Christmastime in 1941 to speak to Congress in the Senate chamber of a "long and hard war" at the start of World War II. Zelenskyy presented to Congress a Ukrainian flag signed by frontline troops that Pelosi said will eventually be displayed at the US Capitol. The world has changed much since Pelosi joined Congress — one of her first trips abroad was in 1991, when she

dared to unfurl a pro-democracy banner in Beijing's Tiananmen Square shortly after the student demonstrations that ended in massacre.

After the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it's again Russia and China that remain front of her mind. "The role of Putin in terms of Russia that is a bigger threat than it was when I came to Congress," she said. A decade after the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, she said, Putin went up. "That's where the fight for democracy is taking place," she said. And, she said, despite the work she and others in Congress have done to point out the concerns over China's military and economic rise, and its human rights record, "that has only gotten worse."

Often mentioned as someone who could become an actual ambassador — there have been musings that Biden could nominate her to Rome or beyond — Pelosi said she is focused on her two-year term in office, no longer the House speaker, but the representative from San Francisco. "Right now my plan is to serve my constituents," Pelosi said. "I like having 750,000 bosses, rather than one."