

**Hina to visit to Sweden today**  
**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar will undertake an official visit to Stockholm, Sweden today (Saturday) to participate in the 2nd EU Indo-Pacific Forum. The visit is taking place at the joint invitation of EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell and Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom.



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# IHC grants bail to Imran in multiple cases

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday granted a two-week interim bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan in the Al-Qadir Trust corruption case and stopped the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) from arresting him.

A two-judge bench comprising Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz heard the bail petitions of the former prime minister Imran Khan in corruption case. Imran Khan appeared before the court along with his legal team.

At the outset of the hearing, NAB Deputy Prosecutor General Sardar Muzafar Abbasi said the inquiry in the Al-Qadir Trust case was initiated on July 15, and call-up notices were served to the accused including Imran Khan, Zulfi Bokhari, Faisal Vawda, Muhammad Mian Soomro and a business tycoon. He said Imran Khan did not appear before the anti-corruption watchdog in any case, while the other accused however, joined the inquiry process.

Advocate General Islamabad Jahangir Jadoon said there was no solid reason to file the instant case before the IHC while an alternate forum was available to the accused for getting bail. He the army was deployed under Article 245 of the Constitution after the incidents of violence in the country. The IHC could not hear the case in the current circumstances, he pleaded.

The Additional Attorney General said the court could summon the Attorney General for Pakistan as well in the case. The petitioner's lawyer Khwaja Haris argued that arrest warrants of an accused could only be issued if he did not respond to the repeated notices of NAB. To a court's query, the lawyer further said NAB



had not even served any questionnaire to Imran Khan and his wife in the case. The Bureau was bound to provide the inquiry report to the accused, which, however, shared with him after his arrest, he added.

Khwaja Haris said NAB converted its inquiry into an investigation on April 28. Imran Khan had responded to its two call-up notices and it was essential to inform the details of the allegations to him in the call-up notices or the reasons for it, he added. After hearing the arguments, the bench granted a two-week interim bail to the former prime minister and stopped the Bureau from arresting him during that period.

Earlier, Imran Khan arrived at the IHC from the Police Lines Islamabad amid foolproof security arrangements. The Supreme Court on Thursday declared his arrest from the premises of the IHC a day earlier as against the law and directed the PTI chief to appear before the IHC to pursue his bail case.

Agencies add: Opposed to a wheelchair in which he would appear before courts earlier, a beaming Khan, sporting a stylish pair of sunglasses, arrived at IHC in tight security like a celebrity, wearing a crisp light-blue shalwar kameez and a dark blue waistcoat, as hundreds of police and

paramilitary troops guarded the premises of the judicial structure in the federal capital.

A day earlier, contrary to the IHC — which termed PTI chief's arrest "legal" — a three-member bench of the Supreme Court deemed Khan's arrest from the premises of the high court "illegal", directing him to appear before the IHC today. "The manner of execution of the arrest warrant issued by the Chairman, National Accountability Bureau (NAB) dated 01.05.2023 in the Al-Qadir Trust case within the premises of the Islamabad High Court against the petitioner is invalid and unlawful," the ruling said.

Khan was arrested from the IHC premises by paramilitary forces on Tuesday (May 9), which triggered violent protests across the country. The former prime minister had immediately approached the court for release but it had declared his arrest legal. Since being ousted from office last April, Khan has waged a tempestuous campaign for snap elections and fired unprecedented criticism at the coalition government and military who he blames for pulling him from power. He has accused senior military and government officials of plotting a November assassination attempt that saw him shot

(Continued on Back Page)

## Sana: Govt to take action against Imran activities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah on Friday said that the coalition government would take action against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran (objectionable) activities.

Talking to a private TV channel, he said, "We have all records of Imran speeches made in public meetings." He said that Imran Khan had used inappropriate language against the national institutions. "The leader of PTI has been exposed before the public due to indecent speeches made in public gatherings," he added.

Commenting on the rule of law, he said, "Law enforcement organizations will take action against those supporters of PTI who violated the law by targeting and attacking sensitive places."

Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan also strongly condemned a terrorist attack on the Frontier Corps (FC) Camp in the Muslim Bagh area in northern Balochistan. The minister, in a statement, expressed his deep grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of two soldiers of security forces while retaliating against the attack.

The brave soldiers of the Pakistan Army, he said, had sent the coward terrorists to hell. He said, "The security forces are fighting against the menace of terrorism with utmost bravery and determination for the protection of the homeland."

The armed forces were fully determined to eliminate the scourge of terrorism from the country, he added. The minister prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured security personnel and expressed sympathy with the families of the martyrs.

## PDM to stage 'protest in front of SC' on Monday: Fazl

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) President Maulana Fazlur Rahman on Friday announced that the PDM would stage a "protest demonstration in front of the Supreme Court" on Monday.

Addressing a press conference after chairing a PDM meeting, he said the Movement was a political force, and as its head, he was conveying the decisions made in the meeting attended by the representatives of all coalition parties, to all those concerned. He alleged that the Supreme Court was considered to be the "mother of the Constitution, but it has been giving verdicts contradictory to the Constitution". Maulana Fazl said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan was arrested in a Rs 60 billion corruption case; however, orders were issued for his immediate release. "The apex court not only defended Imran Khan but also shielded his corruption as it ordered that he should not be arrested in any case," he added.

Referring to the violent protests that occurred across the country following Imran Khan's arrest, Maulana Fazl stated the PTI workers attacked monuments dedicated to those who had made supreme sacrifices for the nation. They launched attacks on the General Headquarters and set the Corps Commander's House on fire, he added.

Ironically, Imran Khan who had undermined the law and the Constitution, was being given a VIP protocol, he added. "Whether such protocol was given to the thrice elected prime minister Nawaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz, or Faryal Talpur?" he questioned. Maulana said everyone had the right to disagree with the institutions, and each institution had its limits and domains. He stated that the apex court's 4 to 3 verdict was acceptable to all and not that of 3 to 2. He alleged that the judiciary had adopted a "biased approach and partisan attitude" and they would stage a protest in front of the apex court on Monday.

# PM deplores 'double standards of justice' with Imran in graft cases

## Cabinet for no leniency, making example of those involved in organised violence on May 9

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday disapproving the "double standards of justice" being meted out to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan in his corruption cases said the coalition would take every step to ensure the rule of law in the country.

Chairing the meeting of the federal cabinet, he said other political leaders in the country faced trials and tough handling, while Imran Khan was given a "privileged treatment". "These are the double standards of justice," he said and expressed astonishment over the remarks of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court during yesterday's hearing where he said that he was pleased to meet Imran Khan.

He pointed out that thousands of cases by the general public were pending with the courts while some political figures were specially given the favour of bail on a priority basis. The prime minister said the judiciary earlier also protected Imran Khan in his corruption cases including the Bus Rapid Transit Project (BRT), Billion Tree Tsunami tree plantation, and Malam Jabba development projects had solid proofs of corruption by PTI but the cases were not pursued.

He said Imran Khan was part of an agenda to bring fascist rule in the country for 10 years. He said May 9, after the debacle of December 16, 1971, was a painful day in the country's history when Imran Khan's party unleashed havoc by attacking national and military installations.

He recalled that despite the tragedy of the assassination of Pakistan Peoples Party leader Benazir Bhutto, his husband raised the slogan of 'Pakistan Khappay' meaning 'We want Pakistan' as a great gesture of nationalism. Also, nobody hit the military installations even after the "judicial murder" of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, he added. Sharif recalled that at the time of the death of their mother, he was in prison but passed the time with patience rather than inciting the public for riots.

He said Imran Khan was the mastermind and planner behind the attacks on military institutions. He termed it a disgrace to the martyred military personnel who sacrificed their lives for the motherland. He said the country was passing through a difficult time and the coalition government was making efforts to address the inherited challenges. He lambasted the leadership of



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing federal cabinet meeting.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf to push the country toward the brink of a dangerous situation. He recalled that the PTI chief for months made false and shameless claims about his ouster from the rule through "regime change" by the United States. Sharif said the coalition government made tireless efforts to mend relations with the US in a diplomatic manner, while Imran Khan ultimately changed his stance against the U.S.

He pointed out that besides maneuvering the situation with International Monetary Fund, Khan made every effort for the country to be declared a default. He said Imran Khan incurred every possible damage to the very fabric of society by promoting hatred and intolerance.

Meanwhile, the Federal Cabinet on Friday, while endorsing the statement of the Pakistan Army spokesperson, called for no leniency against those involved in the organised violence against the state, Constitution and law, besides hurting the nation's dignity, following the arrest of PTI Chairman Imran Khan in a corruption case on May 9.

The cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, also called for making such elements an example by taking strict action against them under the Constitution and the law. The meeting expressed concerns over the situation in the country, observing that through such violence the leader of a "miscreant and foreign-funded" party had inflicted damage to Pakistan which the arch-enemy even could not do during the last 75 years.

Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar briefed the meeting about the arrest of PTI chief Imran Khan in the Al-Qadir Trust corruption case as per law and his sudden release on the order of the Supreme Court of

## Rupee bounces back

ISLAMABAD (INP): After US Dollar skyrocketed against Pakistani Rupee in interbank and open market trading, the local unit gained record Rs13.86 against American currency and reached Rs285 on Friday. The new price of the greenback reached Rs286 in comparison to Rs299 after a whopping decrease of Rs12 in interbank trading. For first time in the history of forex trading in country.

# Patel re-assures that stable Pakistan in US interest

**Jalil Afridi**

WASHINGTON DC: Deputy Spokesperson of the US State Department, Vedant Patel assured that the US wants to see a stable and prosperous Pakistan. Mr Patel made these remarks while answering questions put forth by *The Frontier Post* at a press briefing in the US State Department.

*The Frontier Post* acknowledged the fact that President Biden's Press Secretary, Karine Jean Pierre, National Security Spokesperson, John Kirby and the US State Department have constantly said that they have no favorite in the politics of Pakistan and that the US wants to see a prosperous Pakistan.

But *The Frontier Post* questioned what practical steps have been taken by President Biden in this regard because the President didn't call any Pakistani leadership at the time of US withdrawal from Afghanistan and neither did the President call former Prime Minister, Imran Khan when he was shot several times. Vedant Patel said that he doesn't



agree with this notion and Pakistan and US are cooperating on several fronts including trade, technology, agriculture and combating terrorism.

*The Frontier Post* also asked about the upcoming visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the United States and asked whether the US will raise the issue of Kashmir and atrocities being committed against the Muslims by Modi's political party. Vedant Patel said that India was a strategic partner of the US and during the State visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the US, several areas of cooperation

with India will be discussed and strengthened.

It is pertinent to mention here that US President Joe Biden is being criticized by several news media outlets in the US for his weak foreign policy despite having decades of experience in foreign relations whereas some blame his poor health for not being very active on the international front.

A local Pakistani TV journalist asked about the safety of nuclear weapons in Pakistan and the closure of social media platforms, in reply to which Patel said that free flow of information is vital and it is the right of every citizen.

# Two terrorists killed: ISPR

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: After a heavily-armed assault on their camp in the Muslim Bagh area of Northern Balochistan, Frontier Corps (FC) men eliminated at least two terrorists as the standoff continues, ISPR said on Friday.

According to the military's media wing, the militants attacked the camp in the early hours of the morning, adding that the operation is

currently underway with heavy exchange of fire taking place with the armed assailants. ISPR also noted: "Currently, operation by the security forces is underway to capture the terrorists who have been cornered into a building complex."

During the clearance operation, the military said that two soldiers have embraced martyrdom while another three are injured. As Pakistan has been gripped by a spate of terrorist attacks for the last

few months, the country's civil and military leadership has resolved to stand united against terrorists and vowed to eliminate them from its roots.

In the NSC meeting last month, it noted that the meeting agreed to launch an all-out comprehensive operation — with renewed vigour and the [help] of the entire nation and the government, which will rid the country of the menace of terrorism.

# Imran always insulted judiciary: Marriyum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb has said that Imran Khan had always insulted the judiciary and never followed the law.

In an interview with Sky News, she said Imran Khan considered himself an "untouchable" who was above the law and no one could question him. The minister said that Imran Khan should be treated like an ordinary citizen of Pakistan.

She said that there were allegations of corruption against Imran Khan and his arrest by the NAB was in accordance with the law and the government had nothing to do with it. To a question, the federal infor-

mation minister said that the government did not believe in political revenge and victimization. "If we wanted to arrest him or silence him ... we would not have waited 14 months," she said.

In response to the question regarding the disqualification of Imran Khan, the minister said why would the government want to disqualify him. Why would any democratic government do this, she remarked. However, she said Imran Khan during his tenure arrested political leaders, put them in jails and tried to silence their voices.

To another question, Marriyum Aurangzeb said that after the issuance of a court order, it was his constitutional right to review or

discuss the order. To another question, the minister said that no peaceful citizen was on the streets during the last three days, only armed groups and terrorists were taken to streets who damaged state and public property.

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb also rebutted news regarding the imposition of "emergency" in the country. "The reports circulating in the media regarding the imposition of emergency in the country are baseless" and no such decision was taken in the meeting of the Federal Cabinet, the minister said in a news statement. She urged the media to verify the facts before airing or publishing any news.

# SC to hear ECP plea against Punjab polls on 15th

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A three-member bench of the Supreme Court is set to hear Monday the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) petition challenging the top court's earlier order regarding elections to the Punjab Assembly.

The bench — headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar — will hear the petition a day after the May 14 date on which the top court had ordered polls to be held on in the largest province of the country. The apex court's earlier verdict on a petition filed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), which was heard by the same three-member bench, came after months of drama around the polls.

The PTI-led Punjab gov-

ernment dissolved the provincial assembly in January in a bid to force the ruling coalition to hold snap polls. However, the government has consistently maintained that elections will be held in October or November this year. The electoral authority had postponed the Punjab polls to October, which the PTI had challenged. The Supreme Court, in an April 4 order, declared the ECP's decision to be unconstitutional, without lawful authority or jurisdiction, void ab-initio and of no legal effect.

It ordered the electoral body to hold polls in Punjab on May 14 and directed the federal government to release Rs21 billion for elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, the government has not released the funds yet. Subsequently,

the ECP moved the Supreme Court to review its April 4 directives earlier this month.

In a 14-page petition, the top election organising authority said that the apex court should review its decision as the judiciary "doesn't have the authority to give the date of elections". "Such powers exist elsewhere under the Constitution but certainly not lie in a Court of law," the ECP said, citing various legalities and reasons behind its statement.

The electoral body accused the Supreme Court of disregarding its constitutional jurisdiction, emphasising that it assumed upon itself the role of a public body in giving a date; "thus intervention by the court is necessitated to correct an error which has effectively changed the settled constitutional jurisprudence of the country."

# IHC stays proceedings of Toshakhana case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday stayed the proceedings of the Toshakhana case against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan in the trial court till June 8.

Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the case filed by former prime minister Imran Khan in that regard. At the outset of the hearing, Imran Khan's lawyer Khawaja Haris argued that the complaint was filed in the trial court by an unauthorized authority. The case was filed by the District Election Commissioner while the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had not authorized anyone to file the case, and thus the case was not maintainable.

The lawyer said they had raised the objection before the trial court but it stated that the matter would be viewed at the time of recording evidence. The case was also filed after due time, he added and prayed to the court to issue a stay order against the proceedings of the trial court. The chief justice asked whether there were more identical applications against the interim order and whether the instant case should be heard as the main case.

Khawaja Haris said they had also objection that the matter should be heard first by the magistrate. After hearing the arguments, the court halted the proceedings in the Toshakhana case till June 8 and adjourned the hearing into the matter.

The trial court had already indicted Imran Khan in the said case. The Election Commission of Pakistan had disqualified the former prime minister for not disclosing the details of gifts retained from the Toshakhana and a criminal case was lodged before the lower court.



## Lahore Metro Bus route restricted

LAHORE (INP): Lahore metro bus service has been restricted due to the recent law and order situation, causing severe inconvenience to citizens.

To guarantee the safety of passengers and avoid any untoward incidents, the Metro service is presently operational only from Gajumata to MAO College, while it remains closed from MAO College to Shahdara until further notice. This limited service has caused problems for commuters who rely on the metro bus as a means of transportation.

Notable to mention here that violent protest of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has affected flight operations at national airports, leading to the cancellation of over 60 domestic and foreign flights of various airlines. Major airports including Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi have been affected by the cancellations.

Travelers faced significant inconvenience as a result of the cancellation of 14 flights to and from Islamabad Airport, as well as 12 flights to Lahore Allama Iqbal International Airport, leaving many stranded at the airports for hours. The protest-induced uncertainty has also affected the morale of airline staff who are now grappling with the aftermath of these flight cancellations.

## Police seized Gutka factory

KARACHI (INP): Police has seized gutka factory in Karachi. According to the details, Pak Colony police carried out a targeted raid in the factory located in Husrat Mohani Colony area of Karachi.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Kamran Fazal has stated that over 30 tons of valuable gutka and other ingredients were seized from the factory, while three suspects Bilal Ali, Hussain, and Basit, were arrested. SSP Kamran Fazal said that the operation was carried out on a secret tip-off, and the factory producing gutka was located on Mangu Pir Road.

According to SSP, a large amount of other harmful ingredients were also seized from the factory, including 97 packets of 2190 kg of Chalia in total, 400 kg of lime, 23 packets of cut leaves, 32 packing wrapping wrappers, four packets of powder, one pack of rubber band, and 52 large tubs were also recovered. Police said that gutka worth millions of rupees was being prepared in the factory on a daily basis. A case has been registered against the arrested suspects and an investigation has been launched.

## International Nurses Day being observed today

LAHORE (PPI): International Nurses Day is being observed today to acknowledge invaluable contribution to health care and health security. This year, theme of the day is our nurses, our future. World Health Organization's Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Dr Ahmed Al-Mandahri, in a statement, said as we progress towards universal health coverage it is imperative to invest in the nursing workforce.



LAHORE: Youngsters are enjoying in the canal.

# CM orders steps to maintain law, order in Punjab

LAHORE (PPI): During a review meeting held Friday to ensure the rule of law in the province, Punjab caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi ordered to take all legal steps to maintain the law and order situation.

"A stern action will be taken against the facilitators of the rioters. Those who had attacked public property including Corps Commander House in Lahore should be punished according to the law," Mohsen Naqvi ordered.

"The worst kind of terrorism was shown by vandalising the public property. Every attacker will be identified and punished according to the law," he added.

"The Prosecution Department should speed up the process of prosecution against the elements involved in these terrorist incidents," he stated and also instructed to complete the identification of miscreants and attackers as soon as possible.

"No leniency should be shown in action against the rioters and their facilitators," he ordered. In the meeting, the law and order situation in the province

was reviewed in detail.

"There will be no compromise on the rule of law in the province," he vowed. The Punjab inspector general of police (IGP) briefed the meeting about the law and order situation and the ongoing operation against the miscreants.

The provincial ministers and higher officials concerned attended the meeting.

CM orders to release woman Punjab caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi Friday ordered to release the woman, along with her two daughters, whose husband died after her arrest from Liberty Chowk, Lahore during a protest by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

The caretaker chief minister directed the additional chief secretary (interior) to release the woman and her daughters after completing the legal process.

The woman and her two daughters had been detained by the police during PTI's demonstration at Liberty Chowk, Lahore.

However, after the death of the woman's husband and the father of her daughters, it was decided to release them after the completion of legal proceedings.

## Punjab Public Service Commission postpones PMS exam

LAHORE (PPI): Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC) has postponed the written examination for Provincial Management Service (PMS) due to the deteriorating political situation of the country on

## 7-day anti-polio campaign in 12 districts from May 15

LAHORE (APP): A seven-day anti-polio campaign will begin in 12 districts of the province from May 15.

According to the health sources on Friday, the special drive will continue for seven days in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Faisalabad besides five days in Bhakkar, Layyah, DG Khan, Mianwali, Multan, Muzaffargarh, Rahim Yar Khan, Rajanpur and Sheikhpura.

The provincial health authorities have set a target of immunizing as many as 10.85 million children up to the age of five years with the deployment of about 84,000 polio workers during the campaign.

A meeting of the Provincial Taskforce for Polio Eradication, presided over by the Chief Secretary Punjab, was held at the Civil Secretariat to review the arrangements for the

upcoming campaign.

The chief secretary directed that the anti-polio campaign would be made successful and special attention would be paid to improving the micro plans for the coverage of the 'missed children'.

He said that everyone was needed to continue working with a national spirit for the complete eradication of polio. The Chief Secretary also issued instructions to the health department to review the human resource model.

Secretary Primary Health Ali Jan gave a detailed briefing to the meeting.

The officials of the health department and representatives of international organizations working for polio eradication attended the meeting while deputy commissioners of the respective districts participated through video link.

## RDA demolishes illegal constructions in illegal 'Ittehad Heights' housing scheme

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of Director General (DG) Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa here on Friday conducted an operation against an illegal housing scheme 'Ittehad Heights' and thus demolished illegal constructions.

According to RDA spokesman, the Enforcement Squad of RDA while carrying out an operation demolished road infrastructure and other constructions of an illegal

housing scheme namely Ittehad Heights at Mouza Jattal, Girja road.

He said that the Enforcement Squad was taking strict action against illegal housing schemes. Notice was also issued to the owner of the illegal housing scheme namely Salahuddin for violating the rules, illegal advertisements and development work. The Enforcement Squad including Incharge/Assistant Director Building Control, Superintendent Scheme and others carried out the operation

as the owner of the property was running illegal housing scheme's booking office in violation of the rules. The spokesman said that the DG had advised the citizens not to invest in illegal housing schemes and check status of such the housing projects at RDA's official website [www.rda-gop.pk](http://www.rda-gop.pk).

The DG had directed the MP&TE Directorate to take strict action against illegal and unauthorized housing schemes without any discrimination.



LAHORE: Flag March held by the Law Enforcement Agencies regarding the establishment of peace and order.

# Haleem occupied fifty acres of land owned by the Transport Department in Karachi: Memon

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Minister of Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon told the Sindh Assembly, while answering the questions of various members that Haleem Adil Shaikh has occupied fifty acres of land owned by the Transport Department in Karachi and has utilized it for

establishing buffalo ranches.

Sharjeel Inam Memon has proposed the formation of an assembly committee, led by Nand Kumar, to conduct a transparent investigation into this matter and take necessary action to reclaim the unlawfully occupied land.

Sharjeel Inam Memon informed the Assembly that the People's Bus Service has been initiated in Karachi,

Hyderabad, and Sukkur. The government aims to extend this service to every district across the province. Sharjeel Inam Memon mentioned that a group of individuals had encroached upon seven acres of SRT land along the Sukkur Shikarpur Road. However, the illegal occupation has been resolved, and plans are underway to establish a People's Bus Service station at that location.

## Govt to ensure sufficient supply of flour in markets : Minister

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Minister for Industries SM Tanveer has said that government and flour mills were on same page to ensure sufficient supply of flour in markets.

Presiding over a meeting here on Friday, he said that all possible steps would be taken for ensuring sufficient supply of flour in markets and to sta-

bilize prices. Punjab Food Secretary Khuram Zaman Watoo and a delegation led by Pakistan Flour Mills Association Chairman Asim Raza Ahmad also attended the meeting.

Delegation demanded to open market for purchase of wheat, permission for import of wheat to private sector besides issuing of permits to flour

mills. The minister said that he would put problems in front of Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister that had been highlighted by flour mills. He further said that all legal problems of flour mills would be solved on priority basis. He further said that with the grace of Allah Almighty this year wheat production was very good.

## Sindh info dept asked to highlight govt projects via social media

KARACHI (APP): Secretary Information Sindh Nadeem-ur-Rehman Memon on Friday underscored the need to utilize social media platforms to highlight the development projects commenced by the provincial government.

"Print, electronic, and social media platforms are

an effective tool to keep the public informed about the govt initiatives," said Memon while presiding over a meeting with the directors of the information department. The secretary directed the officers to strengthen coordination with journalists and media organizations for timely

dissemination of information to the masses with respect to government endeavours, a news release said. The advertisements directorate was also asked to ensure prompt payment of advertisement dues. The meeting was attended by directors, admin accounts, Press Information, Electronic Media, Advertising, Publications, Planning and Development, Muhammad Youisf Kabooro, Hassan Asghar Naqvi, Aziz Hakaro, Moizuddin Pirzada, Imtiaz Ali Joyo, Mansoor Rajput, Fida Hussain Baladi respectively.

## Imran Khan being provided relief: Murtaza

KARACHI (APP): Spokesperson for the Sindh government and Advisor to Sindh Chief Minister on Law barrister Murtaza Wahab Friday said there was a double standard for a person, who did not believe in system of the country.

He observed that the aim of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was to push the country towards civil war. The advisor stated this while talking to media persons at Sindh Assembly's media corner.

## Couple killed for 'honour' in Lahore

LAHORE (PPI): A couple was killed on the pretext of honour in Wahdat Colony area on late Friday.

Police said a man in connivance with his sister's husband killed his sister and a man with whom she was currently residing in Wahdat colony. Police said upon receiving information of a robbery incident a police team arrived at the scene, but found door locked.

## LWMC working tirelessly to maintain cleanliness

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) was working tirelessly to ensure the exceptional cleanliness services in the provincial capital.

According to LWMC sources here on Friday, apart from working across the city, the company was taking special measures to make the various areas of Lahore zero waste.


LWMC had deputed special teams for cleanliness operation at Zaman Park, Canal Road, Mall Road, Jail Road and joining areas. Despite the cleaning operation LWMC's enforcement wing was also mobilized to take action against illegal dumping of waste.

LWMC Chief Executive Officer Babar Sahib Din said that providing exemplary sanitation facilities to the citizens was the first priority. During the special zero waste operation, LWMC had ensured cleanliness around the streets, main roads, bus stops and terminals across the city, he added. The company

was utilizing all resources to maintain cleanliness across the city, he asserted.

He said that special cleaning operations were being conducted in urban being conducted in urban union councils as well as

in rural areas in connection with zero waste operation, adding that more than 6,000 containers across the city had also been cleared as per routine.

**PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)**  
تہذیبی ادارہ

**TENDER NOTICE**

Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) invites tender from the licensed private companies / firm having at least 03 years experience in the related field for provision of security services at CAA Chitral Airport for the period of Two (02) years to a technically qualified company and lowest – offer rate. The said contract shall extendable to another Six (06) months with mutual consent of both parties subject to satisfactory services rendered by firm and without any additional cost for provision of services.

<b>Armed Guards (ex-servicemen)</b>	<b>Pakistani Nationals</b> <b>Educational Qualification- Middle</b> <b>Age Max 45 Years and Medically Fit</b>
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2. Tender can be purchased from the office at the cost of Rs.1000/-in shape of bank draft in favor of Civil Aviation Authority Chitral Airport.

3. The interested private companies / firms fulfilling the requirement criteria of CAA and required to submit following documents in a single sealed envelope comprising 02 seals envelope i.e technical and financial bids (offer) separately.

**Technical Offers**

I.	Company / Firm profile and history.
II.	Registration of Firm / Memorandum and Article of Association in case of Company.
III.	No. of clients to whom similar services were provided must be 03 or more
IV.	NTN Registration Certificates.
V.	EORI Registration.
VI.	Registration with Social Security.
VII.	Average monthly credit balance in Bank Account for last 06 months must not be less than 0.2 (M) Attach Bankers certificate or last 06 months statement of Bank Account.
VIII.	The Firm / bidders who rendered or are rendering services to CAA required to submit "Satisfactory Service Certificate".
IX.	Attach an undertaking that information data documentation, accounting records etc will provide within 07 days on demand.
X.	Attach an undertaking on non-judicial stamp paper of value Rs.100/- that firm is not bank listed by Government / Semi Government or Autonomous Body.
XI.	Attach undertaking on non-judicial stamp paper of value Rs. 100/- that firm shall abide the minimum wage and will pay all regulatory payments.
XII.	Not having litigation against CAA. Undertaking / Affidavits attested by Notary Public on non-judicial stamp paper of Rs.100/- value shall be submitted in this regard.
XIII.	The bid shall be valid for a period of 90 days from the date of bid submission.
XIV.	Attach Bid Security on favor of CAA with Financial proposals in shape of DDR / Pay Order for an amount of Rs. 120,960/-.

4. Single sealed envelope shall be dropped in tender box placed at the reception of APM Chitral Airport on **31<sup>st</sup> May, 2023**. The box will be sealed at **11.30 Hrs** and no bid shall be received thereafter. Tenderers shall be opened by the Tender Opening Committee at **12.00 Hrs** on the same day in the presence of bidders / their representatives who may like to be present.

5. Complete information can be reviewed on PCAA website [www.caapakistan.com.pk](http://www.caapakistan.com.pk) and PPRA website [www.ppra.org.pk](http://www.ppra.org.pk). PCAA reserve all rights to accept or reject any / all the tenders without any reason and decision shall be final and not to be challenged.

6. For further details please contact during working hours from 0900 to 1700 hours **except Saturday & Sunday Telephone Office 0943-412597.**

**COO / Airport Manager, Civil Aviation Authority,**  
**Chitral Airport**  
**PID/KS#3216/22**  
[www.caapakistan.com.pk](http://www.caapakistan.com.pk)



Mostly dry weather with chances of isolated rains

**F.P Report**

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Friday predicted that mainly dry and partly cloudy weather is expected in most districts of the province.

However, it said that isolated thunderstorm-rain / gusty wind is likely to occur over Abbottabad, Mansehra, Torgahar, Battagram, Kohistan, Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Swat, Buner, Bajaur, Swabi, Peshawar, Khyber, Kurram, North & South Waziristan districts during evening and night.

During the last 24 hours mainly dry and partly cloudy weather prevailed over most districts of the province. Rain recorded in the province was nil. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 37/20, Chitral 32/13, Timergara 31/17, Dir 30/09, Mirkhani 27/11, Kalam 26/05, Drosh 28/13, Saidu Sharif 33/12, Pattan 35/18, Malam Jabba 21/09, Takht Bhai 37/18, Kakul 29/13, Balakot 34/14, Parachinar 20/09, Bannu 39/18, Cherat 31/18, D.I. Khan 40/23. The highest temperature recorded in the province was 40°C in Dera Ismail Khan.

PHC dispose off petition against Imran Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Musarat Hilali and Justice Shakeel Ahmad has disposed-off writ against disqualification of former Prime Minister Imran Khan following withdrawal of petition by applicant.

The counsel for petitioner argued that former premier Imran Khan has married with Bushra Bibi within 'Iddat' (timeframe for remarriage women under Islamic principle) which is against the religious laws.

However, Chief Justice Musarat Hilali remarked that timeframe for 'Iddat' after divorce is three months while for widow it stands at four months and 10 days. The counsel Ahmad Ali Advocate argued that 'Nikkahkwan' marriage registrar has stated that Imran Khan has offered 'Nikkah' twice before court while added former premier also raises issue of cipher and placed allegation on military officials for his political ends.

In the meantime, PHC observed that it is political issue which isn't pleaded in the petition while dispose-off writ on withdrawal request by petitioner's counsel.

## Corps Commander visits Radio Pakistan Speedy rehabilitation of building directed

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Corps Commander Peshawar, Lieutenant General Hassan Azhar Hayat on Friday visited the building of Radio Pakistan that was ransacked and torched by the violent PTI mob on 10th May last, where he was given a detailed briefing on the incident in which the decades old significant building was vandalized.

The Corps Commander paid a detailed visit to various sections of the burnt out building where the office of APPC was also situated on the fourth floor, and directed for speeding up the rehabilitation work on the building. He said the staff of Pakistan Army was busy in rehabilitation and cleanliness of the different sections of the Radio Pakistan and APPC offices.

The Corps Commander on the occasion offered installation of a transmitter on behalf of the Pakistan Army for the Radio Pakistan and directed for providing every needed assistance by the Pakistan

Army along with the repair of the building and offices.

Moreover, the Corps Commander Lt. General Hassan Azhar Hayat said the staffers would be provided best possible treatment at Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Peshawar. It merits a mention here that with the assistance of Pakistan Army, the Radio Pakistan Peshawar has restarted its broadcasting the other day, which was a testimony to the fact that Pakistan Army was standing by its people at difficult times.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Peshawar transmission has been restored with the hectic efforts of the organization's technical team and the support of Pakistan Army within 26 hours of its suspension.

The historical building of Radio Pakistan Peshawar was attacked by miscreants on Wednesday. They barged into the building, breaking the main gate. The miscreants destroyed and ransacked different sections of the radio station, setting on fire official record, equipment and vehicles.

According to Station Director Radio Pakistan Peshawar Ijaz Khan, the transmission had been suspended as a result of the destruction and ransacking by the PTI miscreants on Wednesday afternoon. He, however, said the transmission was restored both at MW 1260 Khz and web streaming for the listeners on Thursday evening.

Meanwhile, Pakistan People's Party Secretariat Information Secretary Amjad Khan Afridi has condemned the recent attack on the Radio Pakistan, stating that the damage to the property was unacceptable.

In a statement, he expressed solidarity with the journalist friends of Radio Pakistan. He accused miscreants of destroying the equipment and vehicles of the organizations and called for strict action against those responsible for the cowardly attack. "Pakistan People's Party has demanded that police and law enforcement agencies provide full security to media houses and journalists," Afridi said.

## Funeral prayer of DSP, victim of blast offered

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The funeral prayer of DSP, Fazal ur Rehman who breathed his last here after sustaining critical injuries in the deadly Police Lines blast on January 30th last, was offered with complete departmental honor here at Malak Saad Shaheed Police Lines on Friday.

Additional IG Elite Force Muhammad Wisal Fakhar Sultan Raja, Additional IG Headquarters Sabir

Ahmad, CCPO Peshawar Ejaz Khan, Additional IG CTD Shaukat Abbas, Commandant FRP Qasim Ali Khan, SSP Operations Haroon Rashid, SSP Investigation Shehzada Kokab Farooq, police officers, officials and relatives of the deceased attended the Namaz E Janaza.

A smartly turned out contingent of police presented a salute to the coffin of the martyred while the police officers laid floral wreaths at the coffin and

prayed for high place in Heaven for his departed soul.

The deceased Fazal ur Rehman was appointed DSP Investigation, Saddar Circle when he sustained critical injuries in the blast that rocked the mosque of Police Lines on 30th January, last. He remained in critical condition at the Lady Reading Hospital and today left this mortal world to achieve the highest rank of martyrdom.

## Long Covid risk 46% higher for people

PESHAWAR (APP): The risk of long Covid is strongly associated with area-level deprivation, with the odds of having long Covid 46 per cent higher for people from the most deprived areas, compared to those in the least deprived areas, according to a study.

Published in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, the study analysed over 2,00,000 working-age adults and is the first to quantify the association between long Covid and socioeconomic status across a range of occupation sectors. Analysing data from the UK Office for National Statistics Covid-19 Infection Survey, the researchers found that

females had a higher risk of long Covid, with the risk of long Covid in females in the least deprived areas comparable to that in males in the most deprived areas. People living in the most deprived areas and working in the healthcare and education sectors had the highest risk of long Covid compared to the least deprived areas, Medical Daily reported. However, the study did not describe any significant association between the risk of long Covid and the most and least deprived areas for people working in the manufacturing and construction sectors.

"Although certain occupational groups, especially frontline and essential workers, have been

unequally affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, studies on long Covid and occupation are sparse," said lead researcher Dr Nazrul Islam, of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Southampton. "Our findings are consistent with pre-pandemic research on other health conditions, suggesting that workers with lower socioeconomic status have poorer health outcomes and higher premature mortality than those with higher socioeconomic position but a similar occupation. However, the socioeconomic inequality may vary considerably by occupation groups," added Dr Islam, who is also part of Nuffield Department of Population Health at the University of Oxford.



PESHAWAR: Commander Peshawar Corps, Lieutenant General Sardar Hassan Azhar Hayat interacting with injured official during visit to Radio Pakistan.

## Attack on APP, Radio Pakistan Offices played

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan People's Party Secretariat Information Secretary Amjad Khan Afridi has condemned the recent attack on the Radio Pakistan and Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) office, stating that the damage to the property was unacceptable.

In a statement, he expressed solidarity with the journalist friends of Radio Pakistan and APP. He accused the PTI protestors of destroying the equipment and vehicles of the organizations and called for strict action against those responsible for the cowardly attack. "Pakistan People's Party has demanded that police and law enforcement agencies provide full security to media houses and journalists," Afridi said.

## Condolence reference held

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Senior Alumni Association Islamia College Peshawar held an emergency condolence reference death of chairman Department of Botany Dr. Syed Hussain Shah and offered prayer for departed soul while showed solidarity with bereaved family.

The reference was held under the chairmanship of President Alhaj Muhammad Zaman Khan Muhammad Zai and General Secretary Fayaz Ahmad Khan in which a long time member of Senior Alumni Association participated.

They offered prayer for former Principal and Chairman of Great Islamians Botany Department Islamia College Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Syed Hussain Shah's sudden death expressed deep sorrow and grief and expressed sympathy to the bereaved.

## PTI workers loot around 400 shops in city

PESHAWAR (APP): The violent mob of PTI workers besides torching and ransacking the Radio Pakistan building and APP office near Provincial Assembly, also damaged and looted around 400 shops during their protest in the provincial metropolis and escaped with the looted goods.

According to complaints registered by the shopkeepers and vendors, the PTI protestors damaged and looted items from their shops in areas including GT Road, Hashtnagri, Firdous, Ashraf Road, Faqirabad, Dalazak Road, Gulbahar Chowk and Haji Camp.

The protestors looted fruit shops near the Government Higher Secondary School GT Road, outside the Molvi Jee Hospital, tea and general stores at Ashraf Road and scores of other shops in adjacent areas. Likewise, in Sikandarpura Market, the



protestors looted two shops and escaped after looting the items.

According to the traders, they would initiate rehabilitation of their businesses after complete restoration of peace in the city. The initial cost of ransacking at the hands of PTI protestors was estimated at millions of

rupees. The violent protestors also torched a market of domesticated birds and goats' sheds near Shama Cinema on Pachagi Road. When contacted, the police official said CCTV footage from the affected areas was being examined to identify the accused adding that no one would be left spared.

## Jashan-e-Baharan festival spills colors of local culture

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA), in collaboration with the Tourism Wing of the Pakistan Armed Forces, has organized the three-day "Jashan-e-Baharan" festival scheduled from May 12 to 14 in Kharasha-Khwa Stori Khel at Orakzai District.

The festival is promoting and projecting tourism in the province, especially in the merged districts of KP, said a news release

received here on Friday. The food, cultural and traditional stalls have been established during the festival to entertain the participants.

Sports competitions including jeep races, cycle races, cricket, volleyball, paragliding, karate, motor-cycle races, and tent pegging were also arranged to entertain the people with healthy and thrilling games. The festival is also showcasing musical performances, traditional Khattak dance, recitals by local poets, and a

spectacular firework display to be held at the conclusion of the festival.

Director General of KPCTA, Bakhtiar Khan said that the purpose of organizing the Jashan-e-Baharan Festival in the Orakzai tribal district was to invite tourists and locals to participate in tourism and cultural activities. The initiative was not only promoting tourism in the region but also strengthening employment opportunities and the local economy, he added.

## Study links poor sleep to brain health

PESHAWAR (APP): Poor sleep in middle age can have a negative impact on brain health, according to a recent study by researchers from the Australian National University (ANU). The study examined the sleep habits of 29,000 people aged between 37 and 73.

It found that getting fewer than six hours of sleep a day or more than nine hours was associated with lower brain volume and cognitive measures, which are crucial for things like reaction time and memory. Daytime dozing was also found linked to impaired brain health. Tergel Namsrai, leader of the research and

a PhD candidate at ANU, said the findings could provide the basis for combating neurodegenerative diseases such as dementia, Xinhua reported.

"The mechanisms underlying the link between sleep and brain health are not well understood - there's a lot of work to be done," she said. "But our study shows it could be an important target if we want to improve brain health into old age and delay the onset of dementia." The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that more than 55 million people worldwide currently have dementia - a figure that is expected to

rise to 150 million by 2050.

A report published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) in February revealed dementia has surpassed heart disease as the leading cause of disease burden in older Australians for the first time. There is currently no cure for dementia, which Namsrai said made it more important to identify risk factors. "Around 20 to 40 percent of dementia cases are attributable to modifiable, non-genetic factors," she said. "The most well-known of these include smoking, alcohol misuse and obesity. But sleep is an emerging risk factor."



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan called on by a delegation of elders of newly merged districts.

## Online games, fun or matter of worries

**Muhammad Farooq**

COVID pandemic has reshaped the world by diverting people from physical interaction to online activities. Now people prefer online shopping, e-education, likewise youngsters are indulging more in online gaming instead of outdoor activities.

The latest Massively Multiplayer Online Role-playing Games (MMORPGs) are gaining popularity due to intensive social interaction through video, voice, text etc. and are being considered as a source of entertainment, establishing virtual community to interact with others in accom-

plishing common tasks etc. however, besides being a source of entertainment and fun, it has some negative impacts for which every guardian needs to be updated about pros and cons of online gaming for better tackling the situation so as to protect our future generation.

In Pakistan, multiple incidents of suicides by teenagers, killing others in aggression by online gamers have been reported in media. The issue of violence and anti-social behavior arises due to excessive online games playing as concluded by different researchers. Mr. Arthur Cassidy, an associate fellow of the British Psychological Society, says that

growing attachment to gaming devices among children leads to suicide or self-harm. Many other research studies have shown that children's excessive involvement in online gaming deprives them from physical activities therefore they face problems like isolation, introversion, misbehaving with other family members, sleeping disorder, anxiety, depression etc.

Online gaming addiction mainly occurs due to less attention by parents. The kids who suffer loneliness, get an instant relief by playing online games. It takes them away from reality to fantasy and imaginary world where everything seems to be controlled by

their thoughts and imagination. Resultantly, they get frustrated, leads them to violence, self-harm and even raises suicidal thoughts. Besides, chances of getting blackmailed, bullying by others (both offline and online) and theft of personal information also increase while playing online games with online predators.

Parents need to be extremely conscious w.r.t online activities of kids by opting following workable measures:

Always spare time for your kids and even involve in their social activities. Prove yourself as a best friend so that kids may inform you timely in case they encounter any online danger.

Always encourage and arrange physical activities for your kids plus choose schools having facilities for outdoor activities. Parents should be well aware of their kids' friends especially about their character, behaviors etc.

Before purchasing online games, parents need to check rating of the games from concerned department like the ESRB (Entertainment Software Rating Board) and then accordingly select appropriate game as per age of the kid.

Initially, parents should also play online games with children so as to understand content of the game as well as reaction of the children while

playing game.

For having better eye on kid's online activities, computer be placed in common areas. Instead of giving new mobile on permanent basis to your kids, it is better to give them your own mobile solely for that particular purpose on temporary basis. This will ensure a direct check on their activities.

Teach your kids not to share personal information like password, bank accounts, and pictures with anyone else.

Learn and implement parental control features to implement time limits, website restrictions, and permit safe applications for kids.





## In brief

### HSSC exams to start from 20th

BAHAWALPUR (INP): Annual exams of Intermediate under the Bahawalpur board of Intermediate and Secondary education will start on May 20. According to the Controller Examination Bahawalpur Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, as many as 111,511 regular and private candidates have registered for the exams. A total of 162 examination centers have been set up in the Bahawalpur division for the exams. Roll number slips of regular candidates are available online while roll number slips of private candidates are posted at their addresses.

### Two killed as truck overturns

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): A truck carrying a wedding party overturned on Seetpur road, Alipur tehsil on Friday and killed two people including a woman, and injured 32 others. According to Rescue 1122, the mishap occurred due to the overspeeding of the vehicle. The passengers were returning to Alipur after attending a wedding ceremony in Seetpur. The identity of the deceased, including a woman and her 13-year-old son, could not be ascertained by the rescuers till the filing of this report. Assistant Commissioner Nasir Dogar and the DSP reached the spot to supervise the relief operation. The bodies were shifted to THQ Hospital Alipur while the injured were treated on the spot.

### Ex-naib nazim shot dead

FAISALABAD (APP): Former Naib Nazim Tehsil Jaranwala was shot dead over an old rivalry in the area of City Jaranwala police precincts on Friday. A spokesman for police said here on Friday that Rae Shehbaz Ahmad, former naib nazim tehsil Jaranwala, was present outside his residence in Islampura when unidentified assailants riding on a motorcycle came there and opened indiscriminate fire on him. The victim received bullet injuries and died on the spot before getting any medical assistance, while the accused managed to flee the scene. The police took the body into custody and dispatched it to mortuary for postmortem. Apparently, the killing of Rae Shehbaz was an outcome of old enmity. However, the police was investigating the incident to arrest the culprits and ascertain real cause behind this murder, spokesman added.

### Focus on to facilitate patients

D I KHAN (APP): The director of District Headquarters Teaching Hospital Dr Farrukh Jamil has said that solid measures were being taken to provide treatment facilities to citizens. He expressed these views while talking in a meeting with Jamiat-ulema-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and former candidate for city mayor-ship Kafil Ahmed Nizam who visited the hospital. He said that the provincial government had taken a number of measures for the uplift of the health sector and the Teaching Headquarters Teaching Hospital's administration was taking pains to implement the government's directives about the provision of best service delivery to people. During the meeting, Farrukh Jamil was also apprised of the cleanliness system and facilities available for patients in the hospital. Kafil Ahmed Nizami also assured his support for ensuring the best healthcare facilities and services for the citizens and added that in this regard no effort would be spared.

# PPP commits for transparency, accountability: Zehri

F.P. Report

HUB: Prominent tribal and political leader and People's Party district Hub president Mir Ali Hassan Zehri has said that Pakistan People's Party is the only political party which believes in principles even in politics and not believe in any kind of injustice, biased accountability and revenge.

Expressing deep concern over the recent alleged audio of the leadership of Tehreek-e-Insaf, he said that the alleged audio leak linking the leadership of Pakistan PTI with violent incidents PPP is strongly condemned. The audios allegedly link the high-level leadership of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party to violent attacks on public assets. Mir Ali Hasan Zehri said that our party is committed to promoting transparency, accountability and peace within our society. We Believe in principles and if

these allegations are true, they represent a serious breach of trust by those in positions of power and responsibility. Such incidents, if proven, not only harm national harmony but also endanger the peace and stability of our society.

PPP's president added that we emphasize that any act of violence irrespective of whether a party or an individual is involved in it is condemnable and against the fundamental values that we want to uphold. We also firmly believe that the peace and welfare of our nation can never be achieved through violence, but rather through dialogue, cooperation and respect for the rule of law. We also recognize the right to a fair trial and the principle of "innocent until proven guilty."

He said that we appeal to the concerned authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into these allegations and ensure that justice is served. The credibility and

integrity of our democratic institutions and political leadership is at stake and it is imperative that the truth comes out and appropriate action is taken.

Mir Ali Hassan Zehri further said that the People's Party is committed to promote peace and national unity and hold people accountable and should be brought to court and all the factors should be brought to the fore through a clear and transparent investigation and he should be punished in accordance with the requirements of justice.

On the other hand, if the allegation is based only on allegations and lies, then such elements should also be brought forward and they should also be considered punishable for not proving the allegations. We call upon all political parties, civil society organizations and citizens to uphold the values of democracy, transparency, and social harmony.

## AJK PM for citizens' due role in rapid development

MIRPUR (APP): The Azad Jammu & Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwaar ul Haque said it was the responsibility of every citizen to play his due role for the rapid development and uplift of the state.

Talking to a delegation at Jammu and Kashmir House in the Federal metropolis, the prime minister said "We all have to take the state on the path of development". He said, "All the departments are service providers to the public. Their duty is to serve the people."

He said that financial stability is key to running the affairs of any state, with the release of development funds by the federal government, the wheel of development in the state, which was stopped, has started running again. He said that provision of relief to the people is the first priority of his government for which all resources will be utilized.

Development funds should be spent on time. Directives have been issued to all the departments to attend to the complaints of the public, to facilitate the

people and not confuse them. "People are already suffering from economic problems, if their problems are not addressed even in the offices, where will they go, every organization is responsible in this regard," he maintained.

Ch Anwaar ul Haq said, "as a Prime Minister I am accountable to my citizens,". He assured the people that in the coming days they will see real change in every department. It is the responsibility of every citizen to contribute to the development of the state, he said.

## IGP for foolproof security on 34th National Games

QUETTA (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh chaired a meeting regarding the regulation, security and other arrangements of the 34th National Games in Quetta.

Additional IG Police Jawad Ahmed Dogar, Additional IG and Commandant BC Salman Chaudhry, DIG Headquarters Shahab Azim Lahri, DIG Quetta Ghulam Azhar Mesar, DIG ATF Munir Ahmed and other police officers also participated in the meeting. Addressing the meeting, IGP said that after 19 years, a big event was going to be held in Balochistan on the occasion of National Games, which was a matter

of honor for the province.

Therefore, strict and foolproof arrangements will be made for the security of the players and venues in this regard, he said adding that a joint security plan would be arranged with the management in which the players and fans could face minimum inconvenience. He said that all possible resources would be utilized for the peaceful and successful conduct of the National Games, more than 2500 police personnel would be deployed for the security and safety of the grounds and players.

The IG said that officials in civil clothes would also perform their duties throughout the city, police and FC personnel to be

assigned for the security of the grounds and players, while the army would be kept on standby in case of any emergency. He said three control rooms are being set up for the security of the National Games, while surveillance will also be done with the help of CCTV cameras across the city.

He said that 24-hour monitoring would continue during the National Games, and special cards and vehicle passes would be issued for media and guests. It was informed in the meeting that seven thousand official and national and international players from all over the country are participating in the National Games.

## One-day free medical camp organized

LARKANA (APP): A one-day free medical camp was organized by Working Social Welfare Association Larkana in collaboration with the Shafiq Ahmed Chandio, Chairman of Union Committee No. 3 Hyderi Town of Larkana city and District Health Department Larkana.

The camp was held at Eid Gah Sheikh Zayed Colony Larkana, where more than 400 patients including women, children and men suffering from different diseases were provided medical facilities including medicines free of cost and tests. Specialists including Dr. Mohammad Hasan Sheikh, Dr. Jahangir, Dr. Abdul Rahman Soomro, Dr. Yasmin Rind, Dr. Sabah Mangi, Dr. Farman Abro, Dr. Rekha Oda and other patients were checked up at the camp.

On that occasion, there were 2 children from Gharibabad locality in the camp who were deaf and could not speak. ENT specialist Dr. Muhammad Hasan Sheikh said that most people criticized that there were no benefits in setting up a camp, but today in Sheikh Zayed camp two children who were deaf and dumb appeared to be aware that the camp would benefit the patients, Dr. Shaikh added.

Speaking on the occasion,



Chairman UC 3 Hyderi Town Larkana Shafiq Ahmed Chandio appreciated the efforts of the Working Social Welfare Association, health department holding the medical camps in the various localities especially backward areas of district and said that it were better steps, through which poor and deserving people could get benefits of the healthcare facilities at their doorsteps. He said that the government was striving for the provision of basic health facilities to the people and organizing of free medical camps in backward areas was part of it.

He on the occasion urged upon the people that the patients suffering from different diseases may be brought into the hospitals for medical treatment instead of their treatment at home as better medical facilities were

available in the hospitals. On this occasion, the President of the Working Social Welfare Association Larkana, Munawwar Rind said that we are getting rewards by organizing free camps for patients as service to humanity is worship.

He said we will serve the poor and needy people by organizing such camps every year. He said in today's free medical camp more than 500 male, female and children patients suffering from different diseases including ENT, Diabetics, chest, eyes, skin, problems and others were provided medical facilities including medicines and tests free of cost. Ali Murad Mirani, Naveed Solangi, Muhammad Qasim Chandio, Manzoor Solangi, Abdul Qadir Gopang and others participated in the camp.

## 5 of a family die in Shangla jeep plunge

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: At least five people including a woman of the same family were killed and four others seriously injured when the jeep they were traveling in plunged into a deep gorge in Shangla on Friday.

Police said the ill-fated family was returning from a wedding when their Jimmy jeep met the accident in Rageshvam Bailan Tangay area and fell into the gorge. The Rescue workers pulled the bodies and injured from the wreckage of the vehicle after hectic efforts. The four seriously injured people including a woman and two children were rushed to Pooran Tehsil Headquarters Hospital for treatment.

## 4 killed as car plunges into ditch

LOWER DIR (INP): In an unfortunate incident, at least four people were killed while three others sustained injuries in Lower Dir district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) after a car fell into a ditch on Friday.

According to details, a father and son duo were among the victims. Rescue teams and police reached the spot after getting information and shifted the deceased and injured to a nearby hospital.

The bodies were immediately shifted to the district headquarters hospital in Lower Dir, where they were identified by their family members. The police have launched an investigation into the incident and are trying to determine the cause of the accident. Police added that accident was because of over speeding and deceased are yet to be identified.

## 3 friends drown in riverside lake

CHITRAL (INP): Three teenage friends died after drowning in a riverside lake in Shonarovi Lasht Shotar area of the Upper Chitral Headquarters, Booni, Rescue 1122 informed on Friday.

Initial report said the three friends had gone to the lake for a picnic and when the locals noticed that the boys were missing from the scene, they called Rescue 1122 for help. The Rescue 1122 team reached the spot in time to search for the boys in the lake however they could only find all the three dead after efforts of around one hour. The rescuers after retrieving the bodies shifted them to the THQ Hospital, Booni for medico legal procedure.

The ill-fated friends were identified as Murtaza, (14), Mehboob (13) and Fayyaz (12) It needs a mention here that local people create artificial lakes alongside the rivers for hunting ducks coming from the coastal area of Russia and oblivious to the depth of these lakes, the local people sometimes drown in deep water. The bodies of the three friends, when reached the Shotarovi Lasht Shotar village, highly moving scenes were witnessed as most of the people were crying to mourn the death of three young boys.

## Class IX chemistry paper leaked

LARKANA (INP): The Class IX chemistry paper was leaked Friday in Larkana. The question paper was shared in WhatsApp groups; nevertheless, the cheating mafia failed miserably to help students write the answers due to the suspension of internet service across Sindh.

On the other hand, an attempt was made to carry out theft at a public school in Dakhan, a suburban area of Shikarpur. The thieves attempted to remove the iron installed on the roof of the Government Girls Primary School. They also injured the watchman when he resisted the theft attempt. The injured watchman was shifted to Larkana in critical condition. The students and teachers in the school protested against the incident. They were holding placards in their hands inscribed with slogans demanding the arrest of the thieves.

# Training sessions for civil defense volunteers concluded



F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Training sessions for the volunteers of civil defense aimed to impart valuable information pertaining rescue activities were held here separately in Landi Kotal, Jamrud and Bara subdivisions of Khyber.

On the direction of the Secretary Relief and Rehabilitation and Director

General Rescue 1122 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, District emergency officer Syed Shoab Mansoor under his supervision, planned tehsil wise training sessions for the workers of civil defense. The district training wing of Rescue 1122 informed the attendants regarding first aid, fire fighting and tackling of natural disasters.

According to the Rescue

1122 official the purpose of the training sessions was to equip enough the workers of civil defense technically to deal with the emergencies efficiently in conjunction with the Rescue 1122 workers. It is worth mentioning here that Rescue 1122 has intended to impart initial training to more sections of the society to respond effectively during any emergency.

## Cheques among Kurram incident victims distributed

F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: Three laborers who died in Teri Mangal Government School on May 4, 2023 should be compensated with Rs10 million while tribesmen demanded to increased it to Rs33 million in accordance with inflation, on Friday.

These views were expressed by Human Rights Organization (HRCP) Karam District Coordinator Azmat Alizai, PPP Karam General Secretary Haji Jameel Turi, Tehreek-e-Insaf Syed Jafar, Chairman Lalmay Syed Asghar, Zidan leader Latif Hussain Bangash. That on May 4, 2023, in the government school of Teri Mangal, Kurram area, three laborers were brutally killed along with four teachers.

These laborers belong to very poor families. The government gave checks of ten million. Which is not equal to the current inflation, so the government should announce 33 million rupees to these poor workers so that the orphans of these poor families can work.

Meanwhile, government has distributed a martyr package of Rs. 55.55 lakhs to the families of the teachers and Rs. Checks distributed. Checks of relief funds were distributed by the government to the families

of seven martyrs, including the teachers, who were martyred by armed miscreants in Government High School Teri Mangal near Parachinar Pak-Afghan border.

On this occasion, the families of the martyrs, the Federal Minister Sajid Tori, district administration officers, tribal elders and leaders of teachers' organizations were also present. Deputy Commissioner Karam Syed Saiful Islam offered a collective prayer for the martyrs. Full legal action is being taken against their killers. The elements involved in the incident should be given exemplary punishment, but no innocent person should be harmed and efforts should be continued to establish peace and order.

As many as 13 students selected for APS: Pak Army Kurram Militia 152 has selected 13 bright students from Central Kurram's Zee Musht on merit for army public schools through written examination of lower middle classes who will get free education in next classes. With this initiative of the Pakistan Army, not only the morale of the Pakistan Army in the tribal areas has increased, but also the joy of the parents has not come to an end.

The local elders and

leaders of the area have thanked the Pakistan Army and militia forces and said that the tribal area of Zimisht has been very backward and this initiative of the forces will brighten the future of the children and make it easier for the children to get higher education.

It should be remembered that among these thirteen selected children, ten students have been selected for Class VI and three students have been selected for Class VIII, who were given the written test in 152 Wing Militia Force Wing last Sunday. All these children belong to Government Higher Secondary School Manatu and these are the children who have secured good marks in their respective classes.

According to the sources of the Militia Force, now every year the children here will be given a written test and the children will be selected on the basis of merit for Army Public Schools. These children will be able to get free education, the expenses of which will be borne by the Pakistan Army itself. This initiative has been appreciated by the people of Kurram, who hope that more such initiatives will be taken in the future to promote education in the area.

## Step afoot to provide health facilities to people

QUETTA (APP): Secretary Health Balochistan Waqas Ali Mehmood said that practical measures were being taken to provide health facilities to people in respective areas of the province.

He expressed these views while visiting Multipurpose School HRD in Quetta. On this occasion, Director Technical Dr. Amin Khan Mandukhel, Project Director Human Capital

Project Sagib Kakar, DHO Quetta, Dr. Noorullah Bizenjo, Director HRD Dr. Noorullah Musakhel, Provincial Coordinator TB Control Program Dr. Asif Shahwani, Focal Person Secretary, Health Dr. Ababkar Baloch, Dr. Abdul Qadir, Health education Nutrition Specialist Haroon Kasi and other assistants were present.

The Secretary Health inspected the various parts of the multi-purpose school building including

the digital library, and classrooms. He visited the store of the HRD Building and issued orders to form a committee to check and distribute the goods in the store.

The Secretary also met the staff of the sector and listened to the problems of the employees and matters of the Department. He also assured them that he would take possible measures to address these problems for the interest of the sector and staff.

## Arrangements reviewed

BAHAWALPUR (APP): A meeting of the District Emergency Board and District Management Authority was held under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Muhammad Sarwar. The meeting reviewed the arrangements related to the disaster management plan for pre-flood and monsoon 2023.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue said that the officers and staff of the relevant departments should play their role in this regard and all the arrangements should be completed on time. Secretary District Emergency Board and District Management Authority Punjab Emergency Service Rescue 1122 Baqir Hussain

informed the meeting about the arrangements regarding pre-flood monsoon season 2023. He said that a disaster emergency plan has been formed to deal with any possible accident.

He said that 31 ambulances, 7 fire vehicles, 4 rescue vehicles and 50 motor-bike ambulances, and 513 rescuers from Rescue 1122 will perform their duties for pre-flood monsoon. In case of any emergency or mobile network shutdown, Rescue 1122 can be approached on phone number 9250500. The meeting was attended by officers from Punjab Police, Regional Transport Authority, Health Department, Civil Defence, WAPDA, Traffic Police, PTCL, Metropolitan District Corporation, District

Council, Auqaf Department, Sui Gas, Bahawalpur Waste Management Company, and other related departments.

## Load balancing

MULTAN (APP): Superintending Engineer (SE) Mepco Multan Circle Farhan Shabir Malik directed XENs and Standards Developing Organizations (SDOs) to ensure load balancing of transformers in order to prevent tripping and low voltage issues. Presiding over a meeting with officers of all divisions, the superintending engineer said that overloaded transformers caused issues of tripping and low voltage.





## California condors confront bird flu in flight from extinction

LOS ANGELES (AP): The California condor is facing the deadliest strain of avian influenza in US history, and the outbreak could jeopardize the iconic vulture with its 10-foot (3.05-meter) wingspan decades after conservationists saved the species from extinction. But nine newly hatched chicks, covered in downy white feathers, give condor-keepers at the Los Angeles Zoo hope that the endangered population of North America's largest soaring land birds will once again thrive after 40 years of aggressive efforts.

With fewer than 350 condors in the wild — in flocks that span from the Pacific Northwest to Baja California, Mexico — the historic outbreak means ongoing breeding-in-captivity and re-wilding programs like the LA Zoo's remain essential. Over the past year and a half, millions of birds across the US have died from avian flu, including more than 430 bald eagles and some 58 million turkeys and commercial chickens that were euthanized to prevent the spread of the disease. Bird flu is further suspected in the deaths of dozens of seals off the coast of Maine last summer.

Already, the strain is believed to have caused the deaths of at least 22 California condors in Arizona, which were part of a flock in the Southwest that typically accounts for a third of the species' entire wild population. Experts are now concerned the strain could further impact condors by rapidly spreading across state lines through the spring migration. More than two dozen environmental advocates this week urged the federal government to expedite approvals for a vaccine that would be given to both condors in the wild and in captivity.

The advocates, which include the Center for Biological Diversity, warned in a letter that the flu strain is "jeopardizing the existence" of the famed bird. "The California condor is at risk of extinction once again, and once again, an emergency vaccination campaign is required to stave off a deadly infection and possible extinction," they wrote, referencing the success of the West Nile Virus vaccine for condors in the early 2000s.

As the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act approaches, wildlife officials say the species still cannot sustain itself without human interven-

tion — even though humans are also to blame for much of its losses outside the avian flu, including deaths from lead ammunition poisoning. "I think it's going to take some changes in behavior from the humans on the planet so that we can really address the threats to the species," said Ashleigh Blackford, the California condor coordinator for the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Despite a California law banning it for hunting, lead ammunition is still readily used. The condors scavenge meat from dead animals, felled by the lead ammunition, and fall ill — often fatally. "It's really hard to watch a bird you raised come back and die in your arms," said Los Angeles Zoo condor-keeper Chandra David, who has tended to lead-poisoned condors brought back to the zoo for treatment. "And there's nothing we can do about it."

Still, spring is a time for hope. At breeding programs in the US and Mexico, chicks are hatching and online "condor cams" provide live feeds for fans. "It's a funny species in that it really is not your typical charismatic species, right? They are a little bit on the ugly side. Most people are not endeared to vultures, but this one in particular (is different)," Blackford said. Regardless, the condor looms large in California culture — even if it's not the official state bird (that's the California quail). The mascot for the Los Angeles Clippers is Chuck the Condor and one of the birds in flight is featured prominently on the state quarter.

The population was nearly wiped out by hunting during the California Gold Rush, as well as poisoning from toxic pesticide DDT and lead ammunition. In the 1980s, all 22 California condors left in the wild were controversially captured and put into captive breeding programs to save the species. Zoo-bred birds were first released into the wild in 1992 and in the years since have been reintroduced into habitats they'd disappeared from — including the Yurok Tribe's ancestral lands in Northern California. The ongoing re-wilding efforts are considered a conservation success. "It took decades to drive species toward extinction and it's, in many cases, going to take decades to bring them back," said Noah Greenwald, endangered species director for Center for Biological Diversity.

## China hands eight-year jail term to activist

SHENZHEN/HONG KONG (Reuters): China sentenced lawyer and prominent rights activist Guo Feixiong to a prison term of eight years, with diplomats from several countries saying they were barred from the trial in the southern city of Guangzhou.

The sentence follows terms of more than a decade in jail each handed to two prominent rights lawyers, Ding Jiaxi and Xu Zhiyong in April, amid China's clampdown on dissent since President Xi Jinping came to power in 2012. While rights groups say hundreds of lawyers and activists have been detained in recent years, China says it respects the rule of law and individual rights and rejects criticism of its human rights record.

Guo, 58, has drawn international attention for campaigns against issues such as graft and censorship, and his accusations of mistreatment by Chinese authorities during more than a decade behind bars

on previous charges. His latest detention, in 2022, came a year after he was stopped from leaving the country to visit his dying wife in the United States, sparking further outcry. After a three-hour trial Guo, whose real name is Yang Maodong, was found guilty of defaming China's political system and inciting subversion of state power, his brother said in a statement, adding that Guo would appeal against the judgment.

Statement was confirmed by Guo's lawyer. Diplomats from several countries said they were prevented from attending the trial. "Today, US diplomats were blocked from attending the court proceedings of Guo Feixiong," the US embassy in China said on its Twitter account. "We continue to call for Mr. Guo's speedy release so he may be reunited with his family." Diplomats from Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, and the Netherlands were also

turned away and told by a court clerk that foreign visitors needed approval from higher authorities, four diplomats told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

The Guangzhou Intermediate People's Court and China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment. In early 2021, Guo was stopped by officials at the airport in the commercial hub of Shanghai as he sought to visit his ailing wife in the United States. His public pleas to be allowed to leave were rebuffed and his wife died of cancer about a year later. Two days after that, Guo was arrested by Guangzhou police and has been held in detention since, according to rights groups. Guo was subjected to "years of mistreatment, imprisonment, routine harassment and surveillance, and denied foreign travel for his peaceful advocacy on behalf of the Chinese people," the US state department has said earlier.

## Ukraine pushes to extend wartime grain deal

ISTANBUL (AP): The Ukrainian government is seeking to extend a wartime deal that allowed the country's grain to get to nations in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where hunger is a growing threat, a top Ukrainian official said after the latest talks on prolonging the agreement.

The two-talks in Istanbul involved Turkish, Russian, Ukrainian and United Nations officials but yielded no decisions for an extension. The deal is due to expire next Wednesday. Additional discussions are expected in an online format, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said. He said in a statement released after the talks that the grain deal "should be extended for a longer period of time and expanded." "This will give predictability and confidence to both the global and the Ukrainian markets," Kubrakov said. Previous extensions lasted 120 days and 60 days.

However, Russia

opposes both broadening the agreement and its "indefinite expansion," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Vershinin said after the talks. Moscow is considering proposals made by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and "the work, the contacts continue," Vershinin said. If there is no consensus by May 18, the deal "will cease to exist," the Russian diplomat said.

Ukraine and Russia are both major global suppliers of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and other affordable food products that developing nations depend on. In July 2022, Moscow and Kyiv signed an agreement with the United Nations and Turkey that outlined a process for shipments from three of Ukraine's Black Sea ports to resume amid Russia's invasion of its neighbor. It has since been renewed twice, most recently in March. According to the UN, the agreement establishing a safe shipping corridor

from the Ukrainian ports to Turkey has allowed over 30 million metric tons of grain and foodstuffs to leave the country.

Russia has repeatedly complained that a separate agreement with the UN to overcome obstacles to shipments of its fertilizers that was part of the July package has not produced results. According to a UN statement, proposals discussed at the meeting included "the resumption of the Togliatti-Odesa ammonia pipeline, the longer extension of the deal, improvements at the Joint Coordination Centre for stable operations and exports." Vershinin reiterated that Moscow "first and foremost" is defending "Russia's national interests, its agriculture producers, producers of fertilizers." "An initiative that brings unilateral benefits can hardly be recognized and confirmed by all," he said. The Turkish Defense Ministry said in a statement after the talks that the sides displayed "constructive approaches."

## UK sending Ukraine long-range cruise missiles

LONDON (AP): The U.K. is sending Ukraine long-range cruise missiles to help push back Russian forces, British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said. It's the first known shipment of the weaponry that Kyiv has long sought from its allies.

Wallace told lawmakers in the House of Commons that Britain is donating Storm Shadow missiles, which have a range of more than 250 kilometers (155 miles). He didn't say how many are being sent. Wallace said the missiles "are now going into or are in the country itself." Prime Minister Rishi Sunak pledged in February that Britain would be the first country to give Ukraine longer-range weapons.

The missiles give Ukraine capacity to strike well behind the front lines, including in Russia-occupied Crimea. U.K. media reported that Ukraine has pledged not to use the missiles to attack Russia itself. Wallace said the missiles would be used to push back Russian forces in "Ukrainian sovereign territory." He said U.K. support for Ukraine is "responsible, calibrated, coordinated and agile." "We simply will not stand back while Russia kills civilians," Wallace said. He said U.K. officials would not comment publicly on whether Britain had placed any limitations on the missiles' use.

## South Africa supplied arms to Russia: US

WASHINGTON (BBC): The US ambassador to South Africa has accused the country of supplying weapons to Russia despite its professed neutrality in the war in Ukraine. Reuben Brigety claimed that a Russian ship was loaded with ammunition and arms in Cape Town last December. President Cyril Ramaphosa's office said it was disappointed by the claims and said no evidence has been provided to support them.

The country has maintained claims of neutrality in the invasion of Ukraine. Mr Brigety said at a media briefing in Pretoria that Washington had concerns about the country's stated non-aligned stance on the conflict. He referred to the docking of a cargo ship in the Simon's Town naval base between 6 and 8 December last year which he was "confident" uploaded weapons and ammunition "as it made its way back to Russia". The presence of the ship, the Lady R, had seemed curious at the time and raised questions from some local politicians.

"The arming of the Russians is extremely serious, and we do not consider this issue to be resolved," Mr Brigety said, in a damning accusation that seems to have caught South Africa's officials off guard. In the wake of the allegations, the South African government announced the establishment of an independent inquiry led by a retired judge, a spokesman for the president's office said. The US has been critical for months about South Africa's continued cosy relationship with Russia. State Department deputy spokesman Vedant Patel told journalists that the US had previously raised concerns about the Lady R with numerous South African officials.

He said the US would speak out against "any country taking steps to support Russia's illegal and brutal war in Ukraine", but would not say whether there would be any repercussions for South Africa if the claims proved to be true. Washington has also expressed concerns about South Africa's participation in military exercises with Russia and China during the anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine. The naval exercises took place over 10 days in February and were criticised by opposition figures as an endorsement of the Russian invasion.

The South African authorities denied the war games were provocatively timed to coincide with the one-year anniversary and said the country routinely hosts similar drills with other nations, including France and the US.

## Thailand's election may deliver mandate for change

BANGKOK (AP): Voters disaffected by nine years of plodding rule by a coup-making army general are expected to deliver a strong mandate for change in Thailand's general election Sunday. But a predicted victory by the allies of Thaksin Shinawatra, whose ouster by coup 17 years ago plunged the country into prolonged instability, has caused concern for an unhindered democratic transition.

Dissatisfaction with the incumbent prime minister running for reelection, Prayuth Chan-ocha, is high, due in part to a slumping economy and his government's mismanaged response to the COVID-19 pandemic. But weariness and even anger at the military's habitual interference in politics is a major factor. Thailand has had more than a dozen coups since becoming a constitutional monarchy in 1932, the last one in 2014 carried out by Prayuth when he was army commander. Prayuth's governments slapped down democratic reforms and prosecuted activists.

"The main factor could be that people are no longer willing to tolerate the authoritarian government that has been in power for over nine years, and there is a significant wish for change among the people," said Pinkaew Laungaramsri, a professor of anthropology at Chiang Mai University. Seventy political parties are contesting the 500 seats up for grabs in the House of Representatives: 400 are directly elected, with 100 chosen via a form of proportional representation.

Opposition parties endorsing reforms to rein in the army are running strides ahead in opinion polls. But pitching policies that threaten the status quo alarms the ruling conservative establishment. It has repeatedly shown itself capable of bringing down popularly elected governments it didn't like, through rulings in the royalist courts and army coups. Prayuth represents one pole of the country's politics, centered around royalists and the military. Thaksin, the billionaire populist ousted in the 2006 coup, represents the other. The power struggle between Thaksin's supporters and his opponents has been fought — sometimes in the street, sometimes at the ballot box — for almost two decades.

Prayuth is trailing badly in opinion polls behind Thaksin's 36-year-old daughter, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who inherited the popularity and political style of her father. She campaigned intensively while heavily pregnant and gave birth to a son last week. She is the favorite among the opposition Pheu Thai Party's three registered nominees for prime minister. Her party looks set to win a majority of seats in the lower house of Parliament.

Recent history strengthens the appearance of this election as a grudge match between the



Shinawatras and their foes. Prayuth's 2014 coup unseated a government that had come to power with Yingluck Shinawatra — Paetongtarn's aunt, Thaksin's sister — as prime minister. And Pheu Thai topped the field in the 2019 vote, only to be denied power when the army-backed Palang Pracharath Party found partners to assemble a coalition government. But a third major player has injected a sharp ideological aspect into the election. The Move Forward Party, led by 42-year-old businessman Pita Limjaroenrat, has galvanized younger voters and is running a strong second to Pheu Thai in the polls. However, for conservative Thailand, its platform is frighteningly radical: reform of the military and reform of the powerful monarchy, a bold move because the institution has been traditionally treated as sacrosanct.

Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a professor at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University, points out that while Move Forward's agenda would be considered just "progressive" in other countries, in the Thai context it is "revolutionary." "This election is the most important in contemporary Thai politics because it's an election that's going to determine Thailand's political future," he says, crediting Move Forward with "pushing the frontiers of Thai politics into areas where it needs to go."

Pheu Thai largely shares Move Forward's reformist agenda, but the smaller party's more forthright stand poses a dilemma. Adding Move Forward to a coalition government could antagonize the Senate, a conservative body whose support is crucial to taking power. Thailand's 2017 constitution, adopted under military rule, calls for the prime minister to be selected by a joint vote of the 500-

member House and the unelected 250-seat Senate, whose members were appointed by Prayuth's junta. In 2019, the Senate voted as a bloc, unanimously backing Prayuth. This time, a party that wins a clear majority of House seats still might need at least 376, or 75% plus one, of the votes in the 500-member lower house if its prime minister candidate was opposed in the Senate. If Pheu Thai lands in such a position, it could find coalition partners among parties that win some House seats. It could also nominate one of its other candidates for prime minister, most likely 60-year-old Srettha Thavisin, who is not burdened with the Shinawatra name that is anathema to the Senate's conservatives. Most intriguingly, Pheu Thai could ally with another former general, 77-year-old Prawit Wongsuwan, who has been Prayuth's ambitious deputy prime minister and is this year's prime minister candidate for the Palang Pracharath Party.

He and his party are polling badly, but his presence in government might reassure some senators. Such an alliance would seem like a deviation from Pheu Thai's platform, but could be sold to supporters on the basis that Prawit was not actively involved in plotting the 2014 coup. Until Sunday's votes are counted, Pheu Thai's path forward will remain unclear. "Many said that this election reflects the people's hope for change in politics, but at the same time, the greater the hope for change imposed on this election, the more nervous the conservatives currently holding power become," says Chiang Mai University's Pinkaew. "We will begin to see the retaliation from the conservative side, from provoking a sense of extreme nationalism to obstructing some parties."

## Philippine court acquits former justice secretary

MANILA (AP): A former Philippine opposition senator and justice secretary was acquitted of drug charges Friday after key witnesses recanted and said they had lied about her involvement in narcotics trafficking. Leila de Lima, 63, remained jailed, however, as she has one outstanding charge against her.

De Lima has been detained since 2017 on drug charges she says were fabricated by former President Rodrigo Duterte and his officials in an attempt to muzzle her criticism of his deadly crack-down on illegal drugs. His campaign left thousands of mostly petty suspects dead and sparked an International Criminal Court investigation as a possible crime against humanity. Duterte, who has insisted on de Lima's guilt, left office last June at the end of his turbulent six-

year term. Trial court judge Abraham Alcantara said in his ruling that a former senior police official's recantation led to his decision to acquit de Lima.

"Without his testimony, the crucial link to establish conspiracy is shrouded with reasonable doubt," he wrote, "which warrants the acquittal." As supporters surrounded her police escort and chanted "free Leila de Lima" outside the court, she said she felt vindicated.

"Answered prayers, this is a glorious day, this is the beginning of my vindication. May I say this to my oppressors: You can never crucify the truth," she said as she was surrounded by police. Prosecution witness Rafael Ragos, a former head of the Bureau of Corrections, retracted a claim to have delivered money from drug lords to de Lima and said he had been forced by gov-

ernment officials to make it.

De Lima said through her attorney that she was looking forward to her full acquittal on all charges. She has been held in pretrial detention since her arrest without any convictions. "I have no doubt from the very beginning that I will be acquitted from all the cases the Duterte regime has fabricated against me based on the merits and strength of my innocence. That's already two cases down and one more to go," she said in a statement read out by lawyer, Boni F. Tacardon. "I am of course happy that with this second acquittal in the three cases filed against me, my release from more than six years of persecution draws nearer. I am extremely grateful to those who stood by and prayed for me all these years," she added.

## French prosecutors seek trial for Sarkozy

PARIS (AP): French prosecutors are seeking to send former President Nicolas Sarkozy and 12 others to trial on charges that his 2007 presidential campaign received millions in illegal financing from the government of late Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi. After a decade of investigation, the French national financial prosecutor's office announced its decision Friday to seek a trial. It's now up to judges to determine whether to move ahead. In general, judges in France follow such prosecutors' requests, though not always.

The case is the biggest and most shocking of multiple corruption investigations involving Sarkozy. He has been convicted in two others. He denies wrongdoing in all cases. In the Libya

case, he is charged with illegal campaign financing, embezzling, passive corruption and related counts. Sarkozy has been under investigation in the Libya case since 2013. Investigators examined claims that Gadhafi's government secretly gave Sarkozy 50 million euros for his winning 2007 French campaign. The sum would be more than double the legal campaign funding limit at the time, 21 million euros, and would violate French rules against foreign campaign financing.

The investigation gained traction when French Lebanese businessman Ziad Takieddine told news site Mediapart in 2016 that he had delivered suitcases from Libya containing 5 million euros (\$6.2 million) in cash to Sarkozy and his

former chief of staff. Takieddine later reversed course and Sarkozy sought to have the investigation closed. After becoming president in 2007, Sarkozy welcomed Gadhafi to France with high honors later that year. Sarkozy then put France at the forefront of NATO-led airstrikes that helped rebel fighters topple Gadhafi's government in 2011.

In an unrelated case, Sarkozy was sentenced to a year of house arrest for illegal campaign financing of his unsuccessful 2012 reelection bid. He is free while the case is pending appeal. He also was found guilty of corruption and influence peddling in another case and sentenced to a year in prison. A decision on his appeal is expected soon.

## Egyptian politician who vowed to run for president returns

LONDON (AP): An Egyptian politician vowing to run in the country's presidential elections next year returned to Egypt, days after announcing that his relatives had been detained. Ahmed Altantawy, who left the country for Lebanon last August, confirmed his arrival in Egypt on his official Facebook page.

"I arrived today in my homeland, from which I have been away for nine months," Altantawy wrote. "I ask your permission for five days to spend in the bosom of my family who need me and I need them." Next year's presidential election is widely anticipated to be a foregone conclusion in favor of the incumbent President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, who has overseen a sharp crackdown on political opposition.

Since coming to power in 2013, el-Sissi's government has detained thousands of suspected supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood but also large numbers of secular activists. Human Rights Watch say the North African country has detained as many as 60,000 political prisoners, although el-Sissi and other Egyptian politicians have rejected this claim. Altantawy, a former journalist who later served as a lawmaker in Egypt's predominately pro-government legislature until 2020, announced his presidential bid in a video in March. The politician said he wants to provide a democratic alternative to el-Sissi's government, describing its treatment of political opponents as unlawful and unjust. The former lawmaker had promised to return to Egypt last Saturday. However, he postponed his return late Friday after announcing that two of his uncles, among other supporters, had been recently detained.



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## IMF program and Dar’s misdemeanour

**MINISTER for Finance and Revenue Ishaq Dar asserted that Pakistan would not default, even if a stalled loan program with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was not revived. While commenting on the delay in the conclusion of a staff-level agreement with the IMF for the release of a crucial economic bailout package for the South Asian nation, Dar said that rumors about Pakistan defaulting on its debt obligations should not be spread and the international politics based on injustice with Pakistan should be ended.**

Pakistan began formal talks with the Washington-based global lender in February this year to negotiate a plan to rescue the country's economy by reviving the IMF's Extended Facility Fund (IFF) and securing the release of a \$ 1.2 billion tranche that will be part of the Country's \$ 6 billion bailout package previously concluded in 2019. The IMF was extremely annoyed with Pakistani authorities who blatantly trashed the EFF program twice through their politically motivated economic policies and fiscal governance during 2021 and 2022 by the successive administrations of warring Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) and PML-N respectively. The incumbent PML-N-led coalition government remained successful in rescuing the national economy through tough policies and fiscal management in the early months after assuming power last year. However, insane policies, overconfidence, and reckless verbalism of Mr. Dar brought the healing economy to the brink of collapse. Dar's unreal self-proclamation and delusional monetary policies cost billions of dollars loss to the government of Pakistan, private businesses, and commercial entities and the wheel of the industry practically came to a halt as the imported raw material and machinery struck at the ports due to the no opening of LCs and fear of bankruptcy. The International Monetary Fund has not yet expressed willingness and the scope of a staff-level agreement between the parties is rare because the Pakistani leaders have lost their credibility at the global level and the IMF wants assurances from friendly nations who advocating on behalf of the 225 million strong fragile economies.

The country has been struck with acute economic challenges, low foreign reserves, bad governance, an energy crisis and climate-induced superfloods, and high inflation. In contrast, an all-time intensified political anarchy created worse situations for the masses. The severe economic issues and price hikes pushed the middle and lower middle classes below the poverty line, while low government spending in the social sectors including health and education sharply declined the life quality of the people.

In the prevailing situation, the analysts are of the view that the IMF's endorsement of Pakistan's economic policies and revival of EFF program is crucial for the restoration of global confidence in the country and the revival of economic and industrial activities as the nose-downed economy needs periodic injections of additional resources to achieve sustainability and predictability. Currently, Pakistan is facing an existential threat due to its weak economic outlook and persistent political unrest, but our political leadership failed to access the gravity of the risks and the sensitivity of the situation. The nation has experienced the devastating results of the economic policies of its four-time finance Minister and people have no trust in him anymore. This country is not a practice lab for the so-called economists to test their failed recipes and level huge prices on the public. Unfortunately, the world's seventh and first Muslim nuclear nation is unable to sustain itself on its feet despite the abundance of human, and material resources because of the incapacity and corruption of its leaders and bureaucracy. Pakistani leaders should be measured in their words and policies as well as in dealing with global institutions, so the public might not feel ashamed over the mismanagement and bad governance of the leaders at the global level.

# Why are Indian cities a mess? Because they’re not about people

Somdeep Sen

ways of prosperity and development." Similarly, as part of a \$1.7bn project to redevelop the administrative centre of the national capital, New Delhi, Modi renamed a major street that used to be called "Kingsway" during British rule and by its Hindi equivalent "Rajpath" after independence. Its new name? Kartavya Path - "kartavya" means responsibility. "Symbol of colonialism 'Kingsway' will be history and has been erased forever," Modi said on the occasion. "I congratulate all the people of the country as we come out from another symbol of colonialism."

This jingoism is not a uniquely Modi affliction though. It was also unmistakable when the Indian capital hosted the 2010 Commonwealth Games, when the Congress party - now in opposition - was in power. On the eve of the games, Suresh Kalmadi, the head of the organising committee for the event said, "The city is 10 years ahead now. Earlier, people would fly from Delhi to Dubai, Singapore, and many other destinations. Now they will land here, see the beautiful city". But Modi has taken this philosophy - where urban development is first and foremost a symbol of national pride - to new heights, especially with a futuristic-sounding Smart Cities Mission. Launched in

2015, the mission promised 100 smart cities, with tech-driven, sustainable, and citizen-centric solutions, by 2023.

But who are all of these cities being built for? In a bid to spruce up the image of New Delhi before the Commonwealth Games, some 350,000 street vendors were declared "illegal" and a "major security risk". Their jobs didn't matter. In fact, according to the Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN) charity, at least 200,000 people were also evicted from their slums and shanties between 2004 and 2010 in preparation for the games in the capital. This was in violation of the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement. Amnesty International reported that while most evictees were then housed in temporary shelters, these lacked adequate water and sanitation and were not fit for habitation.

It's been the same story with the smart cities. In 2017, for instance, forced evictions and demolitions of homes were reported in 32 cities implementing smart city initiatives. In 2018, as part of the city of Indore's effort to become "smart", 110 homes of mostly Dalit slum-dwellers were demolished. This was in addition to the more than 500 homes that were

demolished the previous year. In fact, at the time, an estimated 30 people each hour were being forcibly evicted across India as a result of smart city projects and urban beautification schemes.

Then there is the focus on tech-driven solutions. Take the digital and online platforms set up to gather citizens' feedback on smart city projects. The massive digital divide in India means that these platforms are largely inaccessible to the most marginalised and vulnerable urban communities - which are also the most likely to be victims of forced expulsions and forced removals as a direct result of these smart city-making projects. In 2019, I met residents of a rehabilitation colony for slum-dwellers in Mumbai who had recently been forcibly evicted from their homes in another part of the city as a result of an urban beautification project. When I asked what they thought of Modi's smart city plan, one of them asked, "Smart or stupid city?" As the others laughed, he continued: "We feel like we are disposable people. They have disposed us to the outskirts of the city and forgotten about us. Just left us to die."

Then another resident chimed in, "But they can't get rid of us. Who will cook for them, drive their cars, clean their houses, take out their trash?"

Without us, their lives will come to a standstill. We live in slums so they can live in their high rises". Yet Modi's public relations machinery has so far managed to ensure that those sentiments that I heard in Mumbai don't translate into a political backlash against his government. I recently asked a migrant worker in Mumbai his prediction regarding next year's national election. He replied, "Modiji will stay in power." When I asked why he thought so, he said, "Haven't you seen the sea-link, the tall skyscrapers? Even G20 is coming to Mumbai." The Mumbai sea-link, an elevated eight-lane bridge that connects otherwise congested western and central Mumbai, actually preceded the BJP-led national government. The G20 presidency, currently with India, is rotated - not any recognition of Modi.

And when foreign dignitaries recently arrived in Mumbai for a G20 event, informal settlements along the highway were reportedly draped with green sheets as a way of beautifying the city. Still, pitching urban development as a national cause clearly works politically. But it does little to solve the crises faced by India's cities. It is only when urban development is focused on the most marginalised and vulnerable can cities truly belong to all, and genuinely become liveable.

## The west must be ready for this moment of opportunity and risk in Ukraine

Timothy Garton Ash

**AS you read this, thousands of young Ukrainian men and women are going through their last training drills, checking their weapons and waiting for D-day. In the big Ukrainian counter-offensive that may start any time now, some of them will be killed and many more will be wounded. None will emerge unchanged. We thought we had said goodbye to all that in 1945, but this is Europe in 2023.**

Nobody knows what will happen in this campaign. Nobody. But we can at least be clear what we want to happen - and firm in supporting the Ukrainians to achieve it. Decisive Ukrainian victory is now the only sure path to a lasting peace, a free Europe and ultimately a better Russia. This alone would be the new VE Day. Ukrainians have a theory of victory. It goes from success on the battlefield to change in Moscow. For preference, that would be a change of regime, getting rid of the war criminal in the Kremlin. But in the highly unlikely event that Vladimir Putin were to acknowledge his own failure and withdraw his troops, while still remaining in power, that would be victory too.

How do they think this might happen, given

Russia's dug-in defending forces and major advantages in numbers and air power? One answer is: the way it happened before in Russian history, with military setbacks triggering the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. If the Ukrainian army can push rapidly south to the Sea of Azov, encircle a large number of demoralised Russian forces and cut the supply lines to the Crimean peninsula, there might be some non-linear collapse of Russian military morale on the ground and regime cohesion in Moscow. Crimea is the key to this scenario. Ukrainians want to head for the peninsula (but not immediately try to occupy it) for precisely the reason that many western policymakers wish them not to: because Crimea is the thing that really matters to Russia. They add that Ukraine can never have long-term security while Crimea is a giant Russian aircraft carrier pointed at its heart. It's a bold and risky theory of victory, but does anyone in the west have a better one? Many western policymakers seem almost as afraid of Ukrainian success as they are of Ukrainian failure, fearing that Putin will escalate in response. So, they nourish a confused idea that there's a Goldilocks outcome - not too hot, not too cold - that will open the

way to the nirvana of a "negotiated solution". Or, more cynically (self-styled "realistically"), they are privately prepared for Ukraine to end up losing perhaps one-sixth of its sovereign territory, in a partition that they can call "peace". But at best this would be a semi-frozen conflict, pending renewed war. Here we encounter, once again, the unrealism of "realism".

Most Western military analysts think that Ukraine is unlikely to achieve a decisive victory, thus making moot the question of whether this would trigger the hoped-for political consequences in Moscow. If you have two exhausted armies, that favours defence over offence. Ukraine has great vulnerabilities in its air defences. The fact that there's only one obvious path towards Crimea means that Russia is prepared to defend that line. (So it's possible Ukraine might try something else, but even taking back a substantial chunk of Donbas would not have the same psychological effect in Russia as a threat to Crimea.) The counter-offensive can deploy nine new western-equipped and trained brigades, but these have a mix-and-match zoo of different western weapons and scant experi-

ence in the complex combined arms operations needed to overcome Russia's defensive lines. Because capitals such as Washington and Berlin have been nervously pondering every item, the Ukrainians don't have the quantity and quality of western tanks, armoured vehicles, long-range missiles and fighter planes they might have had if the west had not held back for fear of escalation. The next six months will be decisive. If, come next winter, Ukrainian forces are still bogged down halfway, the west may not deliver a comparable military boost for another offensive next spring. Beside objective difficulties in gearing up our defence industries, there might be waning political support, especially in the US in the run-up to next autumn's presidential election. There would then be disillusionment in Ukraine. Putin would still be in power. He could use his propaganda apparatus at home to sell his partial occupation of Ukrainian territory as a historical restoration of Catherine the Great's empire.

The alternative, perhaps unlikely but still possible, is a decisive Ukrainian victory. Since that would mean a defeat that even Putin's

state lie-machine could not conceal, the path to victory would bring a moment of increased risk. Although nobody knows exactly what's going on inside the Kremlin black box, intelligence-based analysis suggests that Putin has wargamed and rejected the option of using tactical nuclear weapons, as this would bring no clear military advantage and alienate China and India. But the situation around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which was seized by Russia in February 2022 and around which the occupiers have now evacuated the local population, is extremely worrying. He also has other possible asymmetric responses, such as a cyber-attack or targeting a gas pipeline. What should we do about this? Don't be scared, be prepared. There is no risk-free way forward. Avoiding an immediate risk can mean creating larger risks down the road (which is the mistake the west made after 2014 when it allowed Russia to keep Crimea and negotiated the sticking plaster Minsk Agreement for occupied eastern Ukraine). These risks include not only recurrent armed conflict in Ukraine but also encouraging China to have a go at Taiwan. I've lost count of the number of times

Ukrainians have said to me that the west's biggest problem is fear. "The choice is between freedom and fear," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy recently told the Atlantic. So we have to keep our nerve and show just a little of the fortitude that those thousands of young Ukrainians are demonstrating, as they prepare to risk their lives to defend their freedom.

I'm acutely aware of the need to avoid any hint of armchair heroism. Even if I travel to Ukraine occasionally during this war, I'm not taking a small fraction of the personal risk that Ukrainians face. Responsible governments must recognise, anticipate and carefully weigh the real dangers of escalation. Prudence is not cowardice. But there's also another thing to avoid: the woolly talk of "peace" and "responsibility", which actually means urging, or ultimately even compelling, other people to sacrifice their own homes, freedom and security, so that citizens of countries such as Germany, France or Italy can, if only in the short term, go on enjoying these things for themselves. The west has done that many times before to people in central and eastern Europe. Let's not do it again.

The Guardian

## Russia’s collapse and China’s domination

Allister Heath

**THERE is only one winner from Vladimir Putin's monstrous war on Ukraine, and that is the Chinese Communist Party. To our eternal shame, Xi Jinping has spectacularly outwitted the West, drastically expanded his global influence, and turned Russia into a Chinese protectorate in all but name.**

Russia was meant to have collapsed by now. Britain, America and Europe's gambit was that drastic trade, financial and technological sanctions, a cap on the price of Russian seaborne oil, and substantial help to Ukraine would be enough to defeat Moscow. It hasn't worked. For all of the sacrifices of the Ukrainian people, the war has reached a stalemate, at least until Kyiv's counter-offensive.

The reason? China has quietly stepped in, bailing out Putin's shattered economy on a transformational scale, swapping energy and raw materials for goods and technology. The sanctions are a joke. Russian-Chinese trade rose 41.3 per cent in the first four months of the year to \$73? billion, financing Putin's war. China's

exports to Russia were up 153 per cent in April 2023 alone; their rise more than cancels out the decline in German and French trade, as Robin Brooks, of the Institute for International Finance, points out. China's trade has also shot up with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Georgia and Turkey, all with easy, porous access to Russia. No wonder Russian society hasn't imploded. There may no longer be any McDonald's in Moscow, but sales of Chinese cars are buoyant. We were told Russia couldn't survive without Western technology, but it is switching instead to China's rival systems.

The quid pro quo is that Russia is now dependent on the CCP for its survival, and Moscow's new paymasters will pitilessly flex their muscles. This is a triumph for Beijing's mercantilists: they have permanently absorbed Russia into their orbit. If Putin, a nasty megalomaniac, survives his disastrous war, it will be as a vassal of Xi, the final humiliation. The only upside for the rest of us is that Russia is now less likely to use tactical nuclear weapons, an insane policy China would surely veto. What is certain is that

we are now truly in a new Cold War, a historic battle between the West and a resurgent Chinese civilisation-state. The emerging world grasps this, and is taking sides in this new world order. Tragically, China's reputation is soaring, and America's is faltering under the pathetic Joe Biden administration. China has already brokered a rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, endangering Middle East peace. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Brazil's far-Left president, has "reset" relations with Beijing. In Latin America and Africa, the CCP's influence continues to rise thanks to its Belt and Road initiative, the loans it dishes out, and the deals it strikes to corner the market in key materials and minerals. China is also undermining the Commonwealth. India is buying Russian energy.

Yet for all of these victories, future historians may yet remember the present moment as the CCP's heyday, the moment we hit peak China, rather than the start of a new multi-decade, Han dynasty-style period of Chinese ascendancy. The Chinese economy's period

of extremely strong growth is over, despite its prowess in AI and batteries, for three reasons. First, Xi cracked down on China's oligarchs, the entrepreneurs who had driven so much of its progress but had started to throw their weight around. The CCP is once again in total control; there are no longer any independent power centres. Real capitalism is dead. Second, the savagery of its lockdowns, its obsession with zero Covid and the cover-ups of the past few years demonstrate that China remains a fundamentally closed society. There is no real individual liberty, no freedom and thus no chance of another sustained economic boom. Last but not least, China's population fell 850,000 last year, a harbinger of a looming demographic implosion that will turn dozens of cities into ghost towns, throttle the banking system, starve the military and threaten permanent stagnation. India is now the world's most populous nation, with 1.428 billion residents, against China's 1.425 billion, according to the United Nations, with America third at 340 million. China's population is

expected to shrink by almost half during the next three quarters of a century, to just 766 million by 2100 - a decline precipitated by its abominable one-child policy, a reminder of the immorality of top-down social engineering. By contrast, America's population will continue to grow, hitting 394 million by the end of the century, assuming the country holds together despite its bitter ideological divisions. Unless China's productivity suddenly rockets, unlikely in Xi's repressive climate, the gap between the American and Chinese economies may never quite close, or will take much longer to do so than expected.

These limits to China's model coincide with the beginnings of a fight-back by the free world, symbolised by Italy's withdrawal from the Belt and Road initiative. The West is no longer deluded about China's intentions, its attachment to authoritarian imperialism, or its propensity to engage in espionage and dissembling, even if few realise the immensity of the challenge. But at least the David Cameron-George Osborne "golden era" of close ties with China has long since been

forgotten. Liz Truss is travelling to Taiwan next week to warn against China. The Aukus military pact is a great move, as is Britain's decision to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Japan is rearming. India will become increasingly assertive. A Donald Trump or Ron DeSantis victory would accelerate attempts at decoupling the American and Chinese economies. Confident countries that believe their ascent will continue for the foreseeable future don't usually choose to precipitate a major war - for example by invading Taiwan. As Robert Tombs, the historian, has pointed out, it is when nations feel that they are running out of time or that they are being cornered that they lash out. So what next? Can we avoid a calamitous, global conflict that will set humanity back 50 years, at best? Will China's elites see sense and bank their takeover of Putin's Russia? Or will they worry that their own window of opportunity is closing, and decide to gamble on an invasion of Taiwan, especially if the unfathomably weak Biden is reelected? Britain must hope for the best, and prepare for the worst.

The Telegraph



# Only dialogue can end Ukraine crisis

Zhao Huirong

ON May 4, Geng Shuang, China's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, reiterated China's stance that the international community should pave the way for promoting dialogues and politically resolving the Ukraine crisis. Dialogue and negotiations are the only way to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict, President Xi Jinping said during his conversation over the phone with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on April 26. Xi also said that China will send its special envoy on Eurasian affairs to visit countries, including Ukraine, to hold talks with parties that want a political settlement to the Ukraine crisis. This shows China is committed to promoting peace diplomacy to help end the Ukraine crisis.

Ukraine's economy had not been doing well before the conflict broke out, with its GDP reaching \$200 billion in 2021. Since the conflict broke out in February 2022, Ukraine has lost control of one-fifth of its territory, and its GDP declined by 29.1 percent, with 10 million people fleeing their homes and a significant part of its infrastructure being damaged or destroyed. On the other hand, due to the Western sanctions imposed on Moscow in response to its special military operation in Ukraine, Russia's economy shrank by 2.1 percent in 2022 and its influence in Eurasia declined. Also, the spillover effects of the conflict have slowed down the world economy, disrupted the global industri-

al supply chains and increased the possibility of a Russia-NATO confrontation. However, the policies adopted by the Western countries toward Russia have also increased their military and economic costs, and affected their stability and development, with the arms race triggered by the conflict deteriorating the security situation in Europe.

Unfortunately, the European Union, which is facing challenges due to the influx of refugees, and rising energy and food prices, has traded its strategic autonomy for strengthening its alliance with the United States. The fact is that the US had benefited the most from the Ukraine crisis, as it has consolidated its leadership over its allies and partners, somewhat weakened Russia, and succeeded, to a large extent, in driving a permanent wedge between Russia and Ukraine. The US is also profiteering from arms sales and energy trade. But despite its gains, the US has damaged its credibility by inciting the conflict. Nevertheless, the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict is likely to deepen because of the West's military assistance to Ukraine, which will harm the global economy and international relations.

China knows peace cannot be achieved overnight. But only peace talks and a cease-fire can prevent more deaths and injuries, and thus a larger humanitarian crisis. To prevent the situation from deteriorating further, President Xi has

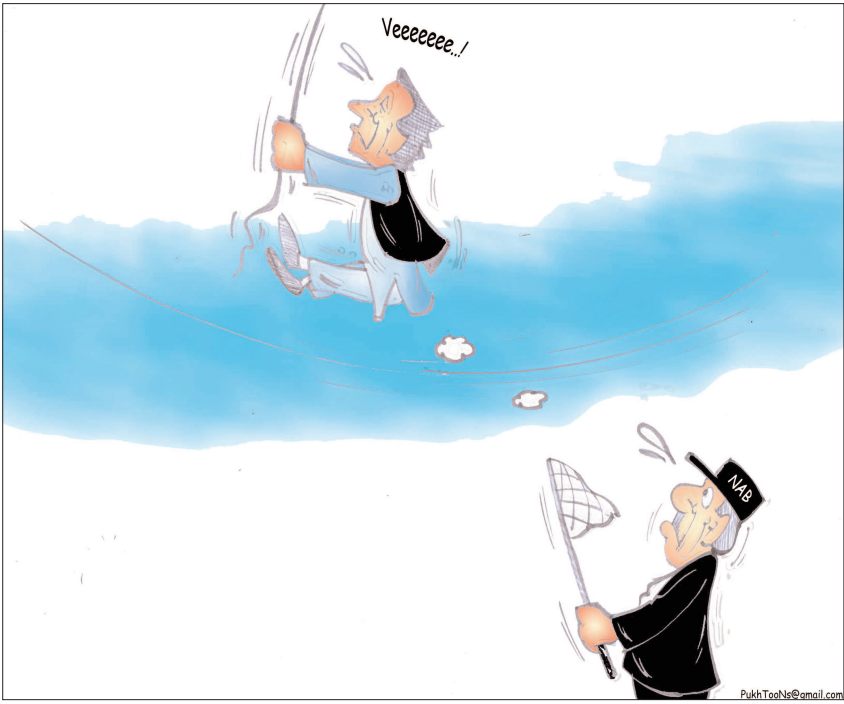
urged the international community to focus on four factors and Ukraine to pay attention to three points. China has even released a position document on the Ukraine crisis to promote peace talks. China's commitment to peace is related to its traditional culture and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. China did not trigger the Russia-Ukraine conflict, yet the escalating conflict has impacted the country as well. For example, a large number of Chinese citizens had to be evacuated from Ukraine and the economic cooperation between the two countries has come to a standstill. The global economic downturn and bloc confrontation caused by the Ukraine crisis, too, have hindered China's peaceful development.

Since Russia and Ukraine both are its strategic partners, China attaches great importance to the long-term development of relations with the two countries. It also hopes Europe will succeed in restoring peace and stability in the region. For China, peace and development are the underlying trends of the times. Perhaps that's why Russia and Ukraine both agree with China's peace proposal and support China's efforts to mediate a rapprochement between the two sides. The Western politicians that

have visited China this year, too, want to see an end to the Ukraine crisis. In this regard, China's mediation efforts are a timely response to the international community's quest for a resolution to the crisis. Global hotspot issues have been increasingly compromising China's interests in recent years, because of its deepening cooperation with other countries. As such, China has been trying to restore peace and stability across the world.

As a matter of fact, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia started in 2014. But the issue is too complex to be resolved overnight because it not only involves confrontations caused by violation of territorial integrity and sovereignty, and historical and current problems, but also because it is a strategic conflict between NATO and Russia and a geopolitical game between Russia and the US. Most EU member states support the US strategy of providing military support for Ukraine to weaken Russia. While Kyiv refuses to trade territory for peace, Moscow says it will use all means possible to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia. Given these facts, it will be very difficult for China's special envoy to mediate peace between Russia and Ukraine. As a traditional Chinese saying goes, those who refuse to take the easy path will succeed, those who meet challenges head-on will prevail. Every war adds to the suffering of the people. Only a cease-fire can end the crisis and bring peace to the region.

The China Daily



## In Somalia, spike in attacks compounds plight of displaced women, girls

**SOMALI humanitarian workers and United Nations officials said women and girls in displaced camps are facing gender-based violence and rape amid the recurring droughts in the country. Physical violence, intimate partner violence (IPV) and rape are the most common types of violence that women and girls are subjected to in displaced communities, according to data gathered by the United Nations Population Fund, or UNFPA.**

In an interview with VOA Somali, UNFPA Country Representative Niyi Ojuolape said data gathered in 2021 shows that 52% of reported gender-based violence, or GBV, incidents are from physical assault, 11% are due to rape, 10% percent from other forms of sexual assault. There are lesser incidents, including denial of resources (7%), psychological or emotional abuse (6%), and forced or early marriages, Ojuolape added. UNFPA officials said GBV attacks have worsened in 2022 and during the first quarter of 2023. Seventy-three percent of GBV incidents recorded in the last quarter of 2022 were reported by displaced persons; 19% survivors from the host communities, and 3% from refugees, mainly from Ethiopia, according to Bahsan Ahmed Said, assistant country representative for UNFPA and head of the Puntland semi-autonomous office.

"Fifty-eight percent of incidents in the last quarter of 2022 were IPV, 10% rape and 14% attempted rape," Said noted. There also was a 4% increase in violence in the last quarter compared to the 3rd quarter of 2022, Said added. In the first quarter of 2023, UNFPA said displaced persons reported 54% of the GBV incidents recorded. Cases reported by survivors from host communities were 22%, an increase from the 19% in the fourth quarter of 2022; while GBV survivors from refugees stand at 12%, there was an increase from 3% in the fourth quarter of 2022. The refugees are originally from Ethiopia and Yemen. UNFPA did not disclose actual numbers of GBV attacks in Somalia, saying it is bound by a data non-disclosure pact in the specific country-context of Somalia to protect the confidentiality and privacy of survivors. During a visit to Somalia last month, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said droughts in Somalia led to the displacement of 1.4 million Somalis. Four out of five of the displaced are women and children, according to Guterres.

Ojuolape says the ongoing humanitarian crisis, past conflicts and displacement are all key drivers in GBV attacks. "When people require humanitarian assistance in any such setting, GBV is estimated to be higher in such circumstances," he said. He added more than 90% of the abusers are male. "This society has witnessed a very, very serious humanitarian situation in which many populations are affected. Their locations have been changed," Ojuolape said, adding that "perpetrators of the violence" act at least in part "based on the physiological

**Mariam Mohamud Barre & Harun Maruf**

factors and the difficulties that they are facing." "If you are in a community where you don't have proper bathing facilities, where you have poor lighting, where you don't have toilet services, where privacy and shelter is reduced ... where you have to use common latrines that others are using, where you don't have the facilities to take care of yourselves, when people are cramped together, it leads to an increase in gender-based violence," Ojuolape said.

He said lack of food and sanitation facilities leaves individuals susceptible to blackmail and rape. Bahsan Ahmed Said says what worries her is that some people sometimes think

further review. Sadia Yasin Samatar, as deputy speaker of the current parliament, is Somalia's highest-ranking elected female politician. She supports legislation criminalizing rape and other sexual offenses, but she welcomes scholars "who have the country's interest at heart" to intervene and make adjustments. Samatar says she has been threatened and insulted for advocating the legislation. "Many men who are claiming to be responsible people, claiming to be scholars who have names who live in countries where there is law and order have threatened me," she said.

"But if I were scared of that, I would not be here. My opinion has not changed. I still believe rape is haram [forbidden].

**It is active in southwestern Somalia. Abdullahi Abdirahman Ali, who runs READO's operations in Baidoa, said he feels aggrieved about attacks on vulnerable people displaced from rural areas by drought. "It touches me very badly, but what I'm very proud about is to support this community," he said. "Whoever is having this issue, I'm willing to support." Somaliland and Puntland have passed laws criminalizing rape, but similar proposed legislation by the federal government of Somalia has faced opposition, including from religious scholars.**

GBV attacks are propaganda, something that doesn't really exist, or something just talked about by women advocates and women groups. "You don't see sometimes relevant action taken by relevant people. So, sometimes you feel helpless," Said observed. UNFPA said it has about 65 centers across Somalia and more than 80 local partners providing support and services addressing gender-based violence.

One partner is the Rural Education and Agricultural Development Organization (READO), an NGO that provides case management, health services, hygiene kits, counseling, legal services and psychosocial support to GBV survivors. It is active in southwestern Somalia.

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The government has withdrawn the bill pending

## Yoon's Japan outreach faces bleak future without Japan reciprocation

William Gallo

WHEN it comes to his country's ties with Japan, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol wants to look to the future. But if South Korean public reaction is any indication, that may be difficult without further moves by Japan to address the past.

Yoon in March took unilateral steps to improve relations between South Korea and Japan, which had sunk to their lowest point in decades over a dispute related to Japan's use of forced labor during its brutal 1910-1945 occupation of the Korean Peninsula. Under a proposal unveiled by Yoon, Korean forced labor victims will receive compensation via a private foundation. Crucially, the foundation will be funded by South Korean companies, rather than Japanese businesses, as mandated by a 2018 ruling by South Korea's Supreme Court.

Japan welcomed the move; so did the United States, which has long urged the two countries to resolve their differences and work together on shared challenges, such as North Korea and China. But the reaction was much harsher in Seoul. About 60% of South Koreans oppose Yoon's Japan approach, opinion polls suggest. Many forced labor victims and their families, as well as the country's liberal opposition, accuse Yoon of diplomatic surrender, saying he should instead demand reparations and an apology from Japan.

Such touchy historical issues are likely to come up during Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's two-day visit to Seoul, which begins Sunday. But Tokyo has given no indication it will make

any concessions on the forced labor issue, raising questions about whether Yoon's outreach will outlast his presidency. "I'm very doubtful," said Moon Chung-in, a Seoul-based international relations scholar and former adviser to multiple left-leaning South Korean governments. "Because President Yoon has not really built up the national consensus to conduct this diplomatic initiative toward Japan." Kishida's stop in Seoul - the first by a Japanese prime minister in five years - follows Yoon's visit to Tokyo in March.

During that visit, the two leaders announced a series of measures aimed at improving cooperation on trade, security, and diplomacy. Similar steps may be announced during Kishida's visit. But without progress on sensitive historical issues, many analysts warn it may be impossible to place Yoon's outreach on a more stable footing at home. "What is somewhat frustrating ... is actually how little Kishida would have to do to put a solid floor under these attempts to improve relations," said Daniel Sneider, lecturer of international policy at Stanford University. "That starts with whatever language he uses when he's in Seoul to talk about the past."

During Yoon's visit to Tokyo, Kishida did not offer a new apology for Japan's wartime history. Instead, he reaffirmed that Tokyo upholds the position of previous governments, including a 1998 declaration that included an apology. That was not nearly enough for many South Koreans - including

even some of Yoon's conservative allies, who had urged Kishida to express his own heartfelt remorse. "To use his own words - to speak with some degree of individual sincerity and responsibility about the past - I think that can make a big difference," Sneider said.

Many South Koreans hope Kishida will also encourage, or at least speak positively about, the idea of Japanese companies contributing to the South Korean forced labor fund. But none of that is likely, says Tetsuo Kotani, senior fellow at the Japan Institute of International Affairs. "Prime Minister Kishida repeated our past statements on history, and this is the maximum that a current Japanese political leader can do," Kotani said. "If any Japanese prime minister says something beyond that, then Japanese conservative politicians could make a lot of noise."

Many Japanese conservatives doubt Yoon can deliver on his promise to improve relations. In the past, conservative South Korean presidents have attempted to strengthen ties, only to criticize Japan once their approval ratings sank, said Kotani. Just one year into his single, five-year presidential term, Yoon's approval rating is already very low and South Korea's liberal opposition dominates the country's legislature. If his political fate worsens, Japanese conservatives fear Yoon will "play the Japan card" and try to exploit historical grievances, Kotani said. Japan insists the forced labor and all other compensation issues were

resolved by a 1965 treaty that established bilateral relations and offered South Korea economic help. Additionally, multiple Japanese governments have issued apologies. The extent of Japan's colonial abuses, however, was only discovered decades later in some cases, leading to a wave of South Korean demands for individual compensation.

Additionally, many South Koreans say that Japan's apologies were insincere, given later attempts by prominent Japanese conservatives to deny or downplay colonial-era atrocities. Though Yoon faces enormous political pressure to take a tougher stance on Japan, so far there are no signs he will give in. During his Tokyo summit, Yoon said he has no plans to seek reimbursement from Japan after compensating forced labor victims.

In an interview with The Washington Post last month, Yoon said he cannot accept the notion that Japan "must kneel [for forgiveness] because of our history 100 years ago." Instead, Yoon has argued, "future-oriented" cooperation with Japan is necessary to preserve freedom, peace and prosperity in northeast Asia. But even if Koreans agree with Yoon on the need for a closer strategic relationship with Japan, they are not ready "to just throw the past aside," according to Sneider, who urges Kishida to use the upcoming visit to take a conciliatory approach to historical issues. "This is not hard to do. Not hard. And it's the right thing to do," Sneider said. "It's the morally, politically, geo-strategically right thing to do."

VOA

## Khader Adnan, the most unifying figure in Palestine

Ramzy Baroud

KHADER Adnan was not a "terrorist" with "Israeli blood on his hands," as pro-Israeli propagandists have been repeating in the news and on social media in the last week. If the former Palestinian prisoner, who died in his Israeli cell last Tuesday following 87 days of uninterrupted hunger strike, was directly involved in armed resistance, the story would have had a completely different ending. Armed Palestinian resisters are either assassinated or detained and tried by Israeli military courts, usually sentenced to prolonged terms in Israeli prisons following brief trials that lack any fairness or due process.

Adnan was a charismatic leader, but not an actual fighter. He inspired Palestinians from his humble home in the village of Arraba, southwest of Jenin, which, along with Nablus, is the home of Palestine's toughest resistance. Adnan had a mathematics degree from the University of Birzeit, graduating in 2001. However, due to repeated arrests by Israeli occupation forces, Adnan, then a young man in his early 20s, was denied the opportunity to pursue a master's degree from the same university in the West Bank.

He was also denied the opportunity to work in his field, so he instead worked in a bakery in Arraba and eventually established his own small bakery in the nearby village of Qabatiya. But Adnan did more than feed the members of his community bread - he also inspired them. It was this quality that put him on a crash course not only with the Israeli occupation, but also with the Palestinian Authority. Adnan's first arrest by

Israel was in 1999, when the young student was held for four months. After that, he was arrested at least 11 more times and spent more than eight years in prison. On six separate occasions, he carried out hunger strikes, the shortest of which lasted for 25 days. The last was his longest.

Expectedly, Adnan was also an agent provocateur by the standards of the Palestinian security apparatus. In 1999, he was arrested and interrogated by PA security forces for leading a student protest against the visiting French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. During a speech at Birzeit University, Jospin had lashed out at Palestinian and Arab resistance. To his surprise, a skinny young student in the audience protested, hailing the resistance while speaking out against Western duplicity. Shortly afterward, the French leader was escorted out of the university as angry students pelted him with rocks and shoes. That was the real danger - and power - of Adnan, who, despite repeated Israeli attempts to charge him for supposed terrorist activities, was only held for prolonged periods in so-called administrative detention - a law designed to silence Palestinian academics, intellectuals and activists who play leadership roles in their own communities.

Adnan, however, could not be silenced. Unlike his previous arrests by Israel, Adnan's final detention on Feb. 5 was different. Israel, this time around, wanted to charge him with incitement to violence and membership of an illegal organization. A conviction of this nature would ensure the outspoken man would spend more than five years in prison.

But why now? A brewing armed rebellion in the West Bank, particularly in the northern regions, where Adnan had much moral authority and influence, meant that his freedom could prove costly for Israel. While armed Palestinian fighters are being killed by Israel at a high rate in Nablus, Jenin, Jericho, Bethlehem and Hebron, the rebellious political leadership is also being sidelined through arbitrary detentions and drummed-up accusations. Indeed, a new leadership has been sprouting throughout the Occupied Territories, offering an alternative not only to the PA, but also to the factional leaderships that seem to operate exclusively around party lines. Though Adnan was affiliated with Palestinian Islamic Jihad, he was a member of the new nonfactional political movement that sought common ground among all Palestinians, regardless of geography, politics or ideology. From the Israeli viewpoint, releasing Adnan would have set a precedent - the same way that Adnan had forced it to set a precedent many years ago, when he weaponized hunger strikes to gain his freedom. Also, Israel did not want Adnan back on the streets, leading mass protests against the Israeli occupation, speaking of resistance and protesting those who collaborated with the Israeli military.

So, they simply allowed him to die. Adnan's wife, Randa Mousa, told the Palestine Chronicle: "On one occasion (80 days into his latest hunger strike), he lost consciousness inside his cell, which was full of surveillance cameras. The Israeli guards only tried to save him after 30 minutes." Ultimately, he died alone and

with no medical attention, to be discovered lifeless inside his cell by the Israeli prison guards some time later. Shortly after the announcement of Adnan's death, Palestinians from all resistance groups in Gaza fired rockets toward Israel, mass protests broke out in the West Bank and Jerusalem, and a general strike was declared. The young Birzeit student had grown up to become the most unifying figure in Palestine, even after his death. In his will, Adnan addressed his people as one, without a single reference to factional lines or language. He praised the "revolutionaries" and spoke of an assured victory. The references he made to his wife, children, parents, aunts and uncles were interwoven with references to all Palestinians, everywhere, as if he were saying that all Palestinians are one single family.

Despite the potentially heavy price of Adnan's death for Israel, such Palestinians represent a real danger. They are often poor, humble, community-based, yet unifying figures who challenge a political discourse that has been at work since the signing of the Oslo Accords; a process that divided Palestinians into classes, turning brothers into enemies, and allowing Israel to maintain its military occupation and apartheid unhindered. Adnan, however, was not the originator of this new thinking. He was an outcome of a whole new political culture that has permeated Palestine for years - a mode of collective resistance that cannot easily be crushed, silenced or killed. His death, though tragic, is likely to contribute to the emerging discourse among Palestinians; that of unity, popular resistance and the hope of an assured victory.

### Important Notice

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# PSX gains 161.95 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Friday witnessed a bullish trend gaining 161.95 points, with a positive change of 0.39 per cent, closing at 41,487.58 against 41,325.63 points on the previous day.

A total of 89,474,706 shares valuing Rs 3.401

billion were traded during the day as compared to 96,850,678 shares valuing Rs 2.891 billion the previous day. As many as 317 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 176 of them recorded gains and 111 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 30 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 9,548,520 shares at Rs 1.14 per share, Maple Leaf with 5,407,794 shares at Rs 28.11 per share, and Sui North Gas with 4,164,051 shares at Rs 42.12 per share.

Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 100.00 per

share price, closing at Rs 5800.006, whereas the runner-up was Sapphire Fiber with a Rs 75.23 rise in its per share price to Rs 1078.99. Bhanero Tex witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 70.77 per share closing at Rs 1060.00, followed by ZIL Limited with a Rs 24.75 decline to close at Rs 305.25.

## Weekly inflation up by 0.27 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.27 per cent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on May 11, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 255.53 points as compared to 254.84 points during the past week, according to the PBS data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 48.02 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs17,732 witnessed a 0.38 percent increase and went up to 261.53 points

from last week's 260.54 points.

Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption group from Rs 17,732-22-888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 witnessed an increase of 0.38 per cent, 0.36 per cent, 0.33 per cent, and 0.20 per cent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 23 (45.09%) items increased, 07 (13.73%) items decreased and 21 (41.18%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW), included Tomatoes (6.32%), Gur (3.41%), Wheat Flour (2.76%), Tea Prepared (2.66%), Potatoes (2.14%), Cooked Daal (1.98%), Powdered Milk (1.91%), Eggs (1.83%), Rice Basmati Broken (1.42%), Pulse Masoor (1.19%), Beef (1.18%) and non-food item, Washing Soap (1.04%).

The items that recorded

a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis, included Onions (9.40%), Chicken (2.25%), LPG (1.51%), Garlic (1.39%), Bananas (0.68%), Pulse Gram (0.13%) and Mustard Oil (0.05%).

The commodities that witnessed an increase in price on Year-on-Year (YOY) basis, included Cigarettes (140.15%), Potatoes (112.80%), Gas Charges for Q1 (108.38%), Tea Lipton (106.09%), Wheat Flour (101.20%), Gents Sponge Chappal (100.33%), Diesel (99.39%), Bananas (98.22%), Rice Basmati Broken (90.76%), Eggs (89.40%), Petrol (87.81%), Rice Irri-6/9 (83.47%), Pulse Moong (66.91%), Bread (62.83%) and Pulse Mash (58.79%).

On a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, the commodities which recorded a decrease in their average prices included Tomatoes (39.70%), Onions (22.17%) and Chilies Powdered (6.48%).

## Elon Musk names Linda Yaccarino new Twitter CEO

NEW YORK (BBC): Elon Musk has named a new chief executive of Twitter, just over six months after his controversial takeover of the social media company. The billionaire said Linda Yaccarino, the former head of advertising at NBCUniversal, would oversee business operations at the site, which has been struggling to make money.

He said she would start in six weeks.

Mr Musk will remain involved as executive chairman and chief technology officer.

"Looking forward to working with Linda to transform this platform into X, the everything app," he wrote on Twitter, confirming the decision a day after he had stoked speculation by writing that he had found a new boss without revealing their identity.

Mr Musk - who bought the social media platform last year for \$44bn - had been under pressure to find someone else to lead the company and refocus his attention on his other businesses, which include electric carmaker Tesla and rocket firm SpaceX.

At NBCUniversal, Ms Yaccarino oversaw roughly 2,000 people, and was involved with the launch of its streaming service.

She joined the company in 2011, after 15 years at Turner Entertainment and has been credited with bringing the network's ad sales operation into the digital future. Her departure had appeared to take NBCUniversal by surprise. On Thursday, amid media reports that she would be headed to Twitter, the firm had told news outlets that she was busy preparing for an upcoming conference. "Linda has made countless contributions to the company during her 12-year tenure, and we wish her the best," the company said on Friday.



MULTAN: A vendor arranging and displaying mangos on his cart at Masoom Shah Road.

## Naveed assures cooperation for Industrial Zone and Expo Centre

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Syed Naveed Qamar, Federal Minister for Commerce said that the role of the business community is very important in steering the economy out of current crisis and said that the government would take all possible measures for ease of doing business to facilitate them in business development.

He lauded the efforts of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) for the establishment of a new Industrial Zone and construction of an Expo Centre in the Capital and assured that he would cooperate for the materialization of these projects as they are very important to boost industrialization and improve trade & exports of the country. He said this while talking to the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

He also inaugurated a new Syed Naveed Qamar Hall in ICCI premises. Syed Naveed Qamar welcomed the ICCI plan for launching an FM Radio for the business community to educate them on business related matters including the trade laws, regulations, importance of exports and assured that he would play a role to facilitate them in this project.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry briefed the Federal Minister for Commerce about the importance of a new industrial zone in the region as the current industrial estates in the Capital have reached the point of saturation and the potential investors are facing problems in setting up new industries in the region.

He stressed that the gov-

ernment should cooperate with ICCI in identifying and acquisition of land to complete this vital project as soon as possible. He said that a great boost in exports is the best option to bring the country out of the current economic crisis and said that CDA has agreed to cooperate with ICCI for the construction of a state-of-the-art Expo Centre in the Capital on the pattern of Expo Centers in Lahore and Karachi to introduce exportable products of Pakistan. He said that the support of the government would help ICCI in early completion of this important project. He also shared ICCI's plan for the launch of an FM Radio for the business community and hoped that the government would facilitate the Chamber in this regard.

Faod Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that many investors are shifting to other areas due to lack of space for new industrial units in Islamabad and said that the government's support for a new industrial zone would attract more investment to this region.

Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that the Ministry of Commerce should finalize trade and exports policies in consultation with chambers of commerce of the country to make them more effective and result-oriented. Khalid Iqbal Malik Group Leader, Zafar Bakhtawari former President & Secretary General UBG, Zubair Ahmed Malik & Muhammad Ejaz Abbasi former Presidents ICCI and others also discussed many issues of the business community with the Federal Minister of Commerce and sought his cooperation to address them.

## SIBL applies to SECP for conversion into a Shariah Compliant Entity

ISLAMABAD (NNI): After the announcement of the Federal Shariat Court Judgement last year, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has issued comprehensive Guidelines for Offering Islamic Financial Services, 2023, paving way for transformation of a regulated person/entity into full-fledged Islamic institution. Subsequent to issuance of these guidelines, Security Investment Bank Limited (SIBL) has applied for conversion into a Shariah-compliant

investment bank.

SIBL is a public limited company listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange and licensed to carry out investment finance services as a non-banking finance company (NBFC) under the Companies Act, 2017. SIBL has made a public disclosure at the PSX, and applied to the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) for a certificate as a Shariah-compliant company under Section 451 of the Companies Act, 2017, read with the Shariah Governance Regulations,

2018. This conversion will be a multi-stage process, and SECP will ensure a smooth transition with minimal disruption to the customers of SIBL.

In view of the growing demand for Shariah compliant financial services, and in light of constitutional requirement to eliminate the Riba from the economy, Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) is geared towards facilitating its regulated entities desirous of converting to Shariah compliant status.

## Shipping Activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships namely, OOCL LE Havre, CMA CGM Ivanhoe and Chemroad Journey carrying Containers and Chemicals, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal and EngroVopak Terminal respectively on Thursday. Meanwhile two more ships, AL-Jassasiya and Ullswater with LNG and LPG also arrived at outer anchorage of the port on (today) Friday morning. A total of 05 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two containers vessels OOCL LE Havre and CMA CGM Ivanhoe left the Port on Friday morning & two more ships, Mega-I and Chemroad Journey are expected to sail on Friday.

A cargo volume of 99,467/tons, comprising 67,728 tons imports Cargo and 31,739 tons export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 3,096 Containers (1,229 TEUs Imports and 1,867 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours. There are 04 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Yankul Silver, Al-Jassasiya and Ullswater & two more ships, Global Oriole and MSC Cape Town-III carrying Palm oil, LNG LPG

## Gold prices decrease by Rs 6500 to Rs 230,800 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24-karat gold decreased by Rs 197,874 from Rs 203,447 whereas the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold went down to Rs 181,384 from Rs 186,393. The price of per tola silver dipped by Rs 300 to close at Rs 3,100

of 24-karat gold also decreased by Rs 5,573 to Rs 197,874 from Rs 203,447

and that of 10-gram silver also decreased by Rs 257.21 to Rs 2,400.54 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market declined by \$33 to close at \$2,005 as compared to \$2,038 last day, the Association reported.

The price of 10 grams

## Inbound tourism, local demand fuel Hong Kong's Q1 economic rebound

HONG KONG (Xinhua/APP): The Hong Kong economy improved visibly in the first quarter of 2023, led by the strong recovery of inbound tourism and local demand, official data showed Friday.

Real gross domestic product (GDP) resumed year-on-year growth of 2.7 percent and surged by 5.3 percent on a seasonally adjusted quarter-to-quarter comparison, according to the first quarter economic report released by the Hong

Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government.

Local private consumption expenditure surged by 13 percent year-on-year in real terms in the first quarter, as consumption sentiment improved sharply along with the adjustment of anti-epidemic measures in both Hong Kong and the mainland. Overall investment expenditure reverted to 5.8 percent growth amid an improved economic outlook.

The unemployment and

underemployment situation continued to improve in the first quarter alongside the economic recovery. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate declined further from 3.5 percent in the preceding quarter to 3.1 percent in the first quarter, and the underemployment rate went down from 1.5 percent to 1.2 percent, government data showed.

In terms of the stock market, the Hang Seng Index closed the quarter at 20,400 points, 3.1 percent higher than end-

2022. The residential property market revived, as market sentiment improved along with the local economic recovery. Looking forward, inbound tourism and local demand will remain the major drivers of economic growth this year.

Taking into account the actual outturn in the first quarter and the factors mentioned above, the HKSAR government maintained its real GDP growth forecast for this year at 3.5 percent to 5.5 percent.

## Asian markets struggle as easing inflation fails to boost optimism

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets fluctuated Friday as traders weighed a range of issues including US debt ceiling hopes, high-level talks between Washington and Beijing, banking sector uncertainty and more signs of a slowing economy.

Investors hoping the Federal Reserve will finally take a breather from its long-running campaign of interest rate hikes have been left feeling a little more confident this week after data showed inflation on both a consumer and wholesale level continued to ease in April.

Their hopes were given a further boost Thursday by news that jobless claims last week hit their highest since October 2021, suggesting the labour market was showing some slack.

The Fed has long said it needed to see a softening in employment as well as a drop in inflation before it could consider ending its rate hike drive and look at a potential cut in borrowing costs. "US economic data overnight continued the theme of tentative signs of a softening labour market and room for optimism about the inflation outlook," said National Australia Bank's Taylor Nugent. "Caution on one week's claims number is always well advised, but the incremental signal looks to be a more compelling trend higher."

There was also some positive news out of Washington that US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi met in Vienna this week, as

the superpowers seek to temper tensions over a number of issues, particularly Taiwan.

The eight hours of talks over Wednesday and Thursday also covered Russia's invasion of Ukraine and capped an unofficial pause in high-level contacts since the United States shot down a Chinese surveillance balloon earlier in the year.

Both sides described the face-to-face as "candid, substantive and constructive". "The risk appetite of the stock market is likely to be lifted by the news of the US-China meeting," Alvin Ngan, of Zhongtai Financial International, said. "Overseas-listed Chinese stocks and Chinese internet sector, of which foreign investors have relatively high exposure, are

likely to get a boost."

US-listed Chinese firms performed well in New York, with tech firms also helped by a strong earnings report from e-commerce giant JD.com. And the rally continued for the sector in Hong Kong, with JD.com up more than seven percent and rival Alibaba almost three percent higher.

The gains lifted the city's Hang Seng Index, while there were also gains in Tokyo and Wellington. But Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore and Taipei were in negative territory. The losses followed another tepid lead from Wall Street, where the Dow and S&P 500 ended down as fears over the banking sector continued to weigh.

US regional lenders came under fresh pressure after PacWest noted in a fil-

ing that media reports that it was exploring strategic options had sparked a surge in withdrawals from worried customers.

It said total deposits dived almost 17 percent in the first quarter, when the finance industry was rocked by the collapse of three local banks.

PacWest dived more than a fifth, while several other regional lenders including KeyCorp, Zions Bancorporation and Western Alliance Bancorporation took a hit.

Eyes are also on Washington, where much-anticipated debt ceiling talks between President Joe Biden and Republican leaders were postponed until next week, with sources saying staff-level discussions were progressing.

While Democrats and

Republicans blamed each other for the impasse on hiking the US borrowing limit, there is a hope a deal can be hammered out that will allow the country to pay its bills. JPMorgan chief executive Jamie Dimon warned Thursday that failure to reach an agreement would be "potentially catastrophic". "People should remember the American financial system is the foundation to the global economic system," he told Bloomberg Television. That came after the International Monetary Fund also said there would be "very serious repercussions not only for the US but also for the global economy should there be a US debt default".

- Key figures around 0230 GMT - Tokyo - Nikkei 225: UP

0.8 percent at 29,359.43 (break) Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: UP 0.1 percent at 19,769.70

Shanghai - Composite: DOWN 0.3 percent at 3,300.11

Euro/dollar: UP at \$1.0924 from \$1.0918 on Thursday

Pound/dollar: UP at \$1.2516 from \$1.2514

Dollar/yen: UP at 134.64 yen from 134.55 yen

Euro/pound: UP at \$7.28 pence from \$7.22 pence

West Texas Intermediate: DOWN 0.2 percent at \$70.73 per barrel

Brent North Sea crude: DOWN 0.4 percent at \$74.71 per barrel

New York - Dow: DOWN 0.7 percent at 33,309.84 (close)

London - FTSE 100: DOWN 0.1 percent at

7,730.58 (close)

Meanwhile, Tokyo shares opened higher Friday after a mixed ending on Wall Street, while players monitored forex movements. The Nikkei 225 index rose 0.13 percent, or 36.55 points, to 29,163.27 in early trade, while the broader Topix index added 0.22 percent, or 4.68 points, to 2,087.77.

"The market was expected to stay in a narrow range at the start after US shares ended mixed," brokerage house Monex said in a note. "Investors will take cues from the dollar-yen" among other factors, it said.

The dollar stayed firm at 134.43 yen, maintaining the ground from New York, where it hovered around 134.55 yen.

A stronger dollar often lifts Japanese shares.





## In brief

## Cycling training camp from May 15

ISLAMABAD (APP): The national training camp in preparation for the Asian Road Cycling Championship would kick off from May 15 to June 8, in Karachi. According to President Pakistan Cycling Federation Syed Azhar Ali Shah all preparations have been completed for the training camp to be held in support with Pakistan Sports Board in Karachi. The selection of players was made on performance basis from the National Road Championship. A total of 15 cyclists have been selected for the camp. He said that International Cycling Federation (UCI) qualified coaches would train the cyclists who would represent the Pakistan team in the Asian Road Cycling Championship scheduled to be held in Thailand in June.

## Nuggets claim series win

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): Nikola Jokic scored 32 points as the Denver Nuggets thrashed the Phoenix Suns to win their Western Conference semi-final series in six games. The Nuggets, who have never reached the NBA Finals, beat the Suns 125-100. Jokic recorded 12 assists and 10 rebounds, while Jamal Murray scored 26 points for Denver. The Nuggets will open the best-of-seven Western Conference final against either the Golden State Warriors or the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday. In their Western Conference semi-final, the Lakers lead Golden State 3-2 with game six in Los Angeles at 03:00 BST on Saturday. It is the first time the Nuggets have reached the Western Conference finals since 2020, where they lost to the Lakers. In the Eastern Conference semi-finals, the Boston Celtics forced a series decider as they held off the Philadelphia 76ers 95-86. The 76ers, who have not reached the conference finals since 2001, will travel to Boston for game seven on Sunday. Jayson Tatum scored 16 of his 19 points for the Celtics in the final quarter as they held off a late 76ers comeback. "I'm, humbly, one of the best basketball players in the world," Tatum told ESPN. "All that mattered was we won this game." "It's game seven, it doesn't get any better than that."

## Man City fully focused on Everton

LONDON (Agencies): Pep Guardiola said all thoughts about Manchester City's Champions League semi-final against Real Madrid have been banished ahead of Sunday's Premier League trip to Everton. Treble-chasing City hope to claim a place in the final of Europe's elite club competition when they host Real on Wednesday after drawing 1-1 in the first leg of their last-four tie this week. City have never won the Champions League, while Guardiola's wait to get his hands on the trophy has now reached 12 years since he lifted it for the second time as Barcelona boss. Despite the significance of the Real tie, the Premier League leaders cannot afford to take it easy when they travel to relegation-threatened Everton in a clash that is crucial at both ends of the table. Any slip-up at Goodison Park would open the door again to second-placed Arsenal, who are just one point behind City, although they have played a game extra. "My thought is just Everton — no more than that," Guardiola said on Friday.

## Pakistan demands neutral WC venues in row with India

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The chairman of Pakistan's cricket board is demanding his side's World Cup games be moved out of host country India if their arch-rivals refuse to travel to Pakistan for September's Asia Cup, a report said Friday.

Arrangements for the one-day international World Cup, which is due to start in October, remain shrouded in mystery, with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) so far failing to release a match schedule or list of venues.

It is an extraordinary situation less than six months before the start of a quadrennial global sporting tournament.

How to accommodate Pakistan appears to be at the heart of the delay, with the nuclear-armed neighbours — both of them

cricket-obsessed, but who have fought multiple wars since independence from Britain in 1947 — mired in diplomatic disputes.

Pakistan is itself hosting the Asia Cup, another 50-over tournament, in September, in which India normally participates.

But the BCCI — the world's richest and most powerful cricket body — has refused to travel to Pakistan for several years citing both the diplomatic tensions and the country's challenging security situation.

It wants its Asia Cup games moved out of Pakistan — and Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Najam Sethi demanded a reciprocal arrangement for the World Cup in an interview with The Indian Express newspaper on Friday.

"If India now wants to

have a neutral venue and accepts the hybrid model, then we'll use the same hybrid model in the World Cup," he said.

Pakistan would be willing to play their World Cup games in Bangladesh or any other venue acceptable to India, he said, calling it "a model that goes forward and resolves this political logjam" between the two countries.

The BCCI is headed by Jay Shah, the son of India's powerful home minister Amit Shah.

But Sethi, a former journalist turned cricket administrator, called on the Indian cricket body to "stand up" to New Delhi and insist on being allowed to travel to Pakistan as "it cannot cite security as an issue anymore".

There was no immediate reaction from the BCCI to Sethi's comments.

## 91-member KP contingents leaves for 34th National Games Quetta

PESHAWAR, (APP): The five Games 91-members Khyber Pakhtunkhwa contingent left for Quetta, Balochistan via buses and were seen off by the office-bearers of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association at Peshawar sports Complex on Friday.

The squad left from the Peshawar Sports Complex by buses to Quetta. Chef de Mission Ilyas Afridi along with Deputy Chef de Mission Miss Sumayyah are going with male and

female teams to Quetta. General Secretary KP Olympic Association Zulfiqar Ali Butt, Director Operation Aziz Ullah Khan, Muhammad Amjad Khan, Khalid Waqar, Nasir Mohmand and other officials and a large number of male and female athletes were also present.

The Games including Kabaddi (13 players), Volleyball 27 (male and female players), Badminton 12 (male female players), Rugby 27

male and female players are going to Quetta while 08 members male and female players left for Lahore with three members of the committee, totally 91-members.

The cycling event is scheduled to be held in Lahore at the velodrome instead of Quetta. The opening ceremony will be held in the second phase on May 22. Some of the 34th National Games competitions will be held in Lahore and Islamabad as well.

## Former PCB chairman says increasing India's share of ICC earnings makes 'no sense'

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Former chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Ehsan Mani is concerned about international cricket's health following revelations that India would receive a significant share from the International Cricket Council's (ICC) media rights deal for 2024-27, which is worth \$3 billion.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is set to receive 38.5% of the net surplus earnings from the ICC which is much higher compared to its 22% share in the current 2015-23 deal, according to ESPNcricinfo.

"The (proposed revenue distribution model) will be giving the most money to the country that needs it the least, which makes no sense," Mani, who was ICC president from 2003-06 and stepped down from the Pakistan Cricket Board in 2021, told Forbes in an



exclusive interview.

"I think it's very unfortunate. There's no strategic thinking about the development of the global game. There's no vision."

Mani also stated that cricket should grow beyond its traditional base rather than just relying on India. "It only takes one downturn in an economic cycle for the ICC members to be affected. There is far too much reliance on India," he said.

"If the ICC wants a truly global game and diversify its financial reliance, the country to develop is the US I would have put \$20-

30 million into the US. You also need to grow the game in Africa, that's the future."

"I think the global game (Associates) should have been allocated at least 30% (instead of 11%). That's the only way to globalise the game." Mani also called for financial parity among the 12 full members of the ICC rather than giving the lion's share to India.

"You have to give countries enough resources to not only develop their players but to pay them a fair amount, especially with the IPL and other T20 leagues targeting players," he said.

"The Indian market brings in a lot of money...it's not the BCCI (India's governing body). There are benefits to the Indian companies to advertise in the ICC events and worldwide. India are not playing on their own, they are playing against other members. It's a two-way street."

## Swiatek gets off to perfect start in Italian Open

ROME (Agencies): Iga Swiatek started her bid to win her third straight Italian Open title in perfect fashion on Friday, not dropping a game in her straight-sets thrashing of Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.

World number one Swiatek looked in exceptional form as she demolished Pavlyuchenkova 6-0, 6-0 in just over an hour to ease her way into the third round in Rome.

Losing finalist in Madrid last weekend, Swiatek looked in great form in the tournament she won last year before going on to blitz the French Open even though she is still shaking off a rib injury suffered at Indian Wells.

"I still may feel some discomfort, but it is really, really low. Even when I withdrew from Miami, the pain was low. It was just the risk of getting it worse that stopped me," Swiatek told reporters.

"I wouldn't say my physicality is stopping me. I came back quickly and I kind of missed only one tournament. I think overall it's pretty positive."

Swiatek now faces either Bernarda Pera or Lesia Tsurenko in the last 32 after extending her winning streak in the Italian capital to 12 matches.

The only real resistance from Pavlyuchenkova, who reached the final of Roland Garros two years ago, came in the final game of the first set, when she saved six set points from 0-40 down on her serve.

Swiatek eventually came through that game and swept Pavlyuchenkova aside in the second set, finishing the job against the serve with her first match point.

Fourth seed Ons Jabeur fell 6-1, 6-4 to Paula Badosa, last year's finalist being eliminated in her first match to leave the women's tournament without another big name.

Jabeur joins world number two Aryna Sabalenka, third-ranked Jessica Pegula and 2019 winner Karolina Pliskova in being dumped out in the second round.

The 28-year-old has had calf problems in recent weeks, an injury which caused her to retire in the semi-finals at Stuttgart and not defend her Madrid title.

Badosa will face world number 27 Marta Kostyuk in the third round.

- Sinner winner -

Earlier, Jannick Sinner cruised into the men's last 32 with a straight-sets win over Thanasi Kokkinakis, 6-1, 6-4.

World number eight Sinner took one hour, 18 minutes to deal with Australian qualifier Kokkinakis, and will now play Russian Alexander Shevchenko, who beat Argentinian Sebastian Baez 6-3, 6-4.

"I'm happy with my level today, it was not easy, it was a little bit breezy, a bit windy," Sinner said on court.

"Especially in the second set he played a little bit better. I also had a

couple of chances which I didn't use but very happy about how I served, I struck the ball very well."

Sinner, 21, did not drop a single point on his serve in a dominant first set in which the gulf in class between the Italian and Kokkinakis was painfully evident.

Kokkinakis, ranked 104 in the world, put up more of a fight in the second set but once Sinner broke in the seventh game to take the score to 4-3, it was only a matter of time before the deal was sealed.

Sinner made no mistake, serving to love in games eight and nine to ensure comfortable passage to the next round. Rome has not seen an Italian winner of the tournament since Adriano Panatta in 1976.

With local boy Matteo Berrettini out of action again with abdominal problems, Sinner will be getting the bulk of the capital city's support.

Sinner has had a decent season, winning in Montpellier in February and losing the finals in Miami and Rotterdam to Daniil Medvedev.

He also reached the semi-finals at Indian Wells, losing to eventual winner Carlos Alcaraz.

Cameron Norrie strolled past French qualifier Alexandre Muller 6-2, 6-3 to set up a clash with Marton Fucsovics in the next round after the Hungarian beat Alex de Minaur 6-3, 6-4.



ROME: Maria Sakkari of Greece in action against Barbora Strycova of the Czech Republic in the second round on Day Five of the Internazionali BNL D'Italia at Foro Italico.

## West Indies recall Paul and Motie for World Cup qualifiers

MIAMI (Agencies): West Indies have recalled all-rounder Keemo Paul and left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie for the World Cup qualifiers in Zimbabwe in June and July.

The poor performances of the Caribbean side, who have slipped to 10th in the ICC's ODI rankings, mean that they must compete with six other teams for the two available places in the 2023 World Cup in India from October.

New ODI skipper Sai Hope will be able to call on Paul and Motie for the first time since last July's ODI series against India in Trinidad. Lead selector, former test opener Desmond Haynes, said he had high hopes for the returning pair.

"Paul is a three-dimensional player, who can bowl the new ball effectively, he's dynamic in the outfield and he can also make vital runs. He is now fully recovered from injury and with his skill-set we see him as a potential match-winner for us," he said.

"Motie was excellent in the Test matches in the Zimbabwe earlier this year, where he took 19 wickets, and we anticipate similar conditions for the qualifiers. We believe he will again relish the chance to bowl in those conditions," he added.

The main omission from the squad is Guyanese batsman and T20 star Shimron Hetmyer who was dropped from the World Cup squad last year after a dispute over flights shortly before the tournament. Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Ireland and the Netherlands are the main rivals for West Indies in the battle for qualification for the main tournament.

Nepal, Oman, Scotland, the United Arab Emirates and the United States are also competing for a chance to make it to India.

West Indies will play three ODI warm-ups against the United Arab Emirates without players performing in the Indian Premier League.

## Lionel Messi returns for PSG after Saudi trip ban

PARIS (Agencies): Paris Saint-Germain coach Christophe Galtier confirmed Lionel Messi "will start" Saturday's Ligue 1 game against Ajaccio, marking the Argentinian superstar's return from suspension.

The 35-year-old World Cup winner was banned by the club after an unauthorised trip to Saudi Arabia.

"Yes, Leo is going to start tomorrow," Galtier told an eve of match press conference.

"Obviously I've spoken to him, he's very relaxed, really keen to play, and

very determined to claim another French league title."

With PSG out of the Champions League and only four Ligue 1 matches remaining as they target a record 11th title, this is likely to be Messi's penultimate appearance at the Parc des Princes.

After an uninspiring two years in France, the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner is reported to be lining up a blockbuster deal to play in Saudi Arabia next season where he would join his old sparring partner Cristiano Ronaldo.

His move to Saudi or

even his departure at the end of his contract in June, however, have yet to be confirmed by the club or his agent father Jorge.

But all the signs are that he is on his way out.

"Messi is a done deal. He will play in Saudi Arabia next season," a source close the negotiations speaking on condition of anonymity told AFP this week.

Galtier said he did not want to go into the six-day suspension which forced Messi to miss last weekend's 3-1 win over Troyes that left PSG six points clear of Lens.

## Haseebullah's century gives Shaheens 298-run lead

ISLAMABAD (APP): Haseebullah's unbeaten century and half-centuries from Hussain Talat, Mohammad Huraira and Omair Bin Yousuf put Pakistan Shaheens in a commanding position at the close of the second day's play of the second four-day match at Mutare Sports Club in Mutare.

At stumps, Pakistan Shaheens were 461 for eight in 112 overs as the tourists were leading by 298 runs, according to information shared by Pakistan Cricket Board.

Earlier, resuming their first innings at the overnight score of 115 for one in 24 overs, in reply to Zimbabwe A's first innings score of 163 all out, Mohammad Huraira (60 not out) and Omair Bin Yousuf (19 not out) could add only 12 runs to the partnership before Huraira (64, 86b, 9x4s, 1x6) became the first batter to return back to the pavilion.

Right-handed Kamran Ghulam (2, 7b), playing his 46th first-class match, soon followed Huraira as

Shaheens were 133 for three in 28.3 overs.

Omair was joined by vice-captain Hussain Talat and the pair knitted 84 runs for the fourth wicket. Over the course of the partnership, Omair brought up his half-century but was bowled by Roy Kaia for a 96-ball 65, smashing six fours and one six.

Qasim Akram playing his first match on the tour, joined Hussain and the pair stitched a 66-run partnership for the fifth wicket, before Hussain (74, 100b, 8x4s, 1x6) and Qasim (36, 55b, 4x4s) returned back to the hut in the space of 14 balls as both batters fell to right-arm fast bowler Victor Nyauchi.

At 293 for six and a lead of just 130 runs, wicket-keeper-batter Haseebullah and all-rounder Aamir Jamal got together and the pair added crucial 83 runs for the seventh wicket. After the dismissal of Aamir (35, 47b, 4x4s) with the scorecard reading Shaheens 376 for seven in 82.4 overs, Mehran Mumtaz joined Haseebullah and another 36

runs was added to the total.

After the departure of Mehran (12, 22b, 1x4), Mohammad Ali and Haseebullah recorded an unbroken 49-run partnership for the ninth wicket. During the partnership, the 20-year-old left-handed Haseebullah brought up his second first-class century in his 11th first-class match. He returned undefeated on 111 off 197 deliveries, hitting 14 fours and one six. Ali scored an unbeaten eight off 37 balls, which included one four.

For Zimbabwe A, Tanaka Chivanga and Victor Nyauchi picked three wickets each.

Scores in brief: Zimbabwe A 163 all out, 56.4 overs (Tadiwanashe Marumani 66, Dion Myers 50; Mohammad Ali 4-36, Mehran Mumtaz 3-36, Aamir Jamal 3-51)

Pakistan Shaheens 461-8, 112 overs (Haseebullah 111 not out, Hussain Talat 74, Omair Bin Yousuf 65, Mohammad Huraira 64, Qasim Akram 36, Aamir Jamal 35, Imran Butt 27; Tanaka Chivanga 3-83, Victor Nyauchi 3-113).

## PbOA President hands over torch of 34th National Games to Secretary Sports Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Olympic Association President Amir Jan handed over the torch of 34th National Games to Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Shahid Zaman and Director General Sports Dr Asif Tufail here at a ceremony held at Punjab Stadium on Friday.

Secretary Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) Mohammad Khalid Mehmood, Secretary Punjab Olympic Association (PbOA) Idris Haider Khawaja, President Punjab Swimming Association Women Wing Mubashra Raza, Secretary Sports Balochistan Ishaq Jamali, Olympian Shabana Akhtar, International athlete Shajar Abbas, former kabaddi captain Shafiq Chishti, Olympian Kh Junaid, Administrator Stadium Rehmatullah, Chief Sports consultant SBP Hafeez Bhatti, and a large number of sports enthusiasts were also present on the occasion.

Earlier, Olympian Shabana Akhtar, International athlete Shajar Abbas and former kabaddi captain Shafiq Chishti carried the torch of 34th National Games to Punjab Stadium and handed it over to President Punjab Olympic Association.

Addressing the ceremony, Secretary Sports Punjab said that Punjab's sports contingent of around 450 athletes will offer brilliant performance in National Games scheduled to be held at Quetta from May 22. "Our athletes are well prepared for the grand National Games event and we are quite upbeat that they will clinch more medals than all other contingents from across the country."

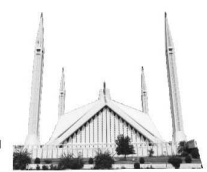
Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail on this occasion said that it would be a wonderful opportunity for young male and female athletes of the province to display their sports potential in their respective games.

"Sports board Punjab is working hard for the promotion of sports across the province."

In his address, President Punjab Olympic Association Amir Jan said that Punjab's sports contingent has been prepared with the untiring efforts of Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Shahid Zaman and Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail. "Punjab Sports Department is taking effective measures for the promotion of sports in the province. Holding National Games is definitely a major step for the growth of sports culture across the country."

Secretary Sports Balochistan Ishaq Jamali in his address said that hosting the National Games will be a great honour for our province. "We have completed all the arrangements including best security measures for organizing 34th edition of the National Games in a befitting manner".





## In brief

### Police arrest two accused

RAWALPINDI (INP) Police on Friday arrested two accused who were allegedly involved in a murder attempt case. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesperson, City police on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO), Rawalpindi under the command of SHO, conducted a raid and managed to arrest two accused namely Sheraz and Bilal who were involved in an attempt to murder case. The accused had opened fire on a citizen, Inamullah over a petty dispute. City Police registered a case against the accused and succeeded in arresting the accused. He said that the Police operation against the criminals would continue and the lawbreakers would be sent behind the bars. The spokesperson said that the CPO had directed the Police to initiate a crackdown against the proclaimed offenders and strict action should be taken as per law, especially against the most wanted criminals.

### Six drug peddlers, bootleggers held

RAWALPINDI (INP): The police in a crackdown against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers and illegal weapon holders, here on Friday arrested six accused besides recovering over 465 grams of hashish, five litres of liquor, five bottles of liquor, three 30-bore pistols and ammunition from their possession. According to a police spokesperson, Dhamial police held Zafar for having 465 grams of hashish while Pirwadhai police rounded up Faisal with five litres of liquor and Airport police netted an accused namely Ali for possessing five bottles of liquor. Taxila, Saddar Wah, and Mandra police arrested Kalat Khan, Sajjad, and Bashir and recovered three 30-bore pistols and ammunition from their possession. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations were underway. City Police Officer (CPO) had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added.

### IRSA releases 146,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 146,300 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 114,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1434.93 feet and was 36.93 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 32,000 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1120.90 feet, 70.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 36,100 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively.

### Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday issued a power suspension programme for Saturday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, Tufail Shaheed, Frash Town, Kirpa, I-11/1, I-11/3, Metro Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Nogazi, Bajniyal Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Chahan, Chontra, Rajar, Chakri, SPD, SPF.



ISLAMABAD: An attractive view of seasonal flowers flourishing and blooming at roadside in the Federal Capital.

## PUC expresses solidarity with national security forces in Friday sermons

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ulema and Mashaykh of all schools of thought, observing 'Pakistan Stability Day' on Friday expressed solidarity with national security forces across the country on the appeal of the Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC). In their Friday sermons, they emphasized the importance of solidarity with the national security forces and strongly condemned the recent acts of violence and attacks on government, military, and public property perpetrated by nefarious elements.

A joint statement was issued by prominent figures including PUC Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Maulana Asad Zakaria Qasmi, Allama Abdul Haq Mujahid, Maulana Muhammad Shafi Qasmi, Maulana Nauman Hashir, Maulana Asadullah Farooq, Allama Zubair Abid,

Maulana Muhammad Ashfaq Pitafi, Maulana Tahir Aqeel Awan, Maulana Abu Bakr Hameed Sabri, Maulana Aziz Akbar Qasmi, Maulana Aslam Siddiqui, and Allama Tahirul Hasan.

Expressing deep regret over the recent surge in violence following the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, the religious leaders labeled these incidents as condemnable acts of terrorism. They highlighted that such levels of organized terrorism had never been witnessed in the 75-year history of Pakistan.

Furthermore, they pointed out that these attacks deliberately targeted public places, government institutions, and locations associated with the military.

The religious leaders accused the PTI leadership of encouraging these mis-

creants instead of taking measures to stop them.

They also took the opportunity to acknowledge and praise the efforts of the Rangers, Police, and Pakistan Army for their exemplary patience and restraint in handling the situation. They commended the security forces for successfully foiling the conspiracies of external enemies which aimed at creating a rift between the people and them.

The observance of 'Pakistan Stability Day' under the umbrella of the Pakistan Ulema Council demonstrates a unified front among religious scholars from various schools of thought. Their condemnation of recent acts of violence and support for the security forces sends a powerful message of solidarity and determination to maintain peace and stability within the country.

### Sanjrani expresses grief

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Friday conveyed his profound sadness and remorse regarding the loss of precious lives resulting from the attack by terrorists on security forces in Balochistan's Muslim Bagh region. In his condolence message, the Chairman strongly condemned the incident, stating that such cowardly acts cannot weaken the resolve of the nation. He acknowledged the unparalleled sacrifices made by the armed forces and security agencies in the fight against terrorism and reiterated that the Pakistan Army was determined to eliminate the scourge of terrorism.

He added that the terrorists would never succeed in their nefarious designs and the sacrifices of the security forces for the peace of the region would not go in vain. The Chairman Senate prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured security personnel and expressed solidarity with the families of the martyrs. He emphasized that the nation stands united against terrorism and will continue to support the efforts of the security forces to maintain peace in the country.

### NHMP, religious congregation matters resolved

ISLAMABAD (APP): The matters between the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) and a religious congregation have been resolved and it was decided that commuters would not be allowed to sit on the roof of buses. According to NHMP, a meeting was held between the Motorway Police and members of the religious congregation of the Abdul Qasim Motorway Link Road Islamabad Mosque.

The meeting was attended by DIG Motorway Muhammad Yousuf Malik, SP Traffic Abid Hussain and leaders of the religious congregation. It was decided in the meeting that passengers would not be picked or dropped on the motorway and they would not be accommodated in trucks. The vehicles will not be overloaded and their parking and pedestrian crossing will not be allowed on Link Road Motorway while luggage will also be stored safely during travelling.

Meanwhile fuel, tire air pressure, tire changing equipment, extra water and vehicle lights etc would be checked before travelling on the motorway.

## President directs varsity to return \$11,270 to student

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday directed the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) to refund an amount of \$11,270 as it committed maladministration by unjustly confiscating the admission dues of a student 15 years ago.

The president gave these directions in a 15-year-old matter, referred to him in 2022. He said that NUST, having been established/controlled by the federal government, fell under the definition of "Agency" of the government, was not a private commercial entity but a service provider in the public sector, and confiscating the dues of a student was tantamount to exploitation and malpractice.

As per details, a student was admitted to MBBS on the Foreign SAT basis session 2007 in NUST and his father (the complainant) deposited the admission fee of \$11,420. The complainant's son got admission in another medical university of Pakistan and he applied to NUST for a refund. The NUST refused his request on the basis of its Refund Policy.

Feeling aggrieved, the complainant approached Wafaqi Mohtasib in 2008, which directed NUST to refund the

amount. The NUST, then, filed a representation which was rejected on the ground that NUST did not explain how its policy was lawful and it failed to show that it suffered any financial loss due to the student's decision to join another university.

Hence, the decision of NUST to retain the fee was termed as unjustified.

NUST then filed a writ petition in Islamabad High Court in 2015 which asked the Mohtasib to pass a reasoned order on the questions that whether any maladministration was committed by NUST and that it was an "Agency" of the government. Subsequently, the matter was remanded to the president.

President Alvi in his decision said that since the "provisional admission" offered to the student could not be converted into final admission and another student was admitted by NUST on the seat vacated by him, therefore, NUST charged double dues against one seat which, prima facie, was tantamount to exploitation and malpractice. He said that the act of declining a refund in the present case amounted to "forfeiture and confiscation" which was not permissible except backed by the law.

## Women can ease many issues, speed up the process of development

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The education and training of a woman is the education and training of a generation and if the same woman's role in the society is increased and she is given a balanced share in practical life, not only development but also the process of constructive manner can be accelerated.

Empowerment of women can ease many issues and speed up the process of development. These views were expressed by the speakers while addressing the event organized under the theme of Diversity4Tech here at NSF office. The event was organized in collaboration with the Universal Service Fund (USF) and Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA).

The event was attended by Ms. Aisha Humera Moriani, Additional Secretary for Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MOITT), Ms. Jeanette Whyte, Head of Public Policy, Asia-Pacific (APAC) GSMA, and many other officials from the public and private sector. The event aimed to foster inclusivity and encourage diversity within the technology sector, promoting equal opportunities for all.

While congratulating the teams of USF and GSMA, Ms. Aisha Humera, said, "I am delighted to be a part of this community that recognizes the transformative power of diversity in the technology sector and welcome the talents of individuals from diverse backgrounds." Furthermore, she expressed her unwavering commitment to actively drive the initiatives and foster collective efforts required to establish a diverse and inclusive technology ecosystem.

While expressing his enthusiasm, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the USF, Mr. Haaris Mahmood Chaudhary said, "As directed by Syed Amin Ul Haque, Federal Minister for IT and Telecom, USF will continue to take lead in initiatives where women are highlighted. The Diversity4Tech event is a reflection of our commitment to fostering an environment where women's perspectives and talents are valued. As we bring together female industry leaders from the public and private sectors, we recognize the unique contributions they can make to drive digital innovation and growth. We're excited about the impact this community will create in Pakistan and beyond."

Ms. Jeanette Whyte, Head of Public Policy, Asia-Pacific (APAC) GSMA, said that this visit will prove to be a turning point in your lives, your skills will increase further, and this will enable you to compete with international students in every field. Nasreen Bano said that there is no shortage of talent in Pakistan. She said that the Federal Ministry of Education always strives to provide talented students with opportunities to increase their skills. She congratulated the students and their parents for being selected for this tour.

## Pakistani students to visit Japan under Asia youth exchange program

ISLAMABAD (APP): As many as 9 students from various educational institutions in Pakistan are leaving for Japan today (May 13) for a 7-day visit under the "Japan-Asia Youth Exchange Program in Science" (SAKURA Exchange Program in Science).

Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) in that regard, organized an orientation session at Allama Iqbal Open University. Dean, Faculty of Science AIOU, Prof. Dr. Irshad Ahmed Arshad presided over the event

while Joint Education Advisor MoFEPT, Nasreen Bano was the chief guest of the event.

Director General, Pakistan Institute of Education, Dr. Zaigham Qadeer, Dr. Rifat Jabeen from Directorate of Education, Director Student Affairs AIOU, Syed Gulam Kazim Ali, Dr. Kanwal and Dr. Afshah Huma were also present at the event.

Dr. Irshad Ahmad Arshad said that these children who have been selected for the visit to Japan are a source of pride for us.

He encouraged students and said that this visit will prove to be a turning point in your lives, your skills will increase further, and this will enable you to compete with international students in every field. Nasreen Bano said that there is no shortage of talent in Pakistan.

She said that the Federal Ministry of Education always strives to provide talented students with opportunities to increase their skills. She congratulated the students and their parents for being selected for this tour.



ISLAMABAD: DG information Services Academy Saeed Ahmad Sheikh giving certificates to participant during 2-Day Training Workshop of Business & Economics Reporting at information Services Academy.



‘45 pubic disputes settled

QALA-I-NAW (Pajhwok): Forty-five disputes have been resolved through the mediation of ulema and tribal elders in Badghis province during the past one year, an official has said. Experts stressed over the resolution of disputes through mediation and said the practice helped promote peace and the culture of co-existence in the society. Although, there are judicial organs and institutions for dispute resolution in Afghanistan but Jirgas and grand meetings were another option for dispute resolution in the war-torn countr.

Turkmenistan sends 125 tons aid

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan announced that 125 tons of humanitarian aid including medicine, medical supplies, food and textile products were delivered to Afghanistan. The President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedov on Sunday signed a Decree to send humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan with the help of the Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov Charitable Fund to assist children and needy families in Afghanistan.

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

Girls in Balkh call for reopening of schools



BALKH (TOLONews): Girls in the northern province of Balkh once again called on the Islamic Emirate to reopen their schools. They expressed concern, saying that they are facing an uncertain future. “We call on the government to allow us to go to our schools,” said Naznin, a student. “We call on the

Islamic Emirate to reopen the doors of the schools for all girls and to allow us to continue our education as in other countries,” said Tania, a student. Muniza, a student of grade 12, said that she dreamed of reopening schools but her wish has yet to be fulfilled. “I was happy prior to the

new (solar) year that I would be able to learn in the new educational year, but, unfortunately, the doors of the schools remain closed,” she said. This comes as the deputy governor of Balkh province, Noorulhadi Abu Idris, said that they are waiting for the reopening of girls schools.

“The Islamic Emirate has been making efforts in this regard. Whenever our leaders make the decision in this regard, we will inform you then,” he said. Meanwhile, women’s rights activist said that the closing of girls’ schools is not benefiting the country. “We can say that in having half of the society be uneducated, women will face an uncertain future and the Islamic Emirate will also not have a good future,” said Tafseer Sia Posh, a women’s rights activist. “Today, the girls and women of Afghanistan are deprived of their fundamental rights and their rights should be provided based on Islamic laws,” said Suraya Paikan, a women’s rights activist. Acting Minister of Education, Sayed Habibullah Agha, on a visit to Panjshir said that the conditions for the reopening of schools for girls above grade six have yet to become suitable.

Qatari delegation meets Taliban Officials in Kandahar



KABUL (Agencies): Qatar’s Prime Minister and Foreign minister Sheikh Mohammed Abdulrahman Jassim Al Thani, arrived in Kandahar on Friday and met with Taliban officials, including acting Prime minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan.

Taliban authorities said both sides stressed cooperation in strengthening relations, including economic, education, and health sectors, and cooperation to build relationships and trust. Meanwhile, he met with former president Hamid Karzai, Abdullah

Abdullah, former head of the national reconciliation council, on Sunday as he urged Afghan parties and groups to participate in National reconciliation. Qatar is one of the countries that has close relations with the Taliban. This country has hosted talks between the US and

the Taliban for nearly two years that led to the signing of an agreement between the two sides. The Doha agreement, which was reached between the US and the Taliban, opened the door for the US and its ally to leave Afghanistan after almost 20 years.

Mujahid stresses ‘importance’ of councils of religious scholars

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate’s spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid stressed the “importance” of the councils of Islamic scholars, or Ulemas, saying it is hoped that with the establishment of these councils, “complete justice” will be ensured in the country. After the Islamic Emirate came to power, the councils of Ulema (Islamic scholars) were established in more than 18 provinces. “(The council) has an important role as a bridge between the people and government. I hope justice will be guaranteed and the people will be assured. The voice of the people will be conveyed to the government and the plans of the government will be conveyed to the people,” Mujahid said. This comes as political analysts said that the



councils should play a role in the formation of the constitution, in addition to monitoring and advising government bodies. “The council of the Ulema, in addition to providing consultations and

monitoring the officials in the provinces, should make efforts in the formation of the constitution and the formation of the government,” said Saleem Kakar, a political analyst. “It is felt that there is a

large distance between the government and people, and the Ulema council as a consultative body may provide consultation to the existing rulers,” said Barna Salehi, political analyst.

Four farmers killed over Poppy field destruction in Afghanistan’s Badakhshan

DARAYIM (Agenices): At least four farmers have died, and five others have been injured in a dispute over the poppy field destruction in the northeastern Darayim district of Badakhshan province of Afghanistan. The incident occurred in the village of Doabe Tagab in the Darayim district of Badakhshan on Thursday when the Taliban forces reportedly arrived to destroy the local’s poppy crops. However, a dispute erupted when the farmers sought payment for the money spent on their lands.

As a result, Taliban forces opened fire on farmers, killing four and injuring five others. At the same time, another local source claimed that 15 individuals were hurt during the dispute, including the district commander and six other Taliban fighters. The locals, who were outraged by the Taliban’s conduct, demanded that those involved be brought to justice. On the other hand, the Taliban were seen establishing a roadblock in the area out of concern about a local uprising. The Taliban has not yet

responded to the incident, in the meantime. According to UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report, since the takeover of the Taliban in August 2021, opium cultivation in Afghanistan increased by 32% over the previous year to 233,000 hectares – making the 2022 crop the third largest area under opium cultivation since monitoring began. On the other hand, since the Taliban announced the cultivation ban in April 2022, opium prices have soared. Opiate seizures around

Afghanistan show that the flow of opium and heroin out of Afghanistan has not stopped. Afghanistan meets eighty per cent of the world’s opiate demand. Meanwhile, the majority of the opium crop for 2023 must be sowed by early November, and farmers will decide whether and how much to plant in the face of a severe economic and humanitarian crisis, persistently high opium prices, and uncertainty regarding how the de facto authorities will enforce the cultivation ban.



Kandahar Police foil precious stone smuggling attempt to Pakistan

SPIN BOLDK (Agenices): Hafiz Saber, the spokesman of the Kandahar Police Command, announced on Monday that security forces had prevented the smuggling of 200 kilograms of precious stones from Spin Boldak district in Kandahar province to Pakistan.



The valuable stones were embedded in a large truck, and its driver was arrested by the security forces. The Kandahar Police did not disclose the identity of the driver or provide further details about the smuggled precious stones. The illegal trade of precious stones has been a serious problem in Afghanistan for years. Despite the presence of government security forces, smugglers continue to transport precious stones to neighboring countries, where they fetch high prices in the international market. In addition, illegal mining and smuggling of precious stones often finance the activities of armed groups in the country, which further destabilizes the security situation. The Afghan government and international organizations have taken several measures to prevent the

smuggling of precious stones and illegal mining in the country. The government has established various regulatory bodies to monitor and control mining activities, and it has also imposed restrictions on the export of precious stones. However, these measures have not been entirely successful in stopping the illegal trade. There are several reasons for this, including the lack of capacity and resources of regulatory bodies, corruption among government officials, and the ongoing conflict and insecurity in the country.

In recent years, the Taliban has also been involved in the illegal mining and smuggling of precious stones, which has been a major source of their funding. Since taking control of the country in August 2021, the Taliban has promised to crack down on illegal mining and smuggling and to regulate the mining industry in the country. The smuggling of precious stones is a major problem in Afghanistan, and it continues to undermine the country’s economy and security.

While the Afghan government and international organizations have taken measures to address the issue, much more needs to be done to effectively control illegal mining and smuggling of precious stones. The new Taliban-led government in Afghanistan has an opportunity to address this issue and to regulate the mining industry in the country. However, this will require the cooperation of regulatory bodies, government officials, and the Taliban, and it remains to be seen whether they can effectively work together to tackle this problem.

UN experts call on Taliban to end ‘brutal’ punishment in Afghanistan

KABUL (Agencies): A group of UN-appointed human rights experts called on the Taliban to end “brutal and undignified” forms of punishment in Afghanistan immediately. Ten Special Rapporteurs, including Richard Bennett and members of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, called on Taliban de facto authorities to end “brutal and undignified” forms of punishment, including stoning, flogging, and burying people under walls. The experts expressed serious concerns about using capital punishment without fair trial guarantees and the discrimination women face in the judicial system. The statement said that the urgent call by the group came in response to an announcement by the Taliban-appointed Supreme Court in favour of brutal punishment. “The de facto deputy chief of the court announced on 4 May that they had sentenced 175 individuals to “retribution in kind” punishments, and 37 to be stoned. Dozens of others were condemned to “crimes against God” pun-



ishments such as lashing,” said the press statement. The experts noted that “women are more likely to be sentenced to death by stoning, due to deeply entrenched discrimination and stereotypes against them... held by the exclusively male judiciary”. They said that stoning or being buried alive under a wall constituted torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or pun-

ishment. “These cruel punishments are contrary to international law.” According to a recent report by the UN Assistance Mission (UNAMA) in the country, 274 men, 58 women and two boys have been publicly flogged, and one judicially sanctioned execution has been carried out within the last six months alone. Afghanistan is a signatory to international agree-

ments that forbid torture, cruel, inhumane, or humiliating treatment, and discrimination against women. “We urge the de facto authorities to establish a moratorium on the death penalty immediately and all forms of corporal punishment”, including flogging and amputation, “each of which constitutes torture or another form of cruel and inhuman punishment,” the experts said.



## Umar acquits in two money laundering cases

ISLAMABAD (APP): A Lahore Judicial Magistrate on Friday cleared businessman Umar Farooq Zahoor in two cases of money-laundering and fraud - registered against him by his former wife actress Sophia Mirza.

Judge Ghulam Murtaza Virk of Judicial Magistrate Courts acquitted Umar Farooq Zahoor and cancelled two First Information Reports (FIRs) after the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) informed the court that its investigations had established that the accused was not involved in fraud, money-laundering and corruption.

Both cases were started in early June 2020 after Sophia Mirza approached the FIA Lahore's Corporate Circle over allegations of fraud and money-laundering of around Rs 16 billion by Umar Farooq Zahoor and his brother-in-law Saleem Ahmad.

## Mazari, Yasmin held

ISLAMABAD, LAHORE (INP): After putting all male PTI leaders behind bars, the authorities turned their attention towards the women leaders and have arrested party's two female heavyweights - Shireen Mazari and Dr Yasmin Rashid - on Friday.

PTI Central Senior Vice-President and former human rights minister Shireen Mazari was taken into custody from her home in Islamabad in a pre-dawn raid and shifted her to the concerned police station. It should be noted that the arrest of Dr Shireen Mazari was confirmed by her daughter Iman Mazari, who said the police had surrounded their house and switched off the CCTV cameras.

Yasmin Rashid, former Punjab minister for health, was reportedly arrested from Lahore at half past six in the morning. A day earlier PTI Central Punjab President Dr Yasmin Rashid had castigated Punjab Inspector General of Police Dr Usman Anwar for making irresponsible statements against her, saying he should be ashamed; she always encouraged peaceful protests.

"We were holding protests for the supremacy of Constitution and survival of democracy in the country," she said in a video message. "There is my video evidence of instructing the party workers to remain calm and peaceful. The truth was the police infiltrated our protests and instigated violence to create chaos in the country."

In Balochistan, PTI's Provincial Minister for Minerals Mubeen Khalji was also reportedly arrested from Quetta. Police also raided former KP minister Shahram Turkai's house in Swabi, but Shahram Turkai was not found at home. Earlier, many central leaders of PTI were arrested from Islamabad and Lahore. Police are looking for more leaders including Mahmood Azhar, Mahmoodur Rashid and Aslam Iqbal.

# Focus on to resolve issues of newly merged areas: Azam

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As an important step to resolve the public issues of newly merged districts, the caretaker chief minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan has decided to reserve every Thursday for meeting with tribal people and to listen to their issues personally. In this regard, the first session of meetings was held at Chief Minister's House Peshawar in which a delegation of tribal elders from different merged districts apprised the chief minister of their issues related to health, education, communications, and other service delivery sectors and submitted written applications to him. The chief minister on the applications of tribal people issued directives to concerned quarters for immediate resolution of public issues in newly merged districts.

The tribal elders appreciated the decision of the caretaker chief minister and said that this initiative of the Chief Minister will prove to be helpful in solving the long-standing problems of the tribal people. The delegates said that this initiative of the Chief Minister is a proof of his interest and seriousness in solving the problems of the tribal people adding that the services of Chief Minister Azam Khan for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were not hidden from anyone and hoped that as caretaker chief minister he will continue the public service in a better way.

While talking to the delegation, the Chief Minister said that people of the merged districts have rendered numerous sacrifices during the last four decades adding that the caretaker government is aware of public issues of the tribal people and steps would be taken to resolve them on priority. Every Thursday has been reserved for tribal people to listen to their problems and issue orders to the relevant authorities to take necessary steps to solve them. The Chief Minister said that steps will be taken on a priority basis to solve the long-standing

issues being faced by people of the merged districts and special meetings of the relevant departments will be convened for this purpose, while special attention would be paid to the timely completion of the ongoing development projects in the merged districts.

Azam Khan said that in order to resolve the long-standing issues of the merged districts and bring them at par with other parts of the province, special measures are need of the day. The chief minister further said that he has taken up the matter with the Prime Minister to get the share of the merged districts in NFC and will raise this matter again with the Federation, the people of the merged districts should get their constitutional and legal right at all cost. He made it clear that the caretaker provincial government will not compromise on due rights of the province and newly merged districts and will raise its voice at every forum to achieve their constitutional rights.

## SC to hear Imran's plea against NAB amends on 15th

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Supreme Court on Friday decided to resume hearing in Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's plea challenging the legality of amendments to the National Accountability Ordinance (NAO) 1999 on May 16 (Tuesday).

Almost a year ago, former prime minister and the PTI Chairman Imran Khan invoked the top court's jurisdiction against amendments to the NAO under Article 184 (3) of the Constitution terming the amendments in the law as sheer violation of the Constitution.

The petition has been filed through renowned lawyer Khawaja Haris, who was former premier Nawaz Sharif's counsel in

the Panamagate case. A three-member bench of the top court comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Mansoor Ali Shah will resume hearing of the matter.

The petitioner urged the top court to adjudicate upon a question of "great public importance with reference to the enforcement of fundamental rights of citizens under Articles 9 (security of a person), 14 (inviolability of dignity of a man, etc), 19A (right to information), 24 (protection of property rights) and 25 (equality of citizens).

The petitioner submitted that the amendment is "a manoeuvre by the bulk of the holders of public office to assume control over and

influence the impartiality of NAB chairman."

Filing the plea, the petitioner made the Federation of Pakistan, through its secretary Law and Justice Division, and the NAB, through its chairman, as respondents in the case. It is pertinent that during last May, the National Assembly had passed bills to abolish the PTI government's election reforms giving overseas Pakistanis the right to vote through electronic voting machines (EVMs), as well as the NAB laws. After the President Dr Arif Alvi refused to sign the bills, the joint session of the Parliament had passed the National Accountability (Second Amendment) Bill, 2021 and Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2022.



ISLAMABAD: Protesters burn a vehicle after clash between police and PTI supporters during Imran Khan's hearing at High Court.



PESHAWAR: KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali administering oath from Justice Musarrat Hilali as Chief Justice Peshawar High Court. KP Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan also present.

## UN chief warns Israel

UNITED NATION (APP): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has voiced "deep concern" over the violence between Israel and Gaza militant groups, and warns the Jewish state must adhere to international law during the latest round of conflict.

In a statement released by his Spokesperson Farhan Haq, he said he condemned the civilian loss of life that occurred during Israeli airstrikes aimed at the Islamic Jihad group, three of whose leaders were killed. In total, 13 Palestinians were killed during Tuesday's morning attacks, including five women and four children.

Guterres said the deaths of the women and children were "unacceptable and must stop immediately", the statement continued. "Israel must abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law, including the proportional use of force and taking all feasible precautions to spare civilians and civilian objects in the conduct of military operations."

According to news reports, in response to Tuesday's strikes, Palestinian militants in the occupied Gaza enclave bordering Israel had fired more than 460 rockets, while Israel had hit more than 130 targets inside Gaza. Local medical authorities reported that six people had died on Wednesday, with more than 40 injured.

Some Israelis were reportedly hurt while rushing to seek shelter from rockets, but most were intercepted or fell on open ground. In his statement, the Secretary-General also condemned "the indiscriminate launching of rockets from Gaza into Israel, which violates international humanitarian law and puts at risk both Palestinian and Israeli civilians." Guterres urged all parties to the latest uptick in violence to "exercise maximum restraint" and work towards ending the fighting immediately. "He reiterates his commitment to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements."

## ATC sends 12 PTI workers to jail

LAHORE (INP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Friday sent 12 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers to jail on 7-day judicial remand for the identification parade in a case, registered for damaging state property during a protest after arrest of the party chief.

ATC Judge Abher Gul Khan conducted the case proceedings, wherein the police produced Farhan Kaleem, Muhammad Mohsin Majeed, Muhammad Aslam, Haider Ali, Farooq Shah, Masood Ahmad, Muhammad Rizwan and others.

The investigation officer requested the court to send the accused to jail on judicial remand for an identification parade. However, the defence counsel opposed the request and pleaded for discharging his clients from the case.

The court, after hearing the arguments, accepted the investigation officer's request and sent the accused to jail for the identification parade. The court held that if the accused were not identified, they would be discharged from the case. The Race Course police had registered a case against the PTI workers for

violence that took place after Imran Khan's arrest.

Meanwhile, the court also sent 14 PTI workers to jail on 14-day judicial remand in another identical case, registered by the Naser Abad police. The police produced the accused Adil Amjad, Muhammad Naeem, Mehr Atique, Nauman Munir, Ali Hassan Nawaz, Shahid Fareed, Sarfraz, Muhammad Nadeem and others before the court and submitted that the detainees burnt a container at Kalma Chowk and damaged other properties, during a protest after Imran Khan's arrest.

Moreover, the court sent three accused to jail on 14-day judicial remand in a case registered under charges of damaging state properties and terrorism. The Ghalib Market police produced Waqar Bashir, Usman and Irfan and submitted that the accused burnt a police vehicle and they were arrested from the crime scene.

ATC grants interim bail to 41 PTI workers: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Friday granted interim bail to 41 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers till May 23 in a case registered by Kasur police on the charges of dam-

aging the state property, terrorism and others allegations. The court directed the workers to furnish surety bonds of Rs 100,000 each for availing the relief of interim bail.

ATC Judge Ijaz Ahmad Buttar conducted the proceedings on the bail petitions of the PTI workers. The PTI activists, including Haji Muhammad, Nusratullah Khan, Humayun Masood, Mudassar, Shahid Masood, Fazl Mehmood, Muhammad Saleem, Muhammad Faisal, Asim Ali, Muhammad Azam, Muhammad Hamid, Owais Ahmad, Muhammad Tanveer, Ijaz Ahmad, Usman Ghani, Muhammad Razzaq, Muhammad Mubashir and others, had approached the court for bail.

Two PTI women workers have been arrested from outside the Islamabad High Court, where former prime minister Imran Khan is present for a hearing against his arrest.

According to media reports, the PTI workers were taken away by the Islamabad police as they were trying to enter the court. In a tweet, the Islamabad police also said that "unnecessary people" have been removed from the vicinity of the Islamabad High Court.

## KP Governor administers oath to Hilali as PHC CJ

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Ghulam Ali Friday administered oath to Acting Chief Justice Musarat Hilali as the permanent Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court.

Justice Musarat Hilali took the oath of office as the Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court in a ceremony held at the Governor House. In the ceremony, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Law Secretary read out presidential order on behalf of the President of Pakistan,

Dr. Arif Alvi regarding appointment of the CJ on a permanent basis.

The governor congratulated the chief justice and expressed good wishes. Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan, judges of Peshawar High Court, lawyers, caretaker provincial ministers Fazal Elahi, Firoz Jamal Shah Kakakhel, Adnan Jalil, Hamid Shah, Pir Haroon Shah, Justice (R) Irshad Qaiser, Bakht Nawaz Thakot, Sawal Nazir Advocate, Muhammad Ali Shah, Salma Begum, Mayor Peshawar Zubair Ali, Chief Secretary

Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, Inspector General Police Akhtar Hayat Khan, Accountant General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Heads of Administrative Departments, Principal Secretary to Governor Mazhar Irshad, Registrar Peshawar High Court Inamullah Khan, PSO Chief Justice, Principal Officers High Court attended the oath taking ceremony. After the ceremony, Governor Ghulam Ali and Chief Minister Azam Khan held a joint meeting with the new CJ and judges of the Peshawar High Court.

## IHC grants bail to Imran in multiple cases

(Continued from Page 1)

in the leg during a rally.

A two-member bench — headed by Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri and comprising Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir — while hearing the petition seeking transitory bail in three terrorism cases directed Khan's lawyer to assist the court only in the cases related to him. The lawyer then pleaded to the court to grant his client protection in all the cases filed against him since May 9.

"Government machinery is being misused," the lawyer said. In response, the judge presiding over the hearing said the incumbent government had a case registered against former interior minister Sheikh Rashid — a resident of Rawalpindi — in North Waziristan's Baka Khel. However, he also noted that the PTI government had registered similar cases against Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Javed Latif and others. Then, the court granted bail to Khan and issued orders that he should not be arrested in the "cases that he has no knowledge of" till Monday morning.

A single-member bench headed by Justice Jahangiri heard the bail petition in the Zille Shah murder case, and after the hearing started, it was adjourned for a brief period. Once, the hearing began, Khan's lawyer Salman Safdar said cases were lodged against his client in Lahore after he was arrested on May 9. He appealed to the court to grant his client transitory bail for approaching

the relevant court. After hearing the arguments, Justice Jahangiri granted bail to the PTI chief till May 22.

A two-member special division bench, comprising Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz heard the bail plea in the Al-Qadir Trust case. At the outset of the hearing — which began after an hour-long delay — the two-member bench expressed its displeasure after lawyers chanted slogans in favour of the former prime minister. During the first session, Khan — in response to a reporter's question on whether he was allowed to use a phone during his arrest or not — said: "NAB officials allowed me to talk to my wife via landline."

The reporter then cross-questioned why Khan contacted Musarrat Cheema when he was given the phone to talk to his wife. At this Khan clarified that he could not contact his wife. A reporter further asked whether he had expected to be arrested, to which Khan replied: "I was 100% certain that I would be arrested." Following this, the courtroom erupted into slogans in favour of the PTI chief. The courtroom staff tried to stop the chanting; however, they failed to do so. At this, Justice Aurangzeb said that this was "unacceptable".

Subsequently, the hearing was briefly adjourned for a break for Friday prayers. Once the hearing resumed, Khan's lawyer Khawaja Haris presented the PTI chief's pre-arrest and protective bail applications. "We have asked for a copy of

the inquiry report in another application," he said, adding that NAB should be ordered to provide a copy of the inquiry report.

Haris said that they had found out about the anti-graft watchdog's inquiry report from the newspaper, adding that arrest warrants can be issued only if an inquiry turns into an investigation. "The reason mentioned in the arrest warrants stated that Khan did not appear before NAB despite repeated notices; however, as soon as the investigation started, an attempt was made to arrest him," he said. However, the lawyer informed the court that the inquiry had been converted into an investigation in April and that replies to two call-up notices had been submitted.

He then pointed out the legal flaws of the call-up notices and asked: "It is important to state in what capacity the concerned person has been called — as a witness or as an accused." In response to a question by Justice Aurangzeb, Haris said he had not visited the NAB office because the call-up notice was "illegal". He then concluded his arguments, saying that he had raised objections in a detailed reply, subsequent to which no further notice was received.

After that Islamabad Advocate General Barrister Jahangir Jadoon presented his arguments to the court. The advocate general defended the government's decision to bring in the army citing the rising violence in the province, following Khan's arrest. He also added that there was no solid reason to bring this matter to the high

court in the writ petition. At this Justice Aurangzeb said: "Has martial law been imposed here that we stop hearing all applications?"

Addressing the claims made by Khan's lawyers, the NAB Deputy Prosecutor General Sardar Muzaffar Abbasi then revealed that the inquiry had started in July after which a call-up notice was issued. Khan never appeared for the inquiry, he said, adding that notices had also been served to a business tycoon, Zulfi Bukhari, and others. "Mian Muhammad Soomro, Faisal Vawda, and others who joined the inquiry were also served notices," he claimed. After hearing the arguments of both sides, the two-member special division announced its verdict of granting bail to Khan for two weeks.

In an informal discussion with journalists during the hearing break, Khan said that he would not resist if his bail plea was rejected. Contacting his legal team amid fears of arrest, Khan — referring to the clashes — warned that a similar reaction would be seen if he was arrested again. "I don't want such a situation to arise again as this is my country and my army," he said, revealing that the Punjab Police had arrived to arrest him.

The PTI chief did not respond to a question about his experience of being arrested; however, in response to a question regarding claims that he was given "extraordinary relief" compared to other political leaders, Khan said: "Relief in this! I was sitting in the high court, they had no jus-

tification to arrest me." Terming his arrest an "abduction", he said that the warrant was shown to him after he was taken to the jail. "This is the law of the jungle," the PTI chief asserted.

"Where did the police and the law go? It looks like martial law has been declared here," he said. Later on, he told journalists that a similar situation would take place if he were arrested again. "If I'm not out there, then who will stop the people [from protesting]?" Lawyers who chanted slogans are not a part of PTI.

Speaking to media persons during the hearing break, Khan's lawyer Babar Awan clarified that the lawyers who started chanting slogans were not related to PTI. He then asked: "Why would someone who wants elections, create trouble in the country?" Awan further expressed concerns about another arrest of the PTI chairman and said: "The Punjab police has especially been called to Islamabad. Why does the government want to arrest Imran Khan?"

The lawyer added that if the Punjab police arrested Khan again, it would be "unconstitutional". Did Khan meet establishment during imprisonment? Ahead of his hearing, a private TV channel reporter asked Khan if he had met with the establishment during his imprisonment. Khan responded by shaking his head in the negative.

He was then asked: "Are you adamant or have you made a deal?" This time too, the PTI chief did not answer, instead he smiled, prompting the reporter to ask if Khan's silence

was a sign that he had made a deal. Once more, Khan did not respond verbally and instead put his finger on his mouth, signalling to be quiet.

Ahead of today's hearing, hundreds of police and paramilitary troops were deployed around the high court and the surrounding area, which was blocked for traffic. PTI lawyers were present at the rear gate of the IHC, while Rangers personnel stood outside the court's building and Islamabad Police were deployed inside the premises.

PTI lawyers had urged the court staff to change the room as Court Room Number 3 — designated for the hearing — was "too small" for the hearing. The request was later accepted and the hearing shifted to Court Room 2. Earlier today, Islamabad police issued an emergency order banning all gatherings in the capital city after PTI called for supporters to come together. The former prime minister, along with his wife Bushra Bibi and other PTI leaders, is facing a NAB inquiry related to a settlement between the PTI government and a property tycoon, which reportedly caused a loss of 190 million pounds to the national exchequer. As per the charges, Khan and other accused allegedly adjusted Rs50 billion — 190 million pounds at the time — sent by Britain's National Crime Agency (NCA) to the government. They are also accused of getting undue benefit in the form of over 458 kanals of land at Mouza Bakralla, Sohawa, to establish Al-Qadir University.