

Police arrest Firdous Shamim

KARACHI (PPI): Karachi police arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh leader Firdous Shamim Naqvi while trying to hold rallies from different areas on Sunday. According to a report, the police sources said several cases were registered against Firdous Shamim Naqvi after the recent protests in various police stations. The police sources said PTI leader Firdous Shamim Naqvi was detained from Pehlwan Goth in Karachi.

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# Maulana Fazal refuses govt’s proposal to change PDM protest venue

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman refused the proposal of his government to change the venue of the sit-in from the Supreme Court of Pakistan to D-Chowk in Islamabad.

As per details, Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah met Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Sunday, to request that the PDM not hold a protest outside the Supreme Court. The meeting took place amidst the current political unrest in Pakistan and the PDM's planned protest outside the Supreme Court. Ishaq Dar and Rana Sanaullah urged Maulana Fazlur Rehman to reconsider the protest location and hold protest at D-chowk.

The decision to hold the sit-in was made during a meeting attended by the heads of PDM parties, including former prime minister Nawaz Sharif who participated via video link from London. However, in a surprising turn of events, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar met with Maulana Fazlur Rehman and urged him to reconsider staging the sit-in outside the top court. The government's request was made in an effort to prevent further tension and unrest in the country.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar stated that the government had suggested that the PDM hold their protest at D-Chowk instead. He emphasized that the country had already experienced a recent law and order crisis, referring to the violent protests that erupted following the arrest of Imran Khan on May 9 by the Rangers, acting on a warrant issued by the National

Accountability Bureau (NAB) in relation to the Al-Qadir Trust case.

**PPP decides to participate in PDM’s sit-in outside SC:** Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has decided to participate in the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)'s sit-in scheduled to be held outside Supreme Court of Pakistan on Monday. Addressing a news conference Sunday, the PPP leaders Nayyar Hussain Bukhari and Faisal Karim Kundi said that Supreme Court of Pakistan has refused to constitute a full court for Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) elections that's why PPP will participate in the protest outside Supreme Court. Nayyar Hussain Bukhari said that the nation needs a judiciary that makes a decision irrespective of their personal likes and dislikes, and who can work for the supremacy of law and constitution.

He maintained that when the PTI chairman Imran Khan was summoned before the court on May 11, he was an accused at that time. On what basis the Chief Justice declared Imran Khan's arrest illegal?

Nayyar Hussain Bukhari said that the Party's leadership, parliamentarians and workers would participate in a sit-in organized by Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) in front of the Supreme Court of Pakistan on May 15. Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation Faisal Karim said that today, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto Shaheed and Supreme Leader of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), Muhammad Nawaz Sharif had signed the Charter of Democracy (CoD) aiming to end political victimization and work for the progress, prosperity and development of the country.

# Police arrest PTI leaders Mehmood-ur-Rasheed, Hammad Azhar

LAHORE (NNI): Lahore Police on Sunday arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders Mehmood-ur-Rasheed and Hammad Azhar. A Crimes Investigation Agency (CIA) police Iqbal Town team took Mian Rasheed under custody from a locality in the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) Sunday.

In another action, another police team also detained Faisal Mehar, the secretary of PTI leader Hammad Azhar, from his Sabzazar residence at the crack of dawn. Mehmood-ur-Rasheed remained the provincial minister in the tenure of Sardar Usman Bozdar as the Punjab chief minister. Major key leaders Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Asad Umar, Chaudhy Fawad Hussian, Omer Sarfraz Cheema, Dr Yasmin Rashid, Musarrat Cheema and others.

Police said number of criminals arrested in the last five days has reached 3,185. These arrests were made following the violent protests, arson and vandalism by supporters of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf workers after the arrest of Imran Khan.

It is pertinent to note that COAS Asim Munir already clarified that no more attack on army installations would be tolerated..

PTI protesters torched Radio Pakistan building in Peshawar and Jinnah House aka Corps Commander House in Lahore and attacked General Headquarters (GHQ) and other army installations.

Pakistan Army and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif termed May 9 as black day while former premier Imran Khan denied any involvement in the attacks and insisted PTI is a peaceful party.

**Police arrests PTI’s Yasmin Rashid from hospital:** Police has arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Dr Yasmin Rashid from hospital.

Yasmin, who was still waiting for her release from Kot Lakhpat Jail has earlier experienced a rapid deterioration in her health. The PTI leader was rushed to the Services Hospital in Lahore where her treatment is underway.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Lahore High Court ordered the immediate release of 17 PTI

women workers, including former Punjab health minister Dr Yasmin Rashid.

LHC judge Justice Safdar Saleem Shahid announced the ruling on petition filed against the detention of the PTI workers and leaders.

Hearing a petition, the court ordered her release if she is not "required in any criminal case".

The petition maintained that Rashid was not named in a first information report filed at the Sarwar Road police station and her arrest was "illegal".

PTI Central Punjab President Yasmin Rashid was taken into custody under section three of the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO).

Several PTI leaders including, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Asad Umar, Fawad Chaudhry, Jamsheed Iqbal Cheema, Musarrat Cheema, Falak Naz Chitrali and Malika Bukhari, Shireen Mazari, Qasim Suri, Ali Muhammad Khan and others had been arrested for 'provoking' people for violent protests' following the arrest of party chairman Imran Khan.

# Imran Khan claims he is ‘ready to go to jail again’

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan has said democracy in Pakistan is "at an all-time low", terming the judiciary as the "only hope" the country has in this situation.

"Some individuals resembling commandos suddenly appeared at the time of his arrest. I thought they came for my security." However, I soon realized that they were after him."

These words were uttered by PTI chief Imran Khan while speaking with Sky News on Sunday.

The PTI leader went on to share his own distressing experiences of being taken into custody, the way they manhandled and beat everyone and arrested me was unsettling and shocking. "The first time they showed me an arrest warrant was inside the jail.

It happens in the law of the jungle," the PTI chairman said.

He recalled a moment

of confusion and said he has displayed unwavering determination and readiness to face imprisonment once again. "I am ready to go to jail again," he maintained. He said that the coalition government, led by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was "petrified of elections", adding that they feared being "wiped out" by his party at the polls.

He went on to say that the government had decided that the only way they would allow elections was if "I am inside the jail or killed". He expressed concern over rights violations in Pakistan following his arrest earlier this week lamenting that democracy in the country is at "an all-time low". He also narrated how his residence had been raided by the police on two occasions. During one of these raids, he said, the authorities forcefully broke down the doors of his house in his wife's presence terming it an

"unprecedented and unsettling situation" for himself.

Stressing the deteriorating condition of democracy in Pakistan, the former premier said that approximately 150 cases had been lodged against him — a huge number of cases that had not been filed against any other politicians in the country. Imran Khan also accused the government of fearing elections, as, according to him, they believed in facing a significant defeat in the elections.

He reprised his faith in the judiciary and deemed it the "only hope" in restoring the rights and freedoms of the people. Khan said that it was due to the threats to his life that a judge previously issued orders for his protection. The PTI chairman also spoke about the violation of fundamental rights in the country, which he claimed had reached unprecedented levels.

# Anti-polio campaign to begin from May 15

ISLAMABAD (APP): Under the National Immunisation Programme, a week-long anti-polio campaign will kick off on Monday (tomorrow), where children under 5 years of age will be given polio drops in various districts of the four provinces in the country.

According to details, a five-day-long campaign will be held from May 15 to 19 with the aim to immunize more than 2 million children to boost the immunity of children.

District Health Officer Punjab talking to a private news channel said that almost 12 districts of Punjab have been made part of the campaign including Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Bhakkar, DG Khan, Layyah, Mianwali, Multan, Muzaffargarh, Rajanpur, Rahim Yar Khan and Sheikhpura. In Lahore, Rawalpindi and Faisalabad, the campaign will continue for seven days while in other districts it will last for five days.

All-out arrangements have been finalized by the National Immunization campaign against Polio to save children from the crippling disease of polio.

He said mobile teams have also been formed which would visit all the areas including the remote, far-flung areas, flood-affected areas and Afghan refugee camps areas in Islamabad and other districts to accomplish the task. He also urged the religious scholars, NGOs and local community to make this campaign successful by involving their all-possible efforts so that the children of the whole district could be immunized against this crippling disease. He said the private schools should also cooperate with the district administration in implementing the polio eradication programme. The government should further accelerate its efforts for tackling polio by strengthening polio surveillance systems and ensuring high vaccination coverage during this time.

# Bilawal declares May 14 as historic day for Pakistan

KARACHI (APP): Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party and Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Sunday declared May 14 as a historic day for Pakistan and democracy as well. On this day, the most popular political leader Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and Pakistan Muslim League leader Mian Nawaz Sharif signed the Charter of Democracy (CoD) in 2006.

Chairman PPP, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that by following the Charter of Democracy, the prestige of the country has increased and democracy is strengthened.

Former President Zardari handed over all his powers as President to the Parliament through a constitutional amendment.

He said that the 18th constitutional amendment is a pact between the federation and all federating units. He said that only the parliament has the power to make the law and constitution. It is the duty of the rest of the institutions of the state to follow the laws passed by the parliament.

Bilawal said that due to the great sacrifices of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and the workers of the Party, the constitution of 1973 was restored in its original form which was the defeat of those who despise and hate democracy. He said that due to the great struggle for the security of the country and restoration of democracy, the graveyard of Kemal Kilicdaroglu with 34.79pc, though pollsters expected the gap to narrow in the tight contest.

HaberTurk and other Turkish broadcasters said the results, given less than two hours after polling stations closed, were based on 9.1pc of the ballot boxes counted. The head of Turkey's High Election



LAHORE: Senator Shaheen Butt calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

# Imran pursuing politics of hatred: Rana Sanaullah

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah on Sunday said that Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran Khan was pursuing politics of hatred and urged the public to minus him from politics by using power of the vote.

Addressing a news conference along with Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb, he said the recent attacks on state installations were planned and strategized by PTI Chairman Imran Khan.

"The sites were identified, highlighted and training was given to people," he added. "This man is doing the politics of hatred. We knew about it but now it is also before the public."

Rana Sanaullah regretted that the pride of Pakistan, historic fighter jet of MM Alam was also set on fire and at the behest of Imran Khan, martyrs' memorials were torched. The minister said that PTI workers were trained how to make petrol bombs and use them. He said, "We have recordings of their telephone

calls, audios and videos. We have identified who is responsible for arson in which areas. We will present all this evidence in the court."

The minister vowed that "the gangs trained by PTI chief Imran Khan" would never be forgiven. "They will be identified through CCTV cameras and will not be allowed to go unpunished." He regretted that despite the request of the Chief Justice of Pakistan Imran had not condemned violence committed by the PTI workers across the country. Sanaullah reiterated the stance of PML-N, which took exception to the relief given to Imran Khan by the courts, by saying that no one else was given such relief in Pakistan's judicial and constitutional history. He said Imran was given whatever he asked for and the Islamabad High Court had given blanket relief to him. The minister said that as per the court decision, Imran Khan cannot be arrested in any case including killing someone.

Rana Sanaullah said that there was no solution other than banning PTI, adding, "but it is

a legal process that requires some time." "What you have done with the country, there is no solution but to ban your party" the minister said.

The minister said that documented evidences were available about corruption of Rs. 60 billion committed by Imran Khan. The minister said that Imran Khan and his wife were trustees of Al-Qadir Trust and both were accused of corruption of

Rs. 60 billion and they would have to explain their position in the case.

He further said that Rs. 60 billion were not deposited in the account of the Supreme Court rather it was deposited in the account of a property tycoon. Imran Khan was saying that no one should ask questions about his corruption, he remarked. The minister said that from day one, it was the stance of political parties that Imran Khan was not a political leader but was a "fitna" He said, that Imran should be removed from politics through the power of the vote, otherwise, he would put the country in danger.

# Marriyum terms Imran mastermind behind attacks on sensitive installations, buildings, hospitals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Sunday that attacks on sensitive installations, buildings, ambulances, children, schools, hospitals, mosques were planned by Imran Khan.

Terming Imran Khan's statement as a confession she said, "Imran did not have any information about (PTI workers) attacks, terrorism and arson just as he did not know about his marriage during 'Iddat' (period of waiting after a divorce) and being a father of Tyrian White.

"You and your planning are behind the desecration of the memorials of martyrs and Ghazis", she said in a statement issued here.

Marriyum Aurangzeb said that Imran Khan had repeatedly threatened that if he was arrested, attacks would be done and for this elaborate planning was done. Imran was the mastermind behind the terrorist attacks in Pakistan, she maintained.

The minister said that the Chief of Army Staff and the Director General Inter-Services Public Relations were repeatedly being named as they had refused to meet the "foreign agent" behind closed doors adding, she said that as no secret meeting in the President's House was being held, so the Army Chief and DG ISPR were being named by PTI repeatedly. Castigating Imran Khan, she said before

advising DG ISPR, he should change the name of his party to "Pakistan Tehreek-e-Terrorism".

Taking a jibe at Imran Khan, she said he will be held accountable for Rs 60 billion of the nation.

She said Imran Khan and his spouse had grabbed precious land in Al-Qadir Trust. Terming Imran a foreign agent, she said his anti-nationalist mindset against the country had been fully exposed now. Like foreign funding, foreign agents and their agendas have been fully exposed, she remarked. Those who attacked ambulances, schools, hospitals, mosques, metros, highways and national assets were Imran's terrorists and anti-national elements, she commented.

# Erdogan ahead in Turkey initial vote results, but his margin is expected to narrow

ANKARA (Agenices): Preliminary results from Turkey's presidential election on Sunday showed Tayyip Erdogan ahead with 59.47 per cent compared to opposition rival Kemal Kilicdaroglu with 34.79pc, though pollsters expected the gap to narrow in the tight contest.

HaberTurk and other Turkish broadcasters said the results, given less than two hours after polling stations closed, were based on 9.1pc of the ballot boxes counted. The head of Turkey's High Election

Board earlier lifted a publication ban and said to wait until it announces official tentative results later.

Pre-election polls had given the edge to Kilicdaroglu, who pledges to roll back much of Erdogan's two-decade legacy. Turks voted in a pivotal election today, poised either to unseat President Tayyip Erdogan and halt his government's increasingly authoritarian path or usher in a third decade of his rule.

The vote will decide not only who leads Turkiye, a

NATO-member country of 85 million, but also how it is governed, where its economy is headed amid a deep cost of living crisis, and the shape of its foreign policy. Opinion polls have given Erdogan's main challenger, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, who heads a six-party alliance, a slight lead, with two polls on Friday showing him above the 50pc threshold needed to win outright. If neither of them wins more than 50pc of the vote on Sunday, a runoff will be held on May 28.

CTD arrests four terrorists

LAHORE (NNI): Four terrorists were arrested in intelligence-based operations in several Punjab cities. Amid fears of terrorism, the Counter Terrorism Department personnel made the arrests in Sargodha, Rawalpindi and Gujranwala. The arrested terrorists were belonged to banned Daesh and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The CTD personnel also seized explosive material and suicide vests parts from the possession of the terrorists.

# Shaheen Butt calls on PM

LAHORE (APP): Senator Shaheen Butt on Sunday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. During the meeting, the overall political situation in the country and other issues of mutual interest were discussed. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

# GHQ releases photographs of attackers

RAWALPINDI (NNI): The General Headquarters (GHQ) has released photographs of those who attacked the military's office. According to sources, 14 people, including four women, were involved in the violent protests. Of them, nine of them are residents of Rawalpindi, three are from Islamabad, one from Karachi and one from Chakwal. They said that the process of identification of more than 300 people were involved in the violent protests has been completed. Now those who have been identified would be arrested soon, they added. After the arrest of Imran Khan on May 9 in Islamabad, PTI workers attacked and vandalized the GHQ.

The Rawalpindi District Police had constituted a special team to investigate the attack on the main gate of the military's General Headquarters (GHQ) by violent protesters after the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan.

According to details, the special investigation team was constituted to probe the attack on GHQ that would be headed by SSP (Investigation) Rawalpindi Zunaira Azfar.

SDPO Cantt, SDPO City as well as the SHOs of RA Bazaar, Westridge, and Civil Lines police stations and the In-charge of the Investigation Support Unit would be part of the committee which would assist in the investigation of the case through technical and human intelligence sources. The investigation team would probe the incident in light of the cases and submit a report.

# Suspect who stole corps commander’s uniform arrested

LAHORE (INP): The police on Sunday arrested a suspect who allegedly stole the uniform of Corps Commander Lahore during protests following the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan.

According to details, the Punjab police intensified their crackdown against those who recently attacked the Lahore Corps Commander House during protests following the arrest of former prime minister in Al-Qadir Trust case. Sources said that one of the perpetrators stole the uniform of the Corps Commander and worn it. However, the police have arrested the suspect and shifted him to an unknown location for further investigation.





## Hot weather forecast for Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Meteorological Department on Sunday predicted hot and dry weather in most parts of the Sindh province during the next 24 hours. The minimum and maximum temperatures predicted for Monday in Karachi 37-39 degrees Centigrade, Hyderabad 44-46 degrees Centigrade, Sukkur 43-45 degrees Centigrade, Thatta 38-40 degrees Centigrade, Mohenjodaro 45-47 degrees Centigrade, Dadu 47-49 degrees Centigrade, Mithi 47-49 degrees Centigrade and in Nawabshah 46-48 degrees Centigrade.

Mainly, hot and dry weather is likely to prevail in the province.

## DG SBCA determines to take action

KARACHI (APP): Director General (DG), Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA), Mohammed Yasin Shar Baloch has said that the SBCA will take action against illegal constructions in the metropolis.

He said that the action would be taken against the illegal constructions on residential plots, which were built without the approval of building plan.

He also directed the officials to take action against those, who construct extra portions in high-rise buildings without approval.

The Director General SBCA said that the construction of flats on residential plots was against the SBCA ordinance.

He said that action would be taken against those, who were found guilty in illegal construction with a fine of Rs 50000 and 3 years in prison.

## 21 complainants ring 'Bell of Hope' at Governor House

KARACHI (APP): As many as 21 people rang 'Bell of Hope', installed outside the gate number one of the Sindh Governor House, to register their complaints and get them resolved as soon as possible. The complainants rang the bell between 12am to 8am after the installation of the 'Bell of Hope'.

Later, the Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori himself listened to the complaints of these 21 people and telephoned Station House Officer (SHO) to register First Information Report (FIR).

A complainant, whose was the owner of a marriage hall and his hall was reduced to rubble in district central, also registered his complaint.

The Governor asked him to come in and listened to his complaint. Kamran Tessori on the occasion said to the complainant that if his marriage hall was illegally reduced to rubble then he would be provided with justice.

He said that the purpose of installation of the bell was to facilitate the complainants, whose grievances were not considered.

# 'Mother spends her whole life for best future of children'

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that mother is a being, whose love is pure and she spends her whole life for the best nurture and future of her children.

In his message on the Mother's Day here Sunday, he said that the purpose of celebrating the day was to highlight the importance of the mother and her motherhood.

The Chief Minister said, "We have to think that our mothers grew up as a strong, intelligent and dignified personalities but are we able to give them that respect?" He said those, children, whose mothers were deprived of their love and living in Edhi Homes should look at them. He saluted those welfare institutions, which became the last support of others' mothers.

## Free Medical and Eye Camp in Shikai area



F.P. Report

SHIKAI: Security Forces Ophthalmology has conducted a free Medical and

Eye Camp in Shikai area of District South Waziristan.

The camp will continue for six days in which eye specialists and paramedical staff will participate and serve the patients free of cost. So far 70 male and 20 female have been treated in the free medical and Eye camp. The locals have appreciated the initiative of Security Forces and considered it an excellent help for those who cannot afford the heavy expenditures of medical Check ups and medicines.

## Social media users pay tribute to mothers on Int'l mother's day

ISLAMABAD (APP): As International Mother's Day is celebrated on May 14 like other parts of the world, Pakistanis from all walks of life especially youngsters on digital platforms have shared inspiring motherhood-related posts while paying their tributes for their sacrifices and for their unconditional love.

"Nation took to social media and shared unseen childhood photos and memorable videos with their moms on the occasion of Mother's Day," said a report aired by PTV news channel. Mother's Day is not only a special day for a child but also for a woman who became a mother because of her child, said a Facebook user while sharing a sentimental post. "The new trend to celebrate Mother's Day through social media has become viral and encourages people to share their cherished childhood memories with their mothers," said another Facebook user.

Mother's Day was all about showing appreciation and gratitude for moms around the world, said a female user.

No doubt every day is for our parents,

but these special days gave us an opportunity to show gratitude to the most important person in our lives, said a student on an Instagram post. "Along with thoughtful gestures, heartfelt quotes and messages we can express our love and appreciation for our mothers," she added.

"A mother is the person who sees the first smile, hears the first word, feels the first hug, and worries about you every day of her life," said an emotional post shared by a youngster on a Whatsapp group.

"A mother is the one who shapes the child when it comes to their character and values #HappyMotherday#" a post shared on Twitter. A leading Pakistani actress also shared old photos along with her family and said, "Happy Mother's Day to my whole world & to all the beautiful mothers out there." A politician said in a Facebook post that a mother's love was priceless and nothing could replace her love in the life of a child, adding, her sacrifices, selflessness, patience and dedication to her offspring were unmatched and priceless.

## Jashan-e-Baharan 'Orakzai festival' continues to attract crowds of tourists

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-day colourful Jashan-e-Baharan festival is underway smoothly in Orakzai tribal district which was gripping the attention of crowds of tourists and promoting tourism in the province. Officials of the district administration talking to a Private news channel said that local and foreign tourists had come to the valley in large numbers to see and enjoy the unique culture and traditions.

The administration was providing fool-proof security, lighting and transportation to the tourists and local residents so they could celebrate the event in a befitting manner, they added.

A local resident of the area commented that the authority is utilizing all available resources to promote tourism in the adjoining districts of the province through this first ever festival. There are many beautiful tourist places in the Orakzai district, and the authority was given full attention to promote tourism in the region by providing all facilities, said a foreign tourist while enjoying multiple local games in festival.

The festival is showcasing musical performances, traditional Khatk dance performances, recitals by local poets and a spectacular fireworks displays, said district management work-

er. This initiative was taken only to promote tourism in the region but also strengthen employment and the local economy, said tourism wing official.

KPCTA official also claimed that we are doing our tremendous job by promoting the tourism industry and taking remarkable steps for the facilitation of tourists visiting the Orakzai district. Administration in Orakzai trying its best to explore the scenic sites of valley, said a local tourist.

The visitors, including men and children equally are enjoying various events, including jeep race, tent-pegging, karate, horse and camel dances.



LAHORE: A vendor selling inflatable toys on his roadside setup.

## 17th anniversary of CoD being celebrated as milestone in Pakistan's democratic history

ISLAMABAD (APP): The nation is celebrating the 17th anniversary of the Charter of Democracy (CoD), a momentous occasion that marks a significant milestone in Pakistan's democratic history as former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Supreme Leader of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, came together to sign this historic document, solidifying their commitment to a shared vision for the country's future in 2006.

Pakistan's major political parties, PML-N and PPP, marked the 17th anniversary of the "Charter of Democracy," signed in 2006, this framework aimed to enhance the governance, democracy, human rights, and judicial independence. It advocated for constitutional reforms, transparent elections, devolution of power, and national security. The Charter has fostered political dialogue, improved relations and influenced Pakistani politics, although not all points have been fully implemented. Nonetheless, it remains instrumental in shaping the country's democratic course.

During this crucial period, Benazir

Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif's visionary leadership reshaped Pakistan's political landscape. They recognized that democracy flourishes when the voices of the people are heard and respected. Their legacy inspires leaders to prioritize dialogue, consensus, and the pursuit of national interests.

Seventeen years on, the enduring impact of the CoD can be seen in the progress made. It serves as a guiding light, reminding the nation of the importance of inclusive governance and the collective pursuit of national welfare. Challenges remain, but the ideals enshrined in the CoD propel Pakistan forward. As we celebrate this milestone, let us recommit ourselves to the principles of justice, equality, and progress. By honoring the legacy of Bhutto and Sharif and upholding the ideals of the Charter, we pave the way for a brighter democratic future for Pakistan.

However, the legacy of the Charter has been overshadowed by the controversial entry of Imran Khan into the political arena. As the leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Khan's rise to power introduced a different political approach that deviated from the principles outlined in the

Charter. His confrontational approach has polarized the nation and undermined the unity and stability envisioned by the Charter.

Pakistan currently faces challenges posed by Imran Khan's leadership, which has led to a fragmented society and diminished trust in democratic institutions. It is crucial to reignite the spirit of the CoD, reignite dialogue among political parties, and reaffirm the commitment to democratic principles, justice, and equality. Political leaders must prioritize the collective welfare of the nation over personal interests and engage in constructive dialogue to address the country's challenges. Consequently, Pakistan now faces challenges stemming from Khan's leadership, including a fragmented society and eroding trust in democratic institutions. To overcome these challenges, it is imperative to revive the spirit of the Charter, rejuvenate dialogue among political parties and reaffirm commitment to democratic principles, justice, and equality. Political leaders must prioritize the nation's collective welfare over personal interests and engage in constructive dialogue to address the country's pressing issues.

## Govt. intensifies efforts to implement Urdu as official language

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives is taking practical measures to implement Urdu as an official language in all government departments under Article 251 of the Constitution. Accordingly, it recently approved a revised PC-I of the project worth Rs. 78.186 million titled "Establishment of National Language Processing Laboratory (NLP-Lab)", expediting its efforts to comply with the Supreme Court's order passed in 2015 for enforcement of Urdu as an official language.

The Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division is the sponsoring agency, while the National Language Promotion Department (NLPD) will execute the project. "The core objective of the project is to elevate Urdu to the status of languages with extensive digital data resources and equip it with modern technology applications," said Director General NLPD Dr

Rashid Hameed, who is associated with the department established in October 1979 to advance and promote the Urdu national language.

Sharing details of the NLP-Lab, Dr Rashid Hameed explained the project includes

the development of several applications like Machine Translation (MT), Speech Recognition (SR) and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) that would make language learning more accessible, facilitate cross-border communication and com-

merce, enable people to access online content, promote cross-cultural understanding, and help preserve language resources. He believed that only languages that adapted to the latest technology would survive in today's world.



LAHORE: A street vendor displaying used Laptops to attract the customers at his roadside setup in Provincial Capital.

## Railways float tender for advertising trains, railway platforms


ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has floated a tender, allowing national and multinational firms to utilize several passenger trains and railway platforms for generating maximum revenue for the department.

"All preparations regarding the branding of trains and platforms, railway station, certain crossings and trains have been finalized," said department sources.

It added that the branding of the trains and platforms would not only cover the increasing deficit of Pakistan Railways but will allow private firms to advertise their products for the said purpose.

They said that initially, Pakistan Railways would offer five trains for branding their seat covers, internal walls of the passenger coaches, and even toilets as a pilot project.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا لَنُحِبُّكَ



Our beloved  
**Imran Atta Soomro**  
Ex. Secretary Information, Sindh  
& Present Secretary Works and Services, Sindh  
**Passed away yesterday in Karachi**

MAY ALLAH REST HIS SOUL IN PEACE  
**Namaz-e-Janaza will be held**  
**Tuesday 16th May 2023**  
at 10.00 am (Morning) in Masjid-e-Tayyeba Bath Island, Karachi.  
he will be laid to rest in Defence Phase 8, Graveyard, Karachi

**BEREAVED**  
Faaris Hassan Soomro (Son) - Irfan Atta Soomro (Brother) - Kamran Atta Soomro (Brother)





# CJ Hilali chairs first PHC full meeting

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A Full Court meeting of the Peshawar High Court was convened and chaired by Justice Musarrat Hilali the Chief Justice, while all Hon'ble Judges attended the meeting. The chair welcomed the participants and opened the house for threadbare discussion on the agenda already circulated to the Judges. During to full court meeting Chief Justice appreciated the performance of special benches of this Court and unanimously agreed to continue the same practice. She added that this will help expeditious disposal of matters of the same nature. It is decided that strict observance of the official timing of the Courts by Judges of the High Court

and the judges of the District Judiciary will be ensured. The matter relating to a uniform/dress Code for all the Judges of the District Judiciary and their staff, the staff members of the High Court establishment were taken and was unanimously decided that they shall strictly observe the dress code notified by the High Court. Additionally, the Clerks of learned advocates would also observe the official dress/uniform. To eradicate corruption in both District Judiciary and Staff members of the High Court, it is decided that any anonymous complaints received against Judicial Officers or staff members shall be examined by a committee presiding over by a Judge of High Court and recommendation on the matter will be placed

before the competent authority. The way forward and steps were discussed for implementation of the judgment of the Apex Court in the case of Meesha Shafi VS Ali Zaffar relating to the rules making. Chief Justice apprised the Members of her various visits to different jails. The pathetic position of the under-trial and condemned prisoners within the jail premises were discussed. The full Court had taken serious note of the prisoners' poor conditions and lack of facilities, unhygienic food, an un-conducive atmosphere/environment within the jail premises, and irrational housing of prisoners in various jails. Decisions were made for remedial and appropriate actions to be implemented by the various competent fora.

The cases relating to unnecessary adjournments also came under discussion and it was decided that shortly a meeting shall be held with the stakeholders including the learned Members of the Bar and to chalk out uniform criteria for regulating the matter to avoid unnecessary adjournments which is indeed a big question mark upon the performance of the judiciary. The necessary approvals were granted for amendment in the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 and amendments were also suggested in the appointment and promotion rules of Subordinate Judicial Officers relating to the (MCMC) Mid-Career and (SMC) Senior Management Course. In this regard, Sub-Committees to be chaired by the Judge of the High Court were recommended.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan inquiring after health of injured official of Radio Pakistan Peshawar in CMH.

## PPP decides to participate in allied parties' sit-in

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary Information, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Amjad Khan Afridi has said that the party would fully participate in the sit-in of the allied political parties outside the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Addressing a press conference here at Peshawar Press Club (PPC) on Sunday, he said that convey of the party workers under the leadership of the provincial president, Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha will leave the provincial capital for the sit-in on Monday. Besides, duty provincial secretary information, Gohar Inqilabi, president

News TV. The Governor prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and patience of the bereaved family. Meanwhile, Caretaker Minister for Information Barrister Feroze Jamal Kakakhel on Sunday expressed grief and sorrow over the death of Journalist Khalid Khan in a traffic accident at Alpuri Shangla. In a condolence message, the Minister prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to bereaved family members to bear this irreparable loss

other sensitive installations. They said the attack on GHQ is terrorism and demanded registration of high treason case against PTI leadership. They were also critical of the alleged soft corner of the superior judiciary towards the PTI leadership and said that destruction which could not be committed to the country by the enemy during a long period of 75 years was inflicted in a single day. Similarly, regarding the ransacking and damaging of the Radio Pakistan Building Peshawar and other public and private properties, they demanded action against the provincial leadership of PTI

including former members of the National and provincial assemblies from the province. They further criticized the performance of the previous 9 years government of PTI in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and said that due to incompetency and ineptness, the province today is lacking funds for payment of monthly salaries to employees and pensions to retired employees. They said that PPP will not allow the use of the national institutes to benefit one individual and will join hands with state institutions to strengthen the country. They urged the party workers to fully participate in the movement.



PESHAWAR: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court Justice Musarrat Hilali chairing Full Court meeting of PHC.

## ANP: Mob attack on RPP attempt to deprive people of credible information

PESHAWAR (APP): Leader of Awami National Party (ANP) and former provincial minister, Wajid Ali Khan here Sunday said that mob attack on the offices of Radio Pakistan and Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) was a deep-rooted conspiracy to deprive people of credible Information, education and entertainment. "The attack on both national institutions on May 10 is a great tragedy and should be thoroughly probed, and facilitators as well as masterminds should also be exposed before masses," he told APP. He said it was a serious security lapse, adding the miscreants first put on fire

the Chagi mountains model and fence on May 9 in the premises of Radio Pakistan and on May 10 have burnt down the whole building of Radio Pakistan including the office of Associated Press of Pakistan. Waji Ali Khan said that resumption of transmission of Radio Pakistan in a short possible time after the attack was a good omen and has passed a strong message that through such assaults the moral of the staff of the national broadcaster could not be shattered. He said APP being a national news agency of Pakistan was providing accurate and credible information to people and attack on it is to stop truth besides

exposed the evil designs of attackers. The ANP leader said violent protest after the arrest of Imran Khan in about Rs60 billion mega corruption case by the NAB was illogical and should face courts. He said that PTI during its 9 years rule has failed to address problems of people and its flagship billion trees afforestation project was taken over by the NAB Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Due to ill planned BRT corridor, he said that Peshawar was plunged into traffic mess and pollution. He said that health reforms were implemented in haste by the PTI rulers that made negative effects on sehat card system.

## CCPO takes charge

PESHAWAR (APP): On reaching the Police Line, a smart armed Police contingent presented a guard of honor to newly posted Capital City Police Officer Peshawar Syed Ashfaq Anwar. Soon after, the guard of honor CCPO laid flowers on the memorial of Police Martyrs at Police Lines Peshawar. He offered a special prayer for martyrs, paid homage to the sacrifices of Police martyrs. The sacrifices of Police officers and Jawans will be written in golden letters in history, CCPO Ashfaq added. Police officers and officials have shed their blood for the sake of the nation in the past and will not hesitate to make any kind of sacrifice in the future as well, said CCPO Syed Ashfaq Anwar while addressing the Jawans present on this occasion.

## Employees to close tube wells

PESHAWAR (APP): The employees of the WSSC on Sunday announced the closure of all tube wells in the city due to non payment of salaries. The All Municipal Workers Union would hold an emergency meeting of employees scheduled for Monday morning at 10am in this regard. Municipal employees are furious over the non-payment of salaries and have decided to take the first phase of protest by closing of the tube wells.

## Convocation to be held on 25th May

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Mahboob Medical Institute (MMI) is going to hold its annual convocation on May 25, 2023 in which the graduated students of 2019-22 will be awarded degrees. A press release issued here on the other day says that the Governor KP Haji Ghulam Ali will grace the ceremony as the Chief Guest, while Chairman MMI Dr Mahboob-ur-Rahman, faculty, graduated students and their parents as well as people from different walks of life will participate on the occasion. The convocation will be held at Serena Hotel Peshawar on May 25, 2023 from 10am to 2pm.

## Excise police foil smuggling of heroin

PESHAWAR (APP): The Excise Taxation and Narcotics Control Department foiled a bid to smuggle narcotics and recovered 30 kilogram of heroin from a truck. Excise Mardan Region police on a tip off foiled to smuggle high quality heroin worth millions of rupees was recovered from a truck near Azakhel area of district Nowshera. Syed Naveed Jamal Provincial In-charge Excise Intelligence Bureau received information from confidential sources that a large amount of heroin was being smuggled in a truck with no number on Azakhel GT Road. After deciding the action plan with Excise and Taxation Officer (Narcotics Control), Muhammad Riaz

SHO Police Station Excise Mardan Region, Ajmal Khan Inspector and Nasir Ameer Sub Inspector Additional Incharge, Malik Niazi Ali Assistant Sub Inspector along with others officers were alerted. The team successfully recovered 30 kg of high quality heroin from the informed truck and arrested driver. Case has been registered in Police Station Excise, Mardan Region and started investigation. Ehsanullah Secretary Excise, Akmal Khan Khattak Director General Excise and Aftabuddin Director Narcotics Control praised the recent action of the relevant staff for thwarting the attempt of smuggling large quantities of drugs.

## Governor, Caretaker Minister condoles demise of journalist

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Sunday expressed profound grief and sorrow over the sad demise of journalist Khalid Khan in a traffic accident. Khalid Khan remained associated with Khyber

News TV. The Governor prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and patience of the bereaved family. Meanwhile, Caretaker Minister for Information Barrister Feroze Jamal Kakakhel on Sunday expressed grief and sorrow

over the death of Journalist Khalid Khan in a traffic accident at Alpuri Shangla. In a condolence message, the Minister prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to bereaved family members to bear this irreparable loss

with fortitude. The minister said that Khalid Khan was a talented journalist and always raised the voice of people in media.

## PMLN completes planning for sit-in: Wali

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Spokesman of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Ikhtiar Wali on Sunday said that the party has completed its preparations for a massive protest in front of the Supreme Court of Pakistan on May 15. In a statement issued here the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa PMLN spokesman announced that the protest would be peaceful but assertive. He said that the convey of PML-N workers will depart from Peshawar Motorway at 8 o'clock in the morning. They will make their way towards the Supreme Court, where they will voice their concerns and demands. The protest will be led by the provincial president and Advisor to Prime Minister Engineer Ameer

Muqam and Murtaza Javed Abbasi, said Ikhtiar Wali. The restoration of justice has now become the primary responsibility of political forces, he added. He said that they believe that the time has come for all political parties to prioritize the restoration of justice in the country, adding the Chief Justice of Suprem Court should announce his resignation.

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## 'JUI-F finalized preparations for sit-in'

PESHAWAR (APP): After the announcement of the JUI-F protest sit-in outside the Supreme Court, the workers have started their movements with the main departure of the workers from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday morning. This was stated by Maulana Ahmad Ali Darwish while talking to media men here Sunday. He said the Caravans of the JUI-F workers will depart from each district according to their schedule and all convoys will reach Haklah Interchange on Monday afternoon. The convoy from Peshawar city will depart from JUI center at 9.00 am on Monday morning, Ahmad Ali Darwish informed. After reaching Haklah Interchange, all convoys from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will go to the Supreme Court in the form of a central convoy, Maulana Ahmad Ali Darwish explained. The workers have been instructed to bring essential supplies, Maulana Ahmad Ali Darwish replied to a question of how long the sit-in will be. "It depends on the high command who can answer to such questions, however, the workers will be ready for any kind of the situation," he added



PESHAWAR: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Siraj ul Haq addressing a public meeting. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

## Chaghi Mountain model, another casualty of May 9 clashes

PESHAWAR (APP): Chaghi mountains model, which was constructed in the premises of Radio Pakistan's building in memory of May 28, 1998 successful nuclear explosions, was another casualty of May 9 clashes in Peshawar where politicians and civil society demanded its reconstruction. The tall Chaghi mountains model with fancy lights and red-yellow colour was built on the left side of the main gate of Radio Pakistan is no more. It attracted visitors' attention while moving on Khyber Road through

Suray bridge before its burning by the violent mob turned it into mounds of ashes. The model remained centre of attraction of visitors, tourists, students and citizens of Peshawar especially on May 28 every year where they paid tribute to the scientists of the nuclear program. "Chaghi model allways fascinate me due to its unique design and was symbol of Pakistan's successful nuclear explosions conducted 25 years ago," said Ehtisham Qaiser, a lecturer at Peshawar while talking to APP.

He said people and students gathered here in large number on May 28 and paid glowing tributes to scientists of the nuclear program and former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif for the successful nuclear tests at Chaghi district of Balochistan on May 28, 1998. The violent mob first broke fence of the model and later put it on fire on May 09 as its flames and black smoke engulfed the entire area before the building of Radio Pakistan wherein APP was also located on its 4th floor, was ransacked and burnt to

ashes on May 10. "The burning of Chaghi model is highly condemnable. It was an attack on the symbol of Pakistan's successful nuclear tests of May 28, 1998 conducted by former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif 25 years ago, and exemplary punishment should be given to culprits," said Ikhtiar Wali Khan, PMLN Khyber Pakhtunkhwa spokesman and former MPA while talking to APP. He said burning of Chaghi model has exposed the evil mindsets of attackers and anti state elements. The attack on Radio

Pakistan and APP offices and Chaghi model should be properly investigated through CTD, he added. He said violence against the government employees including women, vandalism, burning of Chaghi model and damage to government and private properties was terrorism. Ikhtiar Wali Khan said that on one side former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif have made Pakistan's defense impregnable after conducting successful nuclear tests at Chaghi after overlooking international pressure while on the other side Imran

Khan was leveling baseless allegations against the state institutions after his politics became irrelevant. He said that Imran Khan has negated his own foreign conspiracy narrative and failed to controlled his supporters on May 9-10. Ikhtiar Wali said that ransacking of state institutions including Radio Pakistan, APP, toll plazas, attacks on security installations, torching of the government and private buildings was no service to Islam and the country. Wali said that attack on Radio Pakistan and APP was a deep rooted conspira-

cy to silence media and shatter confidence of the state institutions. He said that resumption of Radio Pakistan transmission have passed a strong message that the national broadcaster could not be pressurized through such deplorable actions. Hamza Khan, PMLN Nowshera President while strongly condemning the burning of Radio Pakistan, APP and Chaghi mountains said that attackers wanted to terrorize the residents of Peshawar but failed in their nefarious designs. He said people of all walks of life have con-

demned the attacks on the state and government institutions and expressed solidarity with employees of Radio Pakistan and APP. "On every May 28, I came to Radio Pakistan Peshawar's Chaghi model to celebrate Pakistan successful nuclear tests," he said and demanded reconstruction of the Chaghi model. He expressed the hope that the burnt Chaghi model and Radio Pakistan building would be reconstructed in its original shape being identity of Peshawar and strict punishment would be awarded to the assailants.





## In brief

### DC distributes prizes

SIALKOT (INP): Deputy Commissioner Adnan Mahmood Awan has said that sports activities put positive impacts on human health and personality. He expressed these views while addressing a prize distribution ceremony of the winners of Deputy Commissioner District Karate Cup 2023. District Sports Officer Iftikhar Gondal, Director Pakistan Martial Arts Union Mian Shehzad, Organizer Shehzad Ahmed and Coach Muhammad Younis were also present. Adnan Mahmood Awan congratulated players and distributed medals and trophies among them who secured the first, second and third positions.

### Rs.101,000 fine imposed

FAISALABAD (APP): The price control magistrates imposed Rs.101,000 fine on 91 profiteers over violation of the price control act in various parts of the district on Sunday. A spokesperson to district administration said that price monitoring teams held inspections and checked various merchant stores and found 91 retailers involved in overcharging and profiteering. Hence, they imposed a total fine of Rs.101,000/- on them and warned that they would be sent behind bars if they did not mend their way of profiteering, he added.

### Three caught for pilfering

SIALKOT (APP): Three people were caught for pilfering electricity from main transmission lines and through meter tampering in the district. On a report of the sub-division officer Gepco, Muradpur, Kotli Said Amir and Motra police raided different areas and caught red handed Faraz, Boota and Obaid for pilfering electricity. Police had registered cases and started investigations.

### PASSCO foils smuggling

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO) here on Sunday foiled a bid to smuggle 400 bags of wheat to another province. According to official sources, Zonal Head PASSCO Alipur Sufyan Akram along with his team raided FF Mill in Alipur. The Mill owners were transporting 400 wheat bags to Sindh province through loaded trucks. The officials seized the wheat bags and shifted it to PASSCO centre. They also forwarded recommendations for canceling the license of FF Mill.

### 24,000 bags of wheat recovered

SIALKOT (APP): Assistant Commissioner Pasrur Qamar Mehmood Manj on Sunday raided various rice mills in Chawinda and recovered 24,000 bags of 50-kg wheat. On the instructions of the deputy commissioner Sialkot, the AC with a police team raided various rice mills in Chawinda and recovered 20,000 wheat bags from Dogar Rice Mills, Dogra Harian, and 4,000 bags from Ali Yousaf Rice Mills, Dogarwali. Police had registered cases against them.

### Nation reposes trust Bilawal

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Secretary Information, Pakistan Peoples' Party Bahawalpur Division, Malik Shah Muhammad Channar has said that the nation had reposed trust in the leadership of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari by voting in favour of PPP in Sindh's local government elections. He said that PPP was still the largest political party in the country which enjoyed the support of the masses.

# Corps Commander for setting up paragliding club



F.P. Report

ORAKZAI: Corps Commander of 11 Corp Peshawar, Lt. General Azhar Hayat, Sunday announced the setting up of a paragliding club in Orakzai which would help the youngsters of the area to enter into the field of sports.

He expressed these views as the chief guest on the last day of the Jishan-e-Baharan festival in Orakzai. The festival was organized by KPCTA, Pakistan

Army and District Administration. GOC 9th Division, Major General Ahsan Khattak, Commandant Orakzai Scouts, Tasneem Khan, Project Director KPCTA merged districts, Ishtiaq Khan, Deputy Commissioner Tayab Abdullah and area elites also attended the concluding ceremony and enjoyed the events of the last day.

The Corps Commander said that hotels would be constructed in Orakzai for tourists and their families

would be given respect. He added that facilities would be further developed to attract foreign tourists to Orakzai and it would create growth opportunities for locals. He further stated that the development of the area would attract tourists who prefer to visit northern areas, Galyiat and Malakand.

Various events including jeep racing, cycling, judo competition, javelin throw, Marathon, kabaddi, cricket, volleyball, and mass wrestling were held on the last day and enjoyed by spectators. Stalls of traditional items, including truck art, Charsadda Chappal, Karakul cap, and paintings were also set up by KPCTA for tourists.

A music show of KP traditional instrument, Rabab, was also held, which was enjoyed by spectators who praised the efforts of KPCTA to arrange the colorful event.

## ‘Paying attention to children’s education’

MARDAN (APP): Sheikh Ul Hadith and Quran Maulana Yousaf Ahmad Sunday said that Islam emphasizes the acquisition of education in contemporary sciences as well as religious sciences as Islam is a religion of peace.

He expressed these views as a special guest at the ceremony of distributing certificates and gifts to students who finished the Qur'an and memorized it in Jamia Fariqiya Fahm Al-Qur'an, Baghdadha, Mardan. Hafiz Hyder Ali and Maulana Muhammad Amir Madani of Jamia Fariqiya Fahm Al-Qur'an also addressed the ceremony.

The main reason for the decline of Muslims is the distance from the religion of Islam as Islam teaches us peace and brotherhood, he said. In Islam, he said, the most emphasis is on educa-

tion. Islam emphasizes the acquisition of religious studies as well as modern sciences, he added.

The speakers said that parents should give their children secular education as well as religious education, which will be the reason for giving and the success of the hereafter. He congratulated the memorizing students and their parents and said that the students who have studied the Quran should also follow the teachings of the Quran.

“You should convey the teachings of the Quran to other people,” Maulana Yousaf Ahmad said. He said that the Holy Quran is the source of guidance, the recitation of the Holy Quran brings a person closer to Allah, a bright future can be built only by following Islamic teachings.

He taught the virtues and

created a revolution that has no precedent in history. Humanity is fed up with the current system and wants change, but this change is not possible without the Qur'an, Maulana Yousaf Ahmad said.

He said that the system of Allah and His Messenger (Peace and Blessings of Allah Be Upon Him) has to be implemented and it is not possible without the Qur'an. He said that the most important responsibility of parents is the intellectual and moral training of their children.

Children should learn knowledge, childhood, adolescence and youth are the best times to learn, he said, adding, “During this period, children should be equipped with the jewels of education and they should be admitted to Madrasahs and schools to learn religious issues and Quran.”



SWABI: Advisor to Prime Minister Amir Muqam addressing public gathering.

## Two gunned down over old enmity in Wah Cantt

WAH CANTT (APP): Two persons were shot and killed by unidentified armed assailants in a broad daylight assassination incident in the limits of Wah Cantonment police station on Sunday.

Station House Officer Sub-Inspector Muhammad Rafeeq told APP that 20-year-old Shahbaz Ahmed and 43-year-old Ahmed were waiting for a ride when two masked men riding a motorcycle appeared on the scene and opened fire on them.

Rescue 1122 reached the

spot and shifted the injured to a local private hospital where they succumbed to injuries.

Later, the bodies were shifted to THQ hospital for autopsy.

Wah Cantonment Police have registered a double murder case and launched further investigation.

**Three drugs peddler arrested, drugs recovered**

Police during a crackdown against the anti-social elements involved in the sale of contraband, arrested three drug peddlers including one female and recovered

a huge quantity of drugs from their possession.

According to a Police spokesman, Sadar Wah police recovered 02 kg 220 grams of hashish from accused Nabila Bibi, Wah Cantt police recovered 02 kg 50 grams of hashish from accused Bhai Khan, Taxila police recovered 01 kg 150 grams of hashish from accused Rashid, and 01 kg 350 grams of hashish from accused Umar Mumtaz.

Separate cases were registered against the accused under the Anti-Narcotic Force Act, 1997.

## Three robbers arrested

FAISALABAD (APP): Police on Sunday claimed to have arrested three dacoits and recovered two motorcycles, cash and weapons.

A police spokesman said Khurarianwala police during patrolling arrested three suspects from Chak No 210-RB. During interrogation, the suspects were identified as Ateeq, Khizar Abbas and Boota of Chak No 215-RB, Islampura, who were wanted to police in dacoity, robbery and other cases. Police also recovered two motorcycles, cash, mobile phones, weapons and other items from their possession, the spokesman added.

**Trader killed during robbery:** A trader was shot dead over resistance during

a robbery in the area of Jhang Bazaar police station on Sunday.

A police spokesman said trader Muhammad Rashid, 36, was returning home after closing his business when some armed bandits tried to snatch cash and other valuables from him near Bohar Chowk Jhang Road. However, the criminals shot him dead and escaped when the trader resisted. The police took the body into custody and started investigation for the arrest of culprits, he added.

**Fesco issues shutdown notice:** Fesco on Sunday issued a shutdown notice for Monday due to necessary repair, maintenance and expansion of electricity

lines.

According to the notice issued by the company, power supply from GIC feeder linked with 132-KV Samundri Road and Risala Road feeder attached with 132-KV Jhang Road grid station will remain suspended from 8 am to 1 pm while Nawaz Town, BL Industrial, Ramdewali, Dawood, Samana, University Town, Abu Bakar Block, Kalash, Millat Town, Sandal and Dry Port feeders connected with 132-KV Chiniot Road grid station, Nia Lahore-1 and Nia Lahore-2 feeders originating from 132-Kv Nia Lahore grid station will observe shutdown from 8 am to 2 pm on Monday.



KHAR: Members of Bajaur Chamber of Commerce and Industry and tribal elders participating in rally organized in favor of Pakistan Army.

## Kohat Police arrested two proclaimed offenders

KOHAT (APP): Billi Tang Police Kohat on Sunday carried out a major operation against the proclaimed offenders and succeeded in arresting two proclaimed offenders in the remote area of Kamal Khel.

Police operation led by SHO Billi Tang Waqar Afridi, two proclaimed offenders were arrested who were wanted in several cases including murder and attempt of murders, Police Control Kohat said. Alleged criminals Misal Khan and Asadullah were detained along with weapons during a house raid.

Spokesman of Kohat Police has revealed that 1 repeater, 1 pistol, 3 chargers and dozens of cartridges were recovered from the possession of the arrested criminals. Criminals were transferred to PS Billi Tang for further legal action.

## Woman killed, husband survived murder attack

D.I.KHAN (APP): A woman was killed while her husband survived a murder attack due to old enmity when they were returning home on a motorcycle here in the limits of Yarik Police Station.

According to a police spokesman, Arshad Shah (29) reported to Yarik police that he along with his 30-year-old wife were returning from Dara Pezu and going to their home in Wandha Kali when two persons of their rivals including Nemat Ullah son of Abdullah Jan and Ehsan Ullah son of Nemat Ullah residents of Chunda forcibly stopped them near Muslim Petrol Pump on Bannu road.

He said Ehsan Ullah opened fire at them with his Kalashnikov. In the attack, the husband survived while his wife was seriously injured and succumbed to her injuries. Moreover, Arshad Shah informed the police that they had old enmity with the rival group.

## Drug peddlers held

BADIN (APP): Police in its continued drive against narcotics and criminals on Sunday arrested 10 accused and recovered gutka raw material, Zaafrani pati and gutka.

On the directives of ASP Majida Parveen Halepoto, SHO Tando Ghulam Ali police station Inspector Ghulam Qadir Sirki with his team conducted a raid on Zardari road near Nohriya boundary arrested 3 accused Naseer Qazi, Muhammad Ayoub Rajpoot and Salman Memon, while their accomplice Abdullah Pathan managed to escape.

Police recovered gutka raw material, 39 bags of supari powder, 10 packets of Zaafrani pati and 19 packets of lime from their possession and registered the case against them under relevant law.

In another crackdown, SHO Matli Inspector Ayaz Ali Bhatti with his team conducted successful raids in his territorial jurisdiction and arrested 7 suspects Aamir Ali Mastoi, Abdul Razaque, Bhagwan Das kolhi, Akhter Chandio, Noor Ahmed, Mubarak Rahmoon and Naveed Rahmoon and recovered 40,320 packets of gutka raw material, 28-kilo gram main puri powder, 30 kg supari powder, and 200 packets of gutka from their possession.

## BCCI holds solidarity rally with armed forces

### F.P. Report

KHAR: Bajaur Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCU) and tribal elders held a rally in favor of Pakistan Army in Bajaur tribal district.

A large number of tribal elders, business community and people participated in the rally. The participants raised slogans in favor of Pakistan Army. Tributes were paid to the officers and soldiers of Pak Army on this occasion.

While addressing the rally, the speakers said that they strongly condemn the defamation of the Pakistan Army by a specific political party and its workers in their political rhetoric.

During the protest, the workers of the political party using derogatory words about the martyrs of Pakistan Army and breaking and mocking the statues made by them are intolerable. They said that Pakistan Army is the need of our country.

The entire nation should respect Pakistan's forces from the bottom of their hearts. They said that some politicians are criticizing the Pakistan Army for their political purposes. These elements cannot be in favor of Pakistan.

We know that these political parties are following the agenda of anti-national elements to please their foreign masters. They said that the young generation should wake up and discourage such elements.

## DOP constitute body to investigate damages

DIR LOWER (APP): DPO Dir Lower Sunday formed an investigation team to probe the damages as a result of the violent protest in District besides helping out to race and arrest the miscreants on a daily basis.

He also directed the investigation team to submit a report immediately besides starting investigation against those who were involved in damaging public and private property. An investigation team has been formed under the leader-

ship of SP Investigation Lower Dir Zahoar Ahmad for the investigation of 09 Police Station Balambat. The bodies will be DSP Timgarha Syed Rahim Khan, SHO Timargarah Imran Khan, SHO Balambat Mehboob Shah, Inspector Ismail Khan and Sub-Inspector Nurgani Khan.

Thus, an investigation team has been formed under the leadership of DSP Investigation Syed Zaman Shah Khan for the investigation of case 124

dated 2023-05-09 Chakdara Police Station. Inspector Bahadur Khan, SHO Isbanar Shahabuddin and SHO Ouch Shah Faisal will be the team members.

DPO Lower Dir has directed the Special Investigation Teams to trace the miscreants involved in violent protests and damage government property through footages, photographs and other means and arrest them immediately and submit progress reports on a daily basis.

## Cop martyred, six abducted

KASHMORE (INP): The robbers in Kashmore city are on the loose and it seems nobody is there to stop them as six citizens have been kidnapped in the last 24 hours while a cop has also embraced martyrdom.

According to media reports, Police said bandits opened indiscriminate firing on the vehicles near Kashmore city resulting in truck tyre burst and took away two people including a driver to Kacha area.

Sindh IGP Ghulam Nabi Memon earlier ordered to intensify the intelligence based operation against criminals in Katcha areas. In first quarter of 2023,

189 encounters took place in the Katcha areas including 63 in Ghotki, 53 in Sukkur, 42 in Kashmore and 31 in Shikarpur.

During these encounters, 19 bandits were killed including five in Ghotki, 8 in Sukkur and 6 in Kashmore. Similarly, four bandits were injured in Ghotki, 27 in Sukkur, three in Kashmore and five in Shikarpur.

The quarterly report said a total of 208 robbers were arrested as a result of coordinated police actions, including 45 from Ghotki, 51 from Sukkur, nine from Kashmore and 103 from Shikarpur.

## 20 held, arms and narcotics recovered

SARGODHA (APP): Police on Sunday launched a crackdown and arrested 20 criminals besides recovering weapons and narcotics.

Police Spokesman Qaiser Awan said officials of different police stations raided and arrested Ahmed, Asger, Ali, Tahir, Sultan, Imran, Kamran, Khuram, Khalid, Khaleel, Razaqat, Ramzan, Riaz, Razwan Khan, Tuqeer, Wasif, Majeed, Mehmood and others.

Police also recovered 3-kg hashish, 1.2-kg of opium, 345 liters of liquor, nine pistols, four revolvers, 193 rounds, five Kalashnikovs and other items.

**Six arrested for power theft**

The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (Fesco) launched a crackdown on power pilferers and caught six ones in the district here on Sunday.

Fesco Circle Office spokesman said task teams of the company raided at different localities and caught Amir, Shabir, Shahid, Shamsair, Sajid and Aslam for power theft.

## GDA MNA house looted

SHIKARPUR (INP): Unknown armed persons looted the house of a Grand Democratic Alliance parliamentarian in Shikarpur, on Sunday.

Reportedly, some unidentified armed robbers broke into the bungalow of GDA MNA Ghous Bux Khan Mahar in Madiji Town, Shikarpur. They made the watchman of the house hostage and looted valuables from the MNA's residence and made off.

Police said that the dacoits also beat up the watchman for putting up resistance. The robbers looted solar panels, water motor, batteries, UPS and other valuables from the Mehr house, police added.

Watchman told the police officials that as many as 10 armed men barged into the house, subjected him to torture and made him hostage. After that the robbers looted valuables and fled.

## More efforts needed, says CS

QUETTA (APP): Chief Secretary (CS) Balochistan Abdul Aziz Aqeeli chaired the important meeting of the Polio Provincial Task Force here on Sunday and stressed the need for more efforts to wipe out polio disease.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of the Department of Health Administration and related institutions.

The concerned official briefed the authorities to

the task force on the ongoing measures for the prevention of polio.

Chief Secretary said that we needed more efforts so that we could achieve 100 percent results in the eradication of polio.

He said that all parents should cooperate with polio teams to administer anti-polio drops to children so that they would keep their children safe from polio disease.





## Category 5 Cyclone Mocha hits Myanmar, Bangladesh

TEKNAF (AFP/APP): Cyclone Mocha began to crash ashore at the Bangladesh-Myanmar border on Sunday, Bangladesh's weather office said, uprooting trees and bringing driving rain to a region home to hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees. Packing winds of up to 195 kilometres (120 miles) per hour Mocha hit between Cox's Bazar, where nearly one million Rohingya refugees live in camps largely made up of flimsy shelters, and Myanmar's Sittwe, the office said.

The US Joint Typhoon Warning Center earlier said Mocha was packing winds up to 140 knots, or 259 kph, equivalent to a category 5 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale.

"Our camp houses, which are constructed with bamboo and tarpaulins, can be blown away in soft, light winds," Mohammad Sayed, 28, told AFP from Nayapara refugee camp in Bangladesh.

"The schools, which are designated as cyclone shelters... are not strong shelters that can withstand the winds of a cyclone. We are scared."

"The wind is getting stronger at the moment," rescue worker Kyaw Kyaw Khaing told AFP earlier from Myanmar's Pauktaw, about 25 kilometres inland from Sittwe, and where he said around 3,000 people had arrived to seek shelter.

"We distributed enough food for one or two meals to the people evacuated to temporary shelters. I don't

think we will be able to send any food today due to the weather."

Thousands left Sittwe on Saturday, packing into trucks, cars and tuk-tuks and heading for higher ground inland as meteorologists warned of a storm surge of up to 3.5 metres (11 feet).

A media account run by junta authorities in Rakhine showed what it said were trees downed over a road near Sittwe. "We are not OK because we didn't bring food and other things to cook," said Maung Win, 57, who spent the night in a shelter in Kyauktaw town. "We can only wait to get food from people's donations."

Bangladeshi authorities moved 190,000 people in Cox's Bazar and nearly 100,000 in Chittagong to safety, divisional commissioner Aminur Rahman told AFP late Saturday.

The rain and wind were felt in Myanmar's commercial hub Yangon, around 500 kilometres away, residents said Sunday.

The Myanmar Red Cross Society said it was "preparing for a major emergency response".

In Bangladesh, authorities have banned Rohingya refugees from constructing concrete homes, fearing it may incentivise them to settle permanently rather than return to Myanmar, which they fled five years ago following a brutal military crackdown.

The camps are generally slightly inland, but most of them are built on hillsides, exposing them to the threat of landslides.

Forecasters expect the cyclone to

bring a deluge of rain, which can trigger landslips.

"The wind started about 8:30 this morning and it's getting stronger," a Rohingya community leader in a displacement camp in Myanmar's Kyaukphyu told AFP.

"A house at the camp collapsed and the roof of a shelter built by UNHCR was blown away," they said, requesting anonymity.

Hundreds of people also fled Bangladesh's Saint Martin's island, a local resort area right in the storm's path, with thousands more moving to cyclone shelters on the coral outcrop.

Those left behind said they feared the storm's approach.

"We are in a panic because we don't have enough cyclone shelters here," Jahangir Sarwar, 23, a resident of the Saint Martin's told AFP by phone. "We asked the administrators many times that everyone should be evacuated to a safe place in mainland Teknaf town. But no action was taken."

Cyclone Mocha is the most powerful storm to hit Bangladesh since Cyclone Sidr, Azizur Rahman, the head of Bangladesh's Meteorological Department, told AFP.

Sidr hit Bangladesh's southern coast in November 2007, killing more than 3,000 people and causing billions of dollars in damage.

Operations were suspended at Bangladesh's largest seaport, Chittagong, with boat transport and fishing also halted.

## High rates of maternal mortality reflects global disparities: UNFPA

UNITED NATIONS (APP): A woman dies during pregnancy or childbirth every two minutes, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) has warned on Mother's Day, an annual moment for mothers to receive thanks and recognition for all they do. According to recently released data, a woman dies from pregnancy or childbirth every two minutes, with the vast majority of these deaths due to preventable causes like bleeding and infection, the UN reproductive health agency said.

What's worse, solutions to these problems have existed for decades; but they require immediate investment in family planning and for the world to address its steep shortage of midwives, who UNFPA reports could prevent an estimated two thirds of all maternal and newborn deaths. "We have the tools, knowledge and resources to end preventable maternal deaths; what we need now is the political will," UNFPA Executive Director Natalia Kanem said. Between 2000 and 2015, global maternal mortality decreased by more than a third, but the rate of reduction has since stagnated across several regions and even reversed course in others, UNFPA reported.

This has resulted in a staggering 287,000 maternal deaths in 2020 – a death toll that would dominate headlines if it was tied to a natural disaster or other crisis, the agency showed.

"It is unacceptable that so many women continue to die needlessly in pregnancy and childbirth. Over 280,000 fatalities in a single year is unconscionable," the UNFPA chief said. "We can and must do better."

As often as not, women and girls

do not get to make the decision to become pregnant, UNFPA said.

An alarming four in ten partnered women across 68 countries were unable to exert agency when it came to healthcare, sex or contraceptives. Meanwhile, some data suggests rape-related pregnancies occur at least as frequently as pregnancies arising from consensual sex. These factors and others drive a neglected global crisis, in which almost half of all pregnancies around the world are unintended, leading to stark negative consequences for many of those affected, the agency said. Complications from pregnancy and childbirth can be deadly, especially for adolescents and girls, UNFPA said, noting that an estimated half a million births were to girls aged 10-14 in 2021, making hundreds of thousands mothers while still in childhood. The staggering number of unintended pregnancies represents a global failure to uphold women and girls' basic human rights," Ms. Kanem said.

In November 2022, the global population hit eight billion. While some met this news with admiration for the advances in health care and poverty reduction that have led to this landmark moment, others wrung their hands, worried about how there are "too many" or "too few" people on earth, according to UNFPA.

This line of thinking implicitly places women's bodies in a position to be solutions to the supposed problem of population expansion – a dangerous idea. Historically, this reasoning has led to coercive policies designed to influence women's fertility, which risk their rights

while dismissing their desires, the agency said.

According to UNFPA's 2023 State of the World Population report, 8 Billion Strong, many women want bigger or smaller families than they achieve. Across most sub-Saharan African countries, for example, women report two or more births on average than desired, while a majority of childless women in Japan said they wanted children.

Further, in low and middle-income countries, as few as one in four women are realizing their desired fertility, the report showed.

"What women and mothers want when it comes to their fertility matters," the agency said. "Unfortunately, too often, no one asks." Preventable maternal mortality, the denial of rights or demographic change, can all be addressed by making the world a more gender-equal place. Of course, this is easier said than done, but gender inequality's role at the root of so many other issues, including those mentioned above, must be recognized, the agency said. Gender inequality is what keeps women out of the workforce and schools, vulnerable to conflict and violence, and denies them the right to make decisions about their own bodies and health, the agency said, adding that it is also what makes pregnancy a dangerous endeavor, one which hundreds of thousands of women do not survive. "This Mother's Day, mean it when you say thank you to the maternal figures in your life by work to save their lives. They will thank you in turn by thriving," UNFPA said.

## Thailand votes, but will the military listen?

BANGKOK (AFP/APP): Thailand votes Sunday in an election that could see pro-democracy opposition parties oust the conservative military-backed government of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha after almost a decade in power.

Voters are tipped to deliver a resounding defeat to ex-army chief and coup leader Prayut after a campaign that played out as a clash between a young generation yearning for change and the traditionalist, royalist establishment.

The main opposition Pheu Thai party, fronted by the daughter of billionaire former premier Thaksin Shinawatra, was ahead in final opinion polls.

But in a kingdom where victory at the ballot box has often been trumped by coups and court orders, there are fears the military could seek to cling on, raising the prospect of fresh instability.

At Pheu Thai's closing rally on Friday, main candidate

Paetongtarn Shinawatra told a rapturous 10,000-strong crowd that Sunday would be a "historic day where Thailand

will change from junta rule to democratic rule".

A turnout of 90 percent in last Sunday's early round of voting points to an electorate looking for change, but the opposition faces an uphill battle to secure power, thanks to the junta-sponsored 2017 constitution.

The new premier will be chosen jointly by the 500 elected MPs and 250 senate members appointed by Prayut's junta -- stacking the deck in the army's favour.

In the controversial last election in 2019, Prayut rode senate support to become prime minister at the head of a complex multi-party coalition. Some 95,000 polling stations scattered from the lush-forested mountains of the north to the idyllic sands of the southern beaches will open at 8:00 am (0100 GMT) on Sunday.

The election is the first since major youth-led pro-democracy protests erupted across Bangkok in 2020 with demands to curb the power and spending of Thailand's king -- breaching a long-held taboo on

questioning the monarchy.

The demonstrations petered out as Covid-19 curbs were imposed and dozens of leaders were arrested, but their energy has fuelled growing support for the more radical opposition Move Forward Party (MFP).

MFP leader Pita Limjaroenrat, 42, toured Bangkok streets in an open-top jeep Saturday, urging voters to "give the younger generation the opportunity to govern".

While MFP is looking for support from millennial and Gen Z voters -- who make up nearly half the 52 million-strong electorate - Pheu Thai's base is in the rural northeast where voters are still grateful for the welfare policies implemented by Thaksin in the early 2000s. Prayut, meanwhile, has made an unashamedly nationalist pitch to older voters, painting himself as the only candidate capable of saving Thailand from chaos and ruin.

But he has lagged badly in the polls, blamed for a sputtering economy and feeble recovery from the

pandemic, which battered the kingdom's crucial tourism industry.

Rights groups accuse him of overseeing a major crackdown on basic freedoms, with a huge spike in prosecutions under Thailand's draconian royal defamation laws.

The country has seen a dozen coups in the last century and has been locked over the last two decades in a rolling cycle of street protests, coups and court orders dissolving political parties.

The Shinawatra family's bitter tussle with the royalist-military establishment has been at the heart of the drama, with Thaksin ousted in a 2006 putsch and his sister Yingluck unseated by Prayut in 2014.

An unclear or disputed result this time could lead to a fresh round of demonstrations and instability.

Adding to the uncertainty, rumours are already swirling that MFP could be dissolved by court order -- the same fate that befell its predecessor Future Forward Party after it perished unexpectedly well at the 2019 poll.

## Audio book narrators say AI is already taking away business

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): As people brace for the disruptive impact of artificial intelligence on jobs and everyday living, those in the world of audio books say their field is already being transformed.

AI has the ability to create human-sounding recordings -- at assembly-line speed -- while bypassing at least part of the services of the human professionals who for years have made a living with their voices.

Many of them are already seeing a sharp drop off in business.

Tanya Eby has been a full-time voice actor and professional narrator for 20 years. She has a recording studio in her home.

But in the past six months she has seen her work load fall by half. Her bookings now run only through June, while in a normal year they would extend through August.

Many of her colleagues report similar declines.

While other factors could be at play, she told AFP, "It seems to make sense that AI is affecting all of us." There is no label identifying AI-assisted recordings as such, but professionals say thousands of audio books currently in circulation use "voices" generated from a databank.

Among the most cutting-edge, DeepZen offers rates that can slash the cost of producing an audio book to

one-fourth, or less, that of a traditional project.

The small London-based company draws from a database it created by recording the voices of several actors who were asked to speak in a variety of emotional registers.

"Every voice that we are using, we sign a license agreement, and we pay for the recordings," said DeepZen CEO Kamis Taylan. For every project, he added, "we pay royalties based on the work that we do." Not everyone respects that standard, said Eby.

"All these new companies are popping up who are not as ethical," she said, and some use voices found in databases without paying for them. "There's that gray area" being exploited by several platforms, Taylan acknowledged.

"They take your voice, my voice, five other people's voices combined that just creates a separate voice... They say that it doesn't belong to anybody."

All the audio book companies contacted by AFP denied using such practices. Speechki, a Texas-based start-up, uses both its own recordings and voices from existing databanks, said CEO Dima Abramov.

But that is done only after a contract has been signed covering usage rights, he said. The five largest US publishing houses did not respond to requests for comment.

But professionals contacted by AFP said several traditional publishers are already using so-called generative AI, which can create texts, images, videos and voices from existing content -- without human intervention.

"Professional narration has always been, and will remain, core to the Audible listening experience," said a spokesperson for that Amazon subsidiary, a giant in the American audio book sector. "However, as text-to-speech technology improves, we see a future in which human performances and text-to-speech generated content can coexist." The giants of US technology, deeply involved in the explosively developing field of AI, are all pursuing the promising business of digitally narrated audio books. Early this year, Apple announced it was moving into AI-narrated audio books, a move it said would make the "creation of audio books more accessible to all," notably independent authors and small publishers.

Google is offering a similar service, which it describes as "auto-narration." "We have to democratize the publishing industry, because only the most famous and the big names are getting converted into audio," said Taylan.

"Synthetic narration just opened the door for old books that have never been

recorded, and all the books from the future that never will be recorded because of the economics," added Speechki's Abramov.

Given the costs of human-based recording, he added, only some five per cent of all books are turned into audio books.

But Abramov insisted that the growing market would also benefit voice actors. "They will make more money, they will make more recordings," he said. "The essence of storytelling is teaching humanity how to be human. And we feel strongly that that should never be given to a machine to teach us about how to be human," said Emily Ellet, an actor and audio book narrator who cofounded the Professional Audiobook Narrators Association (PANA).

"Storytelling," she added, "should remain human entirely."

Eby underlined a frequent criticism of digitally generated recordings. When compared to a human recording, she said, an AI product "lacks in emotional connectivity." Eby said she fears, however, that people will grow accustomed to the machine-generated version, "and I think that's quietly what's kind of happening." Her wish is simply "that companies would let listeners know that they're listening to an AI-generated piece... I just want people to be honest about it."

## Mauritania votes in preview of presidential contest

N O U A K C H O T T (AFP/APP): Mauritians voted on Saturday in the first legislative and local elections since 2019 when President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani came to power in a litmus test for the veteran leader ahead of next year's presidential vote.

Ghazouani, who has overseen the West African country's relative stability in the violence-wracked Sahel, is widely expected to seek re-election next year, though he has not confirmed his plans.

His El Insaf party is favoured to win among the 25 parties vying for the backing of around 1.8 million voters. They are choosing 176 members of parliament as well as 15 regional councils and 238 municipal councils. There were snaking queues outside polling stations in the capital, Nouakchott.

After casting his vote, Sidelmoustaphe Ould Ntilitt, 40, said he wanted change and hoped the "new parliament breathes new blood into governance".

Issa Habib Fall, 29, echoed him, adding: "We are poor despite our immense wealth."

Ghazouani's party is the only one to field candidates in all constituencies, which is likely to give him a boost in particular with rural voters in the vast, arid country.

El Insaf's leading challengers are the Islamist movement Tewassoul, the main opposition party in the outgoing parliament, and the Arab nationalist Sawab.

"I'm coming because of

a sense of duty, obviously," Mohamed Ould Cheikh, a 30-year-old mining agent, told AFP. "Our duty is to contribute to the development of democracy. Peace and development depend upon it," he said.

Campaigning has been in full swing since April 27, with main parties setting up large tents in Nouakchott. El-Khadir Lamine, an 18-year-old student voting for the first time, said he was hoping for "new opportunities for young people". For the first time, voters can choose from a list of candidates younger than 35, for whom 11 seats will be automatically attributed in the National Assembly.

The voting centres started to close from 7:00 pm (1900 GMT) and results are expected within 48 hours. A second round of voting is scheduled for May 27 for

half of the 176 National Assembly seats.

Ghazouani, 66, is a general considered one of the main architects of Mauritania's success against jihadism, in his former role as army chief.

After voting, he said that now the politicians had had their say, it was for the voters to have theirs. Everything had been done to ensure that happened "freely and transparently", he added. "All the material and human conditions have been given to fellow citizens to express themselves freely and transparently," the official news agency reported the president as saying. The country's population is divided between Arab-Berber Moors, Afro-Mauritanian descendants of slaves, and other groups of sub-Saharan African origin.

Ghazouani made the fight against poverty one of

his priorities, carrying out an ambitious social programme that has included distributing food and money to the poorest.

But the economy has slowed since the Covid-19 pandemic, and rising inflation due to the war in Ukraine has put cost-of-living concerns at the forefront. El Insaf had a comfortable majority in the previous parliament and analysts have predicted little threat from rival parties.

The Tewassoul Islamists are seeking a strict application of Islamic law and are again expected to be the main opposition group in parliament. Sawab is allied with the anti-slavery activist Biram Dah Abeid, the runner-up in the last presidential election, who has long advocated for the descendants of slaves, a community to which he belongs.



## Ecuador fishermen increasingly fall prey to drug gangs

GUAYAQUIL (AFP/APP): "Captain, bring your boat closer," shouts an Ecuadorian naval officer aboard a launch patrolling the Gulf of Guayaquil on a route traffickers use to ferry drugs to the high seas.

Guayaquil, on Ecuador's southern Pacific coast, has become a strategic point for the shipment of hundreds of tons of drugs, mostly cocaine, to the US or Europe.

Since the rightist government of Guillermo Lasso came to power in 2021, Ecuador has seized some 500 tons of drugs.

"This is a routine inspection," the naval officer shouts, as his rifle-bearing colleagues check the crew's documents and crates on the small boat.

In one of his several attempts to contain the illicit traffic, Lasso declared

criminal gangs to be terrorists, thereby granting the military a policing role without having to declare an emergency.

A fisherman who said he was afraid to give his name said he and his counterparts are at the mercy of the criminal gangs navigating the Gulf of Guayaquil, at the entrance to Ecuador's main commercial port.

Armed men in launches, some with rifles, "are robbing and extorting money from crabbers and the people fishing there," he told AFP.

Fishermen and crabbers are forced to pay them \$20 to \$30 a week for the right to work unimpeded in the area -- one of the most violent in Ecuador.

Drug-linked criminality has surged here, with the homicide rate nearly doubling between 2021 and

2022, from 14 to 25 per 100,000 inhabitants.

With its declaration of war on narco-traffickers, the government has intensified the military's presence in land and sea operations.

"There are many settlements around the Gulf of Guayaquil... which criminal organizations use to gain access to carry out their illegal activities at sea," one soldier told AFP, a mask covering his face.

Among the residents of the many humble homes that line the gulf, fear is pervasive.

"Everything is scary -- going fishing or crabbing," 77-year-old housewife Ilda Vera told AFP on Puerto Libertad island.

Her sons have organized nightly watches to keep criminals from stealing their boats -- the family's only source of sustenance.

A string of robberies and even killings have struck fear into residents' hearts, she said.

In his effort to combat the gangs, Lasso has decreed several states of emergency, even giving a green light to residents to carry guns for their own defense.

Still, reports of hired killers, seizures and extortion have multiplied in Ecuador, which is sandwiched between Colombia and Peru, the world's biggest cocaine producers.

Out at sea, a red mark on a boat's motor ensures another week of work. It is the sign criminals use to identify those who have paid protection money -- or been "vaccinated," as they say. "They pay because they want to work in peace," said the fisherman, shrugging his shoulders.



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## May 9 violence, victims await justice

The Islamabad High Court has directed former Prime Minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan to join the investigation of the Al-Qadir Trust case. The IHC on Saturday issued a 7-page written order on the interim bail given to Imran Khan in the Al-Qadir University Trust case till May 31. The order said that if Imran Khan obstructs the investigation, the NAB can request the cancellation of the bail.

Recently, the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) released the former Prime Minister from the government prison granting him bail in the Al-Qadir Trust case along with multiple other cases and advised the PTI Chairman to cooperate with the national graft watchdog in the probe of the alleged corruption case. Earlier, the Lahore High Court also ordered the PTI Chairman to join investigations in multiple cases relating to him as there had been complaints by the Police and the courts that the probe and trial of the cases against Mr. Khan struck delayed due to continuous no-showup and cooperation from the PTI Chairman. Meanwhile, the NAB authorities claimed that the anti-corruption bureau issued Khan’s arrest warrant after his continued absence and disregard of multiple show-case notices issued by the authority urging him to join the investigation.

Multiple cases had been registered by the coalition government against the PTI Chairman concerning the violence and damage to public properties by the PTI workers/supporters during the party’s rallies/protests in the aftermath of the PTI’s ouster from power. Among several dozen cases, the most important is an abuse of power, corruption in Toshkhana gifts, mis-declaration with the Election Commission, and others. The Al-Qadir Trust case is of unique importance which not only alleged the PTI Chairman and his family’s direct involvement in corruption entailing government money for the procurement of 458 canals of valuable land for Al-Qadir University trust that is solely being owned and steered by the former ruling family. After recent violence, the federal and provincial governments registered fresh cases against the PTI’s leaders, who are allegedly involved in inciting workers and managing attacks against military installations. Hundreds of PTI workers across the country had been arrested for their alleged involvement in violence in recent days.

The head-on collision between the ruling PDM government and the opposing Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had reached a saturation point and the country faced extreme anarchy and civil unrest over the past week. The contesting political groups are at loggerheads with institutions, while the respect for the Constitution and the sanctity of the institutions had been blatantly abused by the parties’ leaders and their workers. Chauvinism is at its peak as the staunch rivals demand justice and the adjudicators of their own choice, translate the court’s verdicts and evaluate the constitution as per their desired ideologies. At the same time, leaders’ quest for support/backing from public institutions including the judiciary, the ECP, and the bureaucracy has become a party agenda of contesting political groups, that manipulate the political environment and cause doubts about the leadership and conduct of government departments and federal entities.

After waging a bloody war against the military and the state, the PTI leadership is trying to shed away its responsibility and elude accountability in the guise of innocence and nationalism. During his appearance in the court, the PTI Chairman urged for a judicial investigation into the recent violence to ascertain the truth and responsibility. The Prime Minister has also ordered the identification and arrest of the perpetrators involved in the May 9, mob’s violence and destruction. There are no two opinions that the May 9 violence was a planned invasion against the state and the national institutions for the accomplishment of nefarious motives by a particular faction that take advantage of it. At this point, the formation of a powerful judicial commission of utmost importance that pinpoints the individuals involved in violence identifies its architect and facilitator along with bringing them all to justice, so no crook dares repeat of such heinous acts in the future.

# How Sudan crisis casts long shadow over Libya

Hafed Al-Ghwel

country already hosts 400,000 Sudanese refugees, despite facing acute challenges ranging from extreme poverty to acute food insecurity that will only worsen with more displaced Sudanese. It previews how a Darfur-like conflict could become another potent stressor, particularly in porous border zones between fragile states. Additionally, their respective governments there could potentially use the crisis to justify more illiberalism, unperturbed by threats of sanctions or isolation since the international community will likely be distracted by events in Sudan.

Secondly, instability in Sudan could also contribute to the proliferation of arms trafficking and non-state armed groups in the region. As the Sudanese state weakens, its control over arms depots and border regions may diminish, leading to a further increase in the illegal flow of arms into Libya. This, in turn, could empower non-state actors in Libya, such as militias and extremist groups, who may capitalize on the chaos to expand and terrorize areas they control, undermining efforts to establish a unified Libyan government. Even before the mid-April clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, a report by the UN highlighted the role of Sudan in the proliferation of arms in Libya, emphasizing the need for effective border control and regional cooperation to counter this threat — an unachievable prospect now.

Moreover, escalations in Sudan endanger plans to repatriate Sudanese mercenaries from Libya, further complicating Libya’s already tenuous political situation. The continuing uncertainty in Libya, exacerbated by Sudan’s deepening conflict, threatens to prolong Libya’s political transition and intensify security risks. Libya relies on Sudan for coordination and information exchange concerning the repatriation of Sudanese mercenaries and limited commercial trade. The presence of more than 10,000

Sudanese mercenaries in Libya, primarily aligned with the Libyan National Army, or LNA, raises concerns about potential spillovers and increased cross-border movements of combatants into Libya, which would worsen border insecurity in southern Libya.

This development could prompt the LNA to focus on securing the border with Sudan to limit the flow of arms and fighters to its adversaries in Libya while also providing sanctuary to Sudanese soldiers, many of whom may have previously served in LNA ranks before the October 2020 ceasefire.

Thirdly, Sudan and Libya share some economic ties, particularly in trade and investment.

The UN estimated that a peaceful transition and reconstruction in Libya could potentially enhance Sudan’s economic performance by more than \$20 billion over four years beginning in 2021. However, continued turmoil and escalating violence in Sudan may dampen these economic prospects due to heightened concerns about security and political and economic management. A conflict in Sudan will further disrupt these economic links, affecting both countries’ economies and exacerbating existing hardships.

In addition, a destabilized Sudan could have broader implications for the regional stability of North Africa, as it may hinder regional cooperation efforts and undermine the international commu-

nity’s attempts to restore peace and order in Libya. For instance, the African Union and the Arab League have been key players in the mediation efforts in Libya. Still, a crisis in Sudan could divert their focus and resources away from the situation. Egypt is also active inside Libya and will likely move to exert some influence over the developing situation in Sudan to safeguard its regional strategic interests now under threat, especially the dispute with Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, or GERD.

Egypt’s policy toward Sudan has always focused on aligning with Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan due to their shared approach to the GERD issue. However, an all-out conflict will undermine Egypt’s efforts to create a united front with Sudan, emboldening Addis Ababa to continue taking unilateral action despite Egypt’s repeated warnings. Prolonged conflict in Sudan also raises the risk of GERD talks collapsing and the likelihood of Egypt becoming more militarily aggressive in the region, possibly directed at Ethiopia, or reasserting itself on its borders, including in Libya.

Sudan’s crisis was never going to be a localized affair likely to wax and wane between brief skirmishes, ceasefires, protracted talks and vague settlements within its borders. Its spillovers will complicate diplomatic efforts to resolve Libya’s political impasse while putting pressure on neighboring countries. Thus, as

regional and international actors become increasingly preoccupied with managing the catastrophic fallout from Sudan’s turmoil, they may be less able or willing to focus on Libya’s challenges, which still need sustained external support. Furthermore, divergent or combative responses to Sudan’s crisis by members of the global community will worsen divisions among key stakeholders, making it more difficult to build consensus around a common strategy for resolving Libya’s political deadlock. The fragmentation of the international community’s approach has been a critical obstacle in the Libyan peace process, and the crisis in Sudan could further exacerbate this.

In conclusion, the crisis in Sudan poses a significant risk to Libya’s efforts to overcome its political crisis.

The spillover effects, such as cross-border migration, arms trafficking, economic interdependence and shifting international relations, could further destabilize Libya and undermine attempts to establish a unified government. As such, it is crucial to highlight the potential consequences of Sudan’s crisis on Libya’s political landscape in order to develop effective strategies for promoting stability in both countries as well as in the wider region.

Failing to do so could result in a protracted conflict that will not only affect the two countries but also have far-reaching consequences for the stability and security of North Africa as a whole.

## G7 summit will showcase revival of the Western alliance

Andrew Hammond

cially if there are any “bumps in the road” arising from Ukraine.

One such challenge could be the return of higher energy prices. Last Tuesday, for example, Goldman Sachs predicted gas prices will nearly treble this coming winter across Europe. It forecast prices could rise above 100 (\$108) per megawatt hour in the second half of this year, compared with the current 36.

However, for now at least, there has been a reversal of the trend in the years between 2017 and 2021 when a dominant narrative was the uncertainty about the enduring purpose of the West (which some analysts termed “Westlessness”).

It should be remembered, too, that while the G7’s membership no longer includes all of the world’s most-dominant economies, as it did in the 1970s, it still retains significant economic strength and its members accounted for almost 15 percent of global GDP growth in the period from 2012 to 2022.

Of course, key questions about the future of the West predate Trump’s term as US president. Moreover, it is not only Trump who has highlighted the problems with key Western alliances, as illustrated by the UK’s Brexit vote in 2016 to leave the EU.

Yet, there is no question that Trump’s presidency intensified the concerns about the future of the West, which is why there has been such a sense of urgency among transatlantic partners since then to develop a strategy for a new, unfolding era of great-power competition.

The revival of the West as the world’s leading political and economic force is far from complete, however, even now. Significantly more needs to be done to accomplish Biden’s goal of seeing the Western community reunify against what he perceives as common challenges from not only Russia but also China.

One necessary move is for all key parties, includ-

In the build-up to this week’s G7 summit, a wide range of issues, from climate change to the global economy have been discussed by Western ministers. However, the overriding issue to be discussed in Hiroshima from May 19-21 is the conflict in Ukraine and its ongoing ramifications.

It is getting close to 500 days since Russia’s invasion, and there is no obvious sign that the conflict will be over any time soon. This was highlighted last Tuesday by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who said: “I don’t think peace negotiations are possible at the moment. ... Both sides are convinced they can win ... I don’t see Russia being willing to pull out of the territories it’s occupying at the moment and I think Ukraine is hoping to retake them.”

The outcome of the conflict therefore remains highly uncertain. What is much clearer is the galvanizing effect it has had on the West, including the G7, in the past year and a half.

While Joe Biden is still

widely criticized, it is his presidency that has helped rebuild and renew the transatlantic and wider Western alliance, and also highlight the areas in which international cooperation is now most urgently needed.

The G7’s revival as a political and economic force has surprised many, especially after the woes of Donald Trump’s presidency, and also the early successes of the G20 after it became a leadership forum following the 2007-08 financial crisis.

Indeed, for some time it was speculated that the G7 might even cease to exist. Part of the reason for that was the G7’s declining share of the world economy. In the 1970s, the members of the Western club were responsible for about 80 percent of global gross domestic product; the figure is now closer to 30 percent.

Fast forward to 2023, however, and the unexpectedly unified Western response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has renewed the G7’s self-confidence. To be sure, that might yet unravel, espe-

## Why Alaska is critical to America’s security strategy

Dr. Theodore Karasik

Alaska and its peninsula are a unique geographical feature. While the peninsula juts into the North Pacific Ocean, the US state’s northern circumpolar shores are on the increasingly contested Arctic waterways. In the Pacific Ocean security environment, Alaska is at the forefront of the US security paradigm regarding this tremendous northern water mass. Satellite pictures of the Pacific Ocean can be positioned to show that absolutely no significant landmass exists at all, illustrating the depth of the outlook.

The US looks at Alaska as part of the foundation of the larger Indo-Pacific region and the Arctic by creating an arc of protection and projection. There are, especially to the West, many dangers, as demonstrated by North Korea.

Alaska, with its Pacific and Arctic presence, is also part of America’s security considerations as affected by climate change. Climate

change is changing the strategic picture in the north. The ice pack is melting and there is a viable Northwest Passage across the Canadian-US Arctic coast for much of the year. Permafrost is now not so permanent and a scramble for resources in the region might match the same type of activity seen around other Pacific Ocean nations.

For the US, Alaska is a critical region for both power projection and homeland defense.

The importance of the region only grows as the impacts of climate change accelerate. Temperatures are beginning to change, affecting military infrastructure. So, while planning and conducting strategic and tactical missions in the Pacific and Arctic, the weather and its impact on geography become an important aspect. Military infrastructure in the region is built on permafrost foundations that are now melting, while coastal erosion

impacts radar sites, so repairs are part of the daily routine.

The Pacific Ocean economy, in which Alaska finds itself, is highly contested along particular coastlines. The changing nature of the sea and of coastal communities impact the way other countries’ navies operate as they cross into Alaska’s over-the-horizon strategic viewpoint. The increased geopolitical activity by China and Russia is at the forefront of the Pacific Ocean security paradigm, with North Korea also taking a specific front-row seat.

To be sure, Russia has the largest Arctic landmass facing America and only about 80 km separates one side of the Bering Strait from the other at its narrowest point. Russia’s presence in the northeast Pacific cannot be ignored, especially regarding US allies such as Japan and South Korea. The growth of possible contingencies

involving Russian activity in the Pacific needs constant revision because of Moscow’s future trajectory.

Meanwhile, China, the main strategic competitor of the US, is thousands of miles deep into the Pacific. The Chinese navy has, for decades, been going to the Pacific ports of Central and Latin America. Beijing’s understanding of the Pacific region is an important part of how the US and its allies may respond in a contingency. China will also now be able to assert itself in the Arctic thanks to the signing last month of a special border control agreement with Russia that covers the length of Russia’s northern maritime passage. Chinese naval ships will now be transiting the Bering Strait. If you live in Alaska, you may be able to see Beijing’s navy outside your window, with Russia in the background.

The presence of both

Russia and China close to Alaska predates the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. Russian long-range aviation patrols around Alaska’s Air Defense Identification Zone, which surrounds the state but is not US territorial airspace, restarted in 2007. And US officials have revealed that the number of intercepts of those flights in 2020 was at its highest level since the Cold War. Chinese warships were spotted off Alaska’s coast for the first time in September 2015 and Chinese icebreakers are making more trips to the Arctic, often passing through the Bering Strait. Such actions by Moscow and Beijing were all taking place before the European war that started in February last year.

An important historical lesson about the Alaska Peninsula comes into play when thinking about Pacific maritime and island security. The Second World War Aleutian Islands campaign

— a yearlong battle — is worth examination. The islands of Attu and Kiska were the only North American territory captured during the war and retaking them required brutal fighting in frigid, rugged conditions. Japanese troops headed to the Aleutians in May 1942 as part of a plan to lure the US Navy into a trap during the Battle of Midway. The Aleutian battle is largely forgotten, but the lessons learned require review in the coming years.

Overall, Alaska and its landmass are critical to US security strategy, especially in the circumpolar regions and the bulk of the Pacific Ocean maritime domain, from a land-based perspective. Contested islands are part of today’s warfare environment and history tells us, in a repetitive way, what type of contingency is coming. But Alaska also offers a way for the US to protect against the overall trend lines found in the Pacific Ocean domain.



# Sudan conflict jeopardizes regional stability

Sudan has, since last month, been witnessing a serious military confrontation between two of its own generals: Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, who heads the nation's armed forces, and Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, popularly called "Hemedti," who leads a militia, the Rapid Support Forces, or RSF. This month-old conflict has already claimed at least 600 lives, displaced several thousand nationals and plunged the volatile Horn of Africa region into a deep political and economic crisis.

At the heart of the current crisis is the "existential" rivalry between the country's two generals. Al-Burhan had earlier cooperated to subvert the nascent democratic government in October 2021. However, with no challenge from advocates of democracy, the rivalry between the two generals was exacerbated as each attempted to undercut the other. Al-Burhan started to recruit army personnel from Dagalo's home base in Darfur, while the latter moved his troops from Darfur to Khartoum.

The framework agreement put together in December 2022 by the "Quad," made up of the US, the UK, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, provided a roadmap toward popular participation in governance. This agreement collapsed as neither of the two generals was willing to dilute his political and military authority and financial advantages from control over domestic commercial assets.

On April 15, Dagalo's RSF launched surprise attacks on several army bases across the country, including in Khartoum. Since then, several cease-fires have gone unheeded, while the trail of killing, displacement and destruction continues unabated. During the latest round of negotiations in Riyadh, the representatives of Sudan's warring sides have signed up to a framework agreement to protect civilians and allow for humanitarian aid flows into the country. Diplomats have clarified that this is not a ceasefire, though there were hopes that this agreement would eventually lead to one.

This could be wishful thinking. There is continuing fierce fighting not only in Khartoum, but two other strategically important areas — the North Kordofan province in the south and Darfur in the west. North Kordofan lies

on the route from Khartoum to Darfur, the home-base of Dagalo and most of his men. It also has an airstrip that gives a military advantage to Burhan's forces as they control the country's air force; hence Dagalo's interest in taking control of this province.

***Sudan's recent history is not very reassuring. The country has a population of 45 million and is the third-largest country in Africa. It dominates the geography of northeastern Africa, bordering seven countries — Egypt, Libya, Chad, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea — as well as having an 850 km coastline on the Red Sea. The White and Blue Nile rivers merge in Sudan, providing the country with 60 percent of the Nile River Basin. Sudan lost 75 percent of its oil reserves with the secession of South Sudan in 2011, but it still has gold mines and 80 percent of the world's gum Arabic, which is used in the food and soft drinks industry and to make cosmetics, glue and paints. Sudan's recent history is replete with turbulence. Since 1956, it has experienced more than 15 military coups. Its two civil wars in the south, from 1955 to 1972 and 1983 to 2005, left more than a million dead, while the conflict in Darfur from 2003 to 2020 caused the deaths of another 200,000 people. Given Sudan's instability and its location in an extremely volatile region, the conflict is likely to have deleterious implications for its neighbors, particularly those in the Horn of Africa — Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia — all of which, with the exception of Djibouti, are in the throes of severe domestic turmoil. The countries of the Horn, such as Egypt and Chad, have porous borders for refugees fleeing from the region's conflicts. The present confrontation in Sudan has unleashed a massive movement of refugees. By early May, 42,000 Sudanese had gone to Egypt, 30,000 had left for Chad, more than 27,000 were in South Sudan, nearly 10,000 were in Ethiopia and another 6,000 in the Central African Republic. The UN has warned that, if the conflict continues, more than 800,000 Sudanese could flee their country.***

In Darfur, the fighting appears to be between the RSF and local African militants, suggesting a replay of the earlier conflict two decades ago. In both arenas, civilians, including displaced persons, have been caught in the cross-fire and have suffered heavy casualties.

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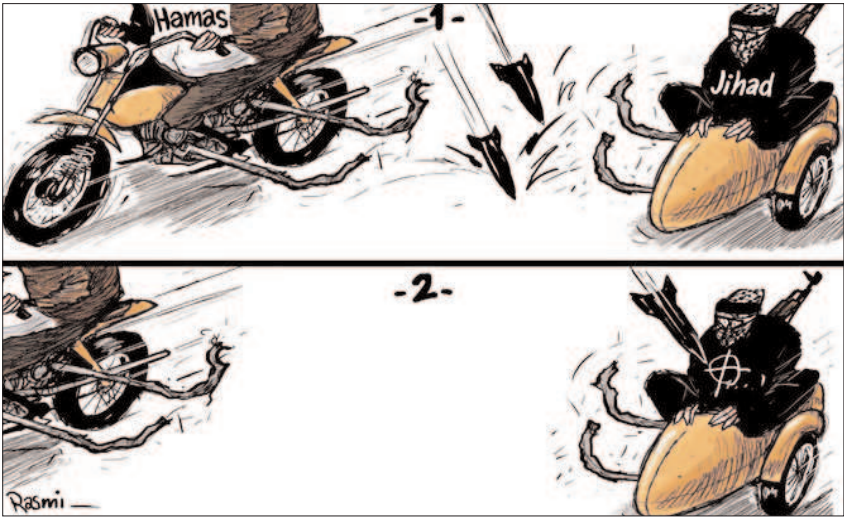
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A prolonged conflict would also sound the death knell for democratic aspirations in Sudan, as well as the prospect of the country emerging as the breadbasket of the Middle East. The Red Sea, already at the center of geopolitical competitions, will see greater big power activity as a result of a prolonged conflict. This could also lure extremist forces, which thrive on state breakdown to spread their messages of hate and wanton violence. All of this will lead to state disintegration and warlords claiming control over bits of valuable real estate for personal advantage. State breakdown will encourage greater drug and human trafficking from Sudan to Libya and on to the Mediterranean.

Unless both of Sudan's feuding generals are exiled and a democratic process reinitiated, the country faces breakdown and ruin, with its neighbors being dragged into the quagmire as well.



## The EU has been MIA on the Israel-Palestinian. Is it back?

It is a rather sad testimony to the European Union that it has taken someone like Itamar-Ben Gvir to cause it to draw a line in the sand and refuse to engage with an Israeli cabinet minister such as he. However, it remains to be seen if this was an isolated case, or the beginning of a thought process which will lead to more coherent thinking in relations with Israel in the context of its relations with the Palestinians, and even more importantly presage courage and proactiveness in helping to resolve it. The folly of the Israeli government's secretariat to select, of all people, National Security Minister Ben-Gvir to represent the country in an event that epitomises countries and peoples coming together after wars, bloodshed and abuse of human rights and replacing that with peaceful coexistence, is beyond baffling. Hence the decision by the organisers of the "Europe Day" event in Tel Aviv to cancel the diplomatic reception, and with that the

Yossi Mekelberg

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Admittedly, the EU can always hide behind the need for its decisions to have unanimous support from its member states, and by doing so relinquish responsibility for what is

guarantees for all, settling the refugee issue, and ensuring that Jerusalem becomes the capital of both Israel and Palestine. In the aftermath of agreement on all these issues the EU could also serve as one of the guarantors of such a peace agreement.

But regardless of recognition or a comprehensive peace plan, there is still enough room for Brussels to be more vocal about who is responsible for the current situation and how to alleviate Palestinians' daily hardships. One of the first steps should be to make cooperation with Israel at all levels, including trade and military, conditional on the immediate improvement of Palestinian rights and living conditions. It could easily also draw a distinction between its relations with Israel proper and with the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, as there is international consensus that they are illegal and one of the main hurdles, if not the principal one, to a lasting peace. Moreover, for too long

***One of the steps that Brussels could and should have taken already in order to give more credibility to its commitment to a two-state solution, is to recognise the state of Palestine. Since the right of Palestinians to self-determination has been recognised by the UN since 1947, is supported by a vast majority of the international community, and is one of the pillars of the two-state solution, it can no longer be a carrot dangled above the Palestinians' heads. In the aftermath of such a recognition Brussels must join forces with the US and the regional powers in advancing a peace agreement, one which addresses all the outstanding core issues between the Israelis and the Palestinians, including agreed borders, security guarantees for all, settling the refugee issue, and ensuring that Jerusalem becomes the capital of both Israel and Palestine.***

speeches, as " we do not want to offer a platform to someone whose views contradict the values the EU stands for," was proportionate, almost self-explanatory, but should be only the first step in a change of mindset by Brussels in its dealings with the current dangerously anti-democratic and belligerent Israeli government.

Diplomatic protocol dictated that the EU couldn't officially ask for different minister to be assigned to this event. Nevertheless, it would have been tragically ironic to give such a distinguished platform to someone who more than any other Israeli politician represents and promotes the despicable religious-fascist Kahanist ideology, especially on the day Europe celebrates both the defeat of fascism in Europe and the subsequent laying of the foundations for peaceful coexistence, unity and the protection of human rights and democracy. For the Israeli government it was another occasion when it showed itself to be completely unaware that it stands in opposition to everything the EU stands for, and that some figures in it are regarded as complete pariahs — and none more so than Ben-Gvir.

For the EU, this unpleasant incident has also been an opportunity to flex its muscles, something that has been missing for a long time from its policies towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For all means and purposes on this

taking place in the West Bank and Gaza, and the sorry state of millions of Palestinian refugees across the region. But this is hardly compatible with the principles of the EU and its own statements on the issue over the years in favour of a two-state solution or calling for a halt to the expansion of settlements in the West Bank. Moreover, lack of consensus within the EU's governing bodies doesn't prevent individual member countries from forming their own policies. Nearly 30 years after the Oslo Accords were signed with great fanfare, the two-state solution and with it Palestinian self-determination now seems a very distant prospect.

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abuses of human rights by Israel's security forces and settlers are taking place with complete impunity, while the EU merely pays lip service to their accountability while offering only the occasional condemnation. This is not good enough, and it must be frank with Israel, as with its counterparts in the PA and in Gaza, that enjoying the privileges of economic, political, cultural and scientific ties with the EU, must be accompanied by adhering to the European Union's values.

The insistence that National Security Minister Ben-Gvir represent Israel on this important day in the European calendar provided the perfect opportunity for Europe to stand firm and refuse to engage with him and what he represents. The EU must not run scared of criticising Israel for its treatment of the Palestinians and blocking of a two-state solution, simply because Netanyahu and his colleagues like to remind them of their past, or because they don't want to upset Washington, or because cooperation benefits the EU as well as Israel. It would do both the Israelis and Palestinians a big favour, and be seen as more credible and less hypocritical, if the EU were to pursue an agenda that proactively promotes an end to the occupation, the establishment of a Palestinian state and the advancement of human, civil and political rights for everyone on both sides of the 1967 borders.

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## Up in the Arctic, it's all starting to heat up

There have been many unintended consequences resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year. For example, the war has threatened Ukraine's global grain exports leaving some countries in Africa and the Middle East with the threat of food insecurity. Russia is now reliant on Iran for weapons imports — something unimaginable before the war. Global energy markets have been impacted because of the war too.

However, one area that has been affected by the war but doesn't get much attention is the Arctic region. Russia is the world's largest Arctic country and controls about half of the world's Arctic coastline. Russian President Vladimir Putin has invested greatly in the Arctic region's infrastructure. In recent years, Russia has also opened new military bases in the region and invested in the cold weather fighting capabilities of the Russian military.

Even so, the Arctic region has remained a relatively peaceful and stable area. For decades, cooperation between Russia and the West in the Arctic was able to weather even the biggest geopolitical storms. However, it appears that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has finally brought Arctic cooperation to an end—at least for now. There are four areas regarding the Arctic region there have been impacted by the war in Ukraine.

The first area is the functioning of the Arctic Council. The Arctic

Council was founded in 1994 by the eight Arctic states (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the US) to cooperate in the region on non-military related issues. Over the years, cooperation has taken place on search and rescue operations, oil spill cleanup, and other environmental issues.

Even after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, cooperation continued inside the council. But since Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year the Arctic Council has stopped functioning. No meetings take place and day-to-day operations have stopped. This week, Russia's two year-long chairmanship of the Arctic Council transferred to Norway. Normally, there's a big summit and a lot of diplomatic fanfare when a transfer takes place. Not this time. Instead, Russia handed over the chair of the Arctic Council to Norway during a lowkey virtual meeting.

The second Arctic related issue that has changed due to the war in Ukraine is with NATO. Although NATO's conducts military training exercises in the region, it has never had an Arctic strategy. This is because not all of the NATO members agree on what role the Alliance should play in the region. In the past, the Arctic was not mentioned in any official NATO document. This is now beginning to change.

For the first time ever, NATO's most recent Strategic Concept—the main policy document

Luke Coffey

published by the alliance—published last year mentioned the region. Finland recently joined the Alliance and Sweden will likely become a member soon. This will mean that seven out of the eight Arctic powers will be part of the same security alliance. From a practical point of view, the Alliance now has no choice but to develop and implement a policy in the region.

Thirdly, there are new opportunities for China in the Arctic. In the simplest terms, China sees the Arctic region as another place in which to advance its economic interests and expand its diplomatic influence.

As a non-Arctic country, China is mindful that its Arctic ambitions in international Arctic institutions are naturally limited—and this has not stopped Beijing from increasing its economic presence in the region.

Even though China's closest point to the Arctic Circle is about 1500 kms away, Beijing refers to itself as a "near Arctic State"—a term made up by Beijing and not found in the lexicon of Arctic discourse. In fact, extending Beijing's logic to other countries would mean that Estonia, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, and the United Kingdom are also "near Arctic" states. These are hardly countries one thinks about when imagining the Arctic.

The impact of the war

in Ukraine on China's Arctic ambitions are twofold. On one hand, Western economic sanctions have created new opportunities for Chinese firms.

No doubt China will try stepping in to help Russia. This will mean more cooperation between Moscow and Beijing in the Arctic region.

For example, last month Russia and China signed an agreement to increase coastguard cooperation in the Arctic. There is also a lot of ambition regarding energy cooperation between the two.

On the other hand, with the Arctic Council no longer functioning, Beijing has lost one of its most important tools for influence in the Arctic. Since 2013, China has been an observer member of the Arctic Council and it uses this position to fund research projects and exert influence in the Arctic region. Until the Arctic Council resumes normal operations, China will have to find other ways to play an active role in the region.

Finally, Russia's ambitious plans for its Northern Sea Route are being curtailed. The Northern Sea Route runs from the Barents Sea to the Bering Strait connecting European with Asian markets. There are some who suggest that the route could become a viable alternative—even a rival—to the Suez Canal because it cuts transit time and distance from Europe to East Asia considerably.

The Northern Sea Route is far from competing with





# Top Chinese machinery manufacturers asked to relocate industrial parks

BEIJING (INP): Top Chinese machinery manufacturers were being urged to relocate and develop their industrial parks in Pakistan, said Ghulam Qadir during the 3rd Changsha International Construction Equipment Exhibition, according to Gwadar Pro.

He highlighted Pakistan's strategic location, lucrative investment incentives, demographic dividend and a favorable economic outlook and potential.

During the exhibition, he addressed a forum titled "2023 Belt and Road International Business Summit on Infrastructure & Construction Machinery"

on Friday and invited top Chinese enterprises to develop industrial parks in Pakistan, encouraging investment and relocation in export oriented, efficiency seeking and labor-intensive sectors.

He sensitized the audience about the government's strong will to facilitate and support Chinese companies who would enjoy substantial market access in EU and USA by manufacturing in Pakistan.

"China is the largest producer and exporter of industrial equipment and construction machinery which can also develop Pakistan as the next hub of Chinese manufacturing,"

Qadir added.

While citing the vision of leadership of both countries, trade and investment counsellor also urged industrial experts and academics to provide guidance on how to make these industrial parks & economic zones more effective and conducive to attract critical levels of investment in the country.

It is to be noted that the exhibition is scheduled to be held at Changsha International Convention & Exhibition Center and Changsha International Conference Center from May 12 to 15 with the theme of "new generation of high-end, intelligent and

new-energy construction machinery".

It covers an exhibition area of 300,000 square meters and brings together 1,500 Chinese and foreign companies, among which 35 of the world's top 50 construction machinery companies while more than 300,000 people are expected to visit the exhibition, and the transaction volume of the exhibition is expected to exceed 50 billion yuan.

The exhibition will launch 6 major events, 7 main events, 2 competition shows, nearly 20 professional forums, and more than 100 trade negotiation and matchmaking activities.

## Agency21 launches first ever franchise with Wasim Akram



### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Agency21 International, Pakistan's biggest estate agency, has announced the launch of its first-ever franchise, with cricket legend Wasim Akram as the first franchise owner. The inauguration ceremony took place in DHA Karachi.

The agreement was signed between Agency21 International and Wasim Akram.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was graced by the presence of Director Agency21 International Sharjeel A. Ehmer, and Wasim Akram who expressed his excitement for the new venture followed by an auspicious gathering at the luxurious Karachi Marriott Hotel. The real estate world witnessed Akram launch "Wasim Akram's Agency21 franchise" in a ceremony that set Pakistan's social and mainstream media abuzz. Pertinent to state,

the launch event was a celebration of the newest addition to the Agency21 family, promising to bring innovative technology, exceptional service, and unmatched expertise to the real estate market in Pakistan.

The event was a star-studded affair, attended by the who's who of Pakistan's real estate industry, including Chairman IMARAT Group Shafiq Akbar, Group Director Agency21 International Sharjeel A. Ehmer, the legendary cricketer Wasim Akram himself and other notable celebrities including Mo'in Khan, Shoaib Malik, and Asim Jofa.

During the event, Chairman IMARAT Group Shafiq Akbar stated, "We are proud to launch Wasim Akram's franchise with Agency21. This partnership aims to bring the latest real estate technologies, services, and expertise to our clients in Pakistan."

As the night progressed, Director Agency21 International Sharjeel A.

Ehmer shared his excitement, stating, "We are thrilled to have Wasim Akram on board as our partner in this new venture. His expertise and experience in the industry are unparalleled, and we believe this partnership will take us to new heights of success."

The man of the hour, Wasim Akram, expressed his delight, saying, "I am honoured to be a part of this momentous occasion and to partner with Agency21. This is a great opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the real estate sector in Pakistan and provide our clients with the best possible services."

The event showcased the latest advancements in real estate technology, with interactive VR and floor plan technologies stealing the show. The franchise also introduced the audience to IMARAT Group's CSR and real estate certifications, highlighting their commitment to excellence

in all aspects of the industry.

The event was a feast for the senses, with stunning visuals of IMARAT Group's construction updates and project maps taking centre stage. The night ended on a high note with Chairman IMARAT Group Shafiq Akbar delivering a rousing speech, followed by the traditional cake cutting ceremony and a sumptuous dinner.

Agency21 is a real estate agency with a long-standing history of success and excellence. Established 25 years ago in the UK, Agency21 received an award for the Best Estate Agency before expanding to Pakistan and adopting the name Agency21 International.

Since its inception in Pakistan, Agency21 has established itself as the largest estate agency in the country, having presence across 30+ cities, and over 1500 advisors serving more than 20,000 satisfied clients. The company has been in the estate agency business for a span of two decades and solidifying its reputation as a trustworthy and reliable source for all real estate needs.

With the launch of Wasim Akram's franchise, Agency21 is set to revolutionise the real estate industry in Pakistan. The company's unwavering commitment to innovation, service, and expertise is sure to set a new standard for the industry.



MULTAN: A person purchasing handmade household items from a roadside vendor.

## China Exhibition Center set up in record time

ISLAMABAD (INP): The China Exhibition and Trading Center has been completed in a record time of six months at Gwadar Port worth US\$ 12 million, Gwadar Pro reported quoting Ministry of Planning's sources.

The development under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) aims to transform Gwadar into a major trade and economic hub, facilitating regional connectivity and enhancing Pakistan's maritime trade.

Located strategically on the Arabian Sea, Gwadar serves as Pakistan's premier deep-water port, offering a gateway to the Arabian Gulf, Middle East, China, and Central Asia. Gwadar holds immense significance as a key component of the CPEC and the broader Belt and Road Initiative.

The project was launched in November 2022 on the direction of Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal for promoting business and related activities at Gwadar.

Following the direction of the Planning Minister, China Offshore Ports Handling Company (COPHCL) started construction of the project which has been completed.

The Planning Minister further directed to conduct the third International Expo Gwadar in the newly established EXPO center in June this year, coinciding with the ten-year celebrations of CPEC in July this year.

## A successful trip - well done Mr. Bhutto

### Mustajab Nazir Dhoki

The current SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) took place in the beautiful city of India which is known for its beaches. This meeting created a chaos in the members of PTI. It's not a new thing for PTI to talk against PPP and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

His success is the only thing that's disturbing Taliban Khan and his puppets. Well, a few days back Chairman visited India to attend the SCO meeting.

There were many other foreign ministers, too. FM of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and obviously India. But everyone was waiting to see the foreign minister of Pakistan, the Chairman of Pakistan People's Party, the son of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and President Asif Ali Zardari, and the grandson of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Within a year this young and charismatic leader Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has inspired the world with his knowledge about politics, his tone, his gesture, and his soft heart towards everyone.

He is following the footsteps of his parents and his grandfather who were involved in politics with one motto 'no grudge or hate towards anyone'. A few days back, he

was invited to India to attend the SCO Conference but the haters doesn't appreciate his visit, well they don't appreciate his any action, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is the reason behind the success of this country, the haters just want a disturbed environment in Pakistan and among other countries. Whereas, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is working hard to make this country a democratic, free of terrorism, and well behaved.

Just because of him, world is respecting Pakistan once again. Shireen Mazari, on twitter is spreading fake news about Chairman's visit. Well, few months back Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in an interview said, 'he spend his own money when he is travelling to other countries'. He is absolutely right. He doesn't need public money to travel or spend his life. He is a legacy though. But those puppets of Imran Niazi doesn't want to listen, they think every politician is like that coward Niazi.

Well, no. That meeting is the proof how India was willing to see the youngest FM. While, there were many senior politicians still the Indian public and Indian media was waiting for Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. While speaking to a press conference in Goa, our young leader and FM of Pakistan,

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari didn't say anything bad about PTI.

He even gave an example of America, 'whenever any politician of USA is on an international visit they don't character defame each other. It's all because they belong to one nation.' Whereas on the other hand Niazi character defame not only senior politician but also the ladies of other political parties. A man, who is not respecting a woman, what Youthias are expecting from him? One of their main issues was Kashmir Issue. Well, it was Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari who stood for the genocide of Muslims of Gujarat and titled Modi as 'The Butcher of Gujarat', while it was Taliban Khan who played his dirty politics over Kashmir. So, youthias got no right to question the visit of Chairman to India.

PTI and its puppets are not seeing the visit of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as the representative of Pakistan, they are considering it as the representative of Pakistan People's Party. Well, its their loss. We cannot make them understand that we are one nation when we are on international platform.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Mr. Ghulam Mustafa Shaikh S/o. Dr. Haq Nawaz Shaikh R/o. Flat No. 102-A, 1st. Floor Obaid Arcade, Opp. Jauhar Complex, Main University Road, Karachi have contracted through Agreement of Sale/Purchase to Purchase Flat Bearing No. A-211/B Measuring 112.77 SQ. YDS. (1015 SQ.FTS.) on 3rd Floor, in the Project Name Decent Garden, 1/6th Un-Divided Share in Sub Plot No. SB-1/179/XI of Plot No. SB-1/179, Situated K.D.A. Scheme 36, Gulistan e Jauhar, Block 7, Main University Road, Karachi from Mr. Abdul Sattar Shaikh S/o. Mohammad Moosa Shaikh. Any Person /Bank / Authority having any claim should notify to the above address or Registrar Office within 7 days with documentary evidence, failing which NO claim shall be entertained and transaction shall be completed in my favour. Contact: 0300-2029561

## Budget deficit widens Rs3.6tr as government spending, debt servicing rising: APBF

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has warned that the federal budget deficit has widened by Rs3.6 trillion in the first nine months of the current fiscal year (9M FY23) on the back of a massive surge in spending on debt servicing, as the government paid Rs3.6 trillion in debt servicing in this period, which is very alarming.

APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the country's economic viability was at stake, as its gross official foreign exchange reserves plunged to lower level. As against the budgeted over \$7 billion foreign commercial loans,

the government still saw \$6.5 billion materializing in the current fiscal year.

He said that the country's debt servicing cost may cross well over Rs7.6 trillion in the next fiscal year, which is roughly 15% more than the projected net income of the government but is still lower than the estimates made by the International Monetary Fund.

APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi observed that based on the fact that the federal government debt stood at Rs54 trillion at the end of April, interest payments in the next fiscal year may cross well over Rs7.5 trillion. The estimated Rs7.6 trillion debt servicing cost is 90% more than this

fiscal year's original budget set aside for interest payments and one-third higher than the revised estimates. It seems that taxes will be collected to just pay the cost of interest to domestic and foreign banks.

Ibrahim Qureshi said that the IMF had asked the government to increase the general sales tax rate to a minimum of 18% to raise more taxes, accelerating inflation to 29% and economic growth rate slowing down to 1.5%, ultimately causing higher unemployment and poverty in the country.

Syed Maaz Mahmood added that foreseeing that the elections could be around the corner, the gov-

ernment's focus has now filtered down to two short-term compulsions, including to present a populist budget and to stay out of default. The government appears to have decided to set aside the complex issues such as rising inflation, loss of rupee value, unemployment, food shortages, closure of industries due to import restrictions and collapse of exports and investments for the present and to leave it behind as a carry-forward for the next government.

Maaz Mahmood added that the IMF demanded that the government should consider increasing the GST rate by 1% to 18% to raise additional taxes in the cur-

rent fiscal year, warning the government that the GST was considered highly inflationary and 1% increase would push the prices of all goods upwards.

He said that the government had already spent Rs2.57 trillion on debt servicing during July-December period of the current fiscal year. The central bank last month increased the interest rates to 17%, which might not help contain inflation but will surely further bleed the budget.

Quoting the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the APBF President pointed out that inflation hit the 48 years' highest level of

46.6% in April. The likely acceleration in the index would bring more misery for the people who were facing difficulties in meeting both ends. However, the government had no choice but to comply with the IMF requirements to avoid default.

Maaz Mahmood informed that due to floods, tight monetary policy, high inflation, and a less conducive global environment, the economic growth rate might slow down in the range of 1.5% to 2% -- a pace that was even lower than the population growth rate and would cause more unemployment in Pakistan.

He said that the agriculture sector would contract,

the industrial sector might show nominal growth. Moreover, compared to old estimates of generating about 1.5 million new jobs, the government should now realize that the additional jobs in the current fiscal year might not be more than half a million.

According to some estimates, about two million new entrants came in the market in search of jobs every year and a low additional employment number suggested that there would be a higher jobless rate in Pakistan. He was of the view that in present circumstances, it would be difficult to raise \$8 billion from the capital markets and foreign commercial banks.

## Govt should focus on economic agenda, prioritizing trade activities

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has asked the government to focus on national economic agenda, giving priority to address the issues of trade and industry in consultation with the business community which is the key stakeholder, as Pakistan, with all its resources and opportunities, cannot afford to continue to muddle through economically due to political polarization.

FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar observed that Pakistan requires a political consensus on economic policy. Freeing the country from its economic calamities

should not be a matter of party affiliation, but a common task for all political actors who want to see Pakistan flourish. There is a dire need for a functioning economic strategy, and for continuity in its implementation, and protecting it from political meddling. He said that Pakistan's economy is working, but only for its elite. Sustained, rapid, and equitable economic growth has remained elusive due to policy distortions that serve its selective sectors and classes.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the business community is the key stakeholder to run the economy and the government should finalize the upcoming federal budget in consultation with major chambers and other trade bodies. He maintained that only solution

that can steer Pakistan out of the crisis is indigenous with few basic elements, including making all economic policies in consultation with real stakeholders of the economy; simplification & broadening of the tax base instead of squeezing the existing tax payers; encouragement of remittances through bridging the gap between banking channels and open markets and protecting the assets of overseas Pakistanis in the country; incentivizing industry and export substitution.

The FPCCI former president said that Pakistan was in dire need of boosting trade and industrial activities in order to achieve early revival of economy and stressed that the government should bring down policy interest rate to single

digit in the next budget that would pave way for availability of low cost credit to the private sector and accelerate the pace of industrialization and investment in the country. He said that 17 percent GST was a major factor for high cost of doing business and hike in inflation for the common man; therefore, he urged that the government should bring down GST to single digit level in the upcoming budget in order to reduce the production cost and decrease inflation in the country. It would also make our exports more competitive in the international market.

Mina Anjum Nisar said that Pakistan was mostly relying on raw materials and agro based commodities for exports while there was a great need to focus

on production of value added products for achieving a great boost in exports. For this purpose, the government should allow duty free import of industrial machinery, equipment and technology so that our industrial sector could upgrade itself to produce value added and hi-tech products for exports. He said that the government should also consider providing incentive package to all major industries on the pattern of construction that would bring a new industrial revolution in the country. He said that the government should also reduce taxes and duties to promote investment in all sectors along with cutting duties on luxury goods.

He said that Pakistan has tremendous potential to improve its economy by

promoting the tourism sector. He stressed that in the next budget, the government should allow duty free import for all paraphernalia for the development of tourism related projects including tiles, lights, electrical, mechanical & IT equipment in addition to machinery and all tourism projects. He emphasized that the government should announce at least a 5-10 year tax holiday along with various other incentives for investment in the tourism industry.

Mian Anjum emphasized that the government's economic and financial team needs to understand that the IMF program is not going to materialize before the upcoming budget, which is only three weeks away. He urged the government to prepare the budget accord-

ingly and make necessary adjustments within this short period.

He assessed that reform is a long-term process but Pakistan must make use of this shock period to redistribute allocations toward social protection and incentivize greater productivity. Delay is not an option. In the coming years, Pakistan's challenges will only deepen due to climate change and rapid population growth. Pakistan is already one of the world's 10 most populous countries and it will remain among those ranks as its population surges over the coming decades.

Pakistan needs a path toward sustained, rapid, and equitable economic growth that incorporates its fast-growing population into the labor market. But

Pakistan is a net energy importer with a narrow export base. Periods of economic expansion have been consumption-driven and import-dependent. As a result, Pakistan's economy overheats once growth passes the 5 percent range. It is vital that the current government devote its energy and reallocate resources toward facilitating export growth, improving agricultural productivity, and addressing the domestic fuel production deficit.

Pakistan's agricultural sector has grown at an average rate of less than 2% since the 2015-16 fiscal year. Declining agricultural productivity, increasing water stress, and the worsening effects of climate change are all exacerbating an already-serious food security challenge.





## In brief

## Shakib ruled out for six weeks

DHAKA (Agencies): Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has been ruled out for around six weeks with a finger injury, the cricket board said on Sunday. Shakib hurt the tip of his right index finger attempting a catch during Friday's second one-day international against Ireland at Chelmsford, England, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) said. "An X-ray today (Saturday) confirmed a fracture on the base of the index finger. Such injuries usually take around six weeks to heal," national team physio Bayzedul Islam Khan said. The injury means Shakib is not available for Sunday's final ODI against Ireland. Bangladesh currently lead the three-match series 1-0. They won Friday's second match by three wickets, knocking off a target of 320 runs after the opening match of the series was rained off. Sunday's ODI against Ireland is the final fixture of the ICC ODI Super League in the current cycle.

## Cycling training camp today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The national training camp in preparation for the Asian Road Cycling Championship would kick off on Monday 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 of Pakistan sports board in Karachi and would conclude on June 8. The selection of players was made on a 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.

## PTBF to feature in 4 int'l tournaments

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation (PTBF) would feature in four international tournaments revealed the national body's sports Calendar for the year 2023-24. According to President, Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation, Ijaz ur Rehman announced the players to feature in four international tournaments between August to November. Pakistani players would participate in the 22nd Asian Junior Tenpin Bowling Championship in Singapore from August 19 to 26 while in Storm Lucky Larsen Master Bowling Tournament at Helsingborg, Sweden from September 1 to 10. Pakistan's participation would also be seen in IBF World Bowling Championship at Kuwait from October 3 to 18 and in 6th Indoor & Martial Arts Games at Bangkok, Thailand from November 17 to 26. Meanwhile PTBF would hold four national tournaments including Azadi Cup Tenpin Bowling Championship 2023 Leisure City Bowling Club Jinnah Park, Rawalpindi (August 9 to 14); 8th PTBF Ranking Tenpin Bowling Championship 2023 Arena Bowling Club, Karachi (October 25 to 30); Pakistan Open Tenpin Bowling Championship 2023 Royal Rodale Bowling Club Karachi (December 25 to 31); 16th National Tenpin Bowling Championship 2024 Leisure City Bowling Club Jinnah park Rawalpindi (March 25-30, 2024).

# Naila Kiani becomes second Pakistani woman to scale world's highest peak Everest

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Mountaineer Naila Kiani on Sunday became the second Pakistani woman to climb the 8,848-metre-tall Mount Everest — the highest mountain in the world — situated in Nepal.

Separately, climber Sajid Ali Sadpara made history by becoming the first Pakistani to summit Mount Everest without the support of high-altitude porters and supplemental oxygen.

Both the mountaineers started their journey towards the highest peak in the world on Saturday evening.

According to Alpine Club of Pakistan Secretary General Karar Haidri, Kiani is the first Pakistani woman climber to summit four peaks over 8,000m and the second to scale the mighty Everest.

Congratulating her in a tweet today, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that Kiani has made Pakistan proud.

"Through her passion for mountaineering and amazing achievements to her credit, she has rein-



forced the notion that our women are capable of achieving anything. My heartiest congratulations to her & best wishes for her future plans," he added.

Kiani is a Dubai-based Pakistani banker, an amateur boxer and a mother of two daughters. She had first gained prominence after images of her wedding shoot at K2 Basecamp circulated on social media in 2018.

She summited Gasherbrum-II (8,035m

Pakistan," he added.

In a tweet, Sajid said that sumitting Everest sans support was the dream of his father, the late Muhammad Ali Sadpara.

This type of ascent that Sajid chose, where climbers are not supported by high-altitude porters from base camp to the summit, is called Alpine style. During this summit, mountaineers manage everything — carrying food, tent, ropes, and setting routes — themselves.

Following Sadpara's latest feat, Kathmandu-based Mingma G, who has scaled Everest six times, congratulated him in a tweet.

Sajid has already summited several high peaks, including K2 (8,611m), Gasherbrum-I (8,080m), and Gasherbrum-II (8,035m) in Pakistan, as well as Manaslu (8,163m) in Nepal, without supplemental oxygen.

His ultimate goal is to climb all 14 eight-thousanders without the aid of supplemental oxygen.

## Hybrid model for Asia Cup and beyond may end Pakistan-India 'logjam' says PCB

ISLAMABAD (AP): The Pakistan Cricket Board is still hopeful India agrees to its hybrid model of hosting majority of the Asia Cup games at a neutral venue in September.

The hybrid model is the brainchild of Najam Sethi, who is the head of the PCB management committee.

Sethi met with the members of the Asian Cricket Council in the United Arab Emirates this week to work out solution after India said it will not travel to Pakistan for the event, apparently because of political tensions between the two countries.

Pakistan, India, qualifier Nepal, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are the six nations due to compete in the Asia Cup which is seen as a major tune-up for the teams due to participate in the World Cup in India.

"Until India is ready to play Pakistan bilaterally and in Pakistan, let's have a hybrid solution," Sethi said.

Sethi's suggestive model to end the impasse means India could play Pakistan at a neutral venue in major tournaments like the Champions Trophy and even the World Cup, while the remaining matches are played in the host nation as scheduled.

After India hosts the World Cup later this year, Pakistan is due to host the Champions Trophy in 2025.

Sethi believes the hybrid model could work in both major events

because he could face a similar situation if the Pakistan government asks him not to send the national team to the World Cup in Oct.-Nov.

"I am concerned about not just the Asia Cup but also the World Cup and the Champions Trophy," Sethi said. "The World Cup will be in India ... my government might turn around to me and say we have security issues there, you don't go."

"And then the Champions Trophy following the World Cup, which we are hosting. India might turn around and say the same thing. We are not going to play in Pakistan and ask the ICC to shift the venue ... this is not going to work. What I am proposing is the way out of this logjam."

Sethi has reportedly even suggested that Pakistan hosts only four games of the Asia Cup while the remaining 13 games can be staged at a neutral venue which would most likely be in the UAE. He is even willing to host the final at a neutral venue even if Pakistan qualifies for it against India or any other nation.

Sethi said he wanted an amicable solution for the Asia Cup which could pave the way for both nations to compete against each other in other major tournaments at a neutral venue.

"I have not been threatening anybody, give me a break," Sethi said. "I am trying to be positive and find a

way out of this problem. I could have easily said that if India is not going to come and play in Pakistan, we will not play in India, but I tried to find a hybrid model."

Sethi hoped ACC president Jay Shah, who is also secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, could take the first step and accept Pakistan's hybrid model for the Asia Cup and keep all the Asian nations united.

"I think Jay (Shah) is a young man, he aspires to be the head of the ICC," Sethi said. "My advice to my young friend would be if you want to be a leader, you have to keep the herd together, keep the flock together."

"Don't let it be said that when you were in the chair in the ACC, the ACC broke up."

Sethi said the PCB has always come to the forefront and helped other Asian countries. Recently Pakistan played three-match T20 series against Afghanistan in the UAE after Australia refused to host them.

"When the Australians pulled out of their matches with Afghanistan we said we will step in and bail you out so that you get some money out of these matches," he said.

"We've been very forthcoming in supporting members who will end up in some sort of trouble ... now we don't have any issues and the others don't have any issues with us. It's just India."

## Brentford beats West Ham 2-0 in the Premier League

LONDON (Agencies): West Ham wasted a chance to seal their Premier League survival as goals from Bryan Mbeumo and Yoane Wissa clinched Brentford's 2-0 victory on Sunday.

David Moyes' side would have been guaranteed to avoid relegation with a victory in west London. But Mbeumo and Wissa netted in the first half to leave the Hammers still needing one win from their last two games to be sure of staying up.

West Ham are six points clear of third bottom Leeds, who have just two matches left. However, second bottom Leicester would move within four points of the east Londoners if they beat Liverpool on Monday.

With games against relegation rivals Leeds and Leicester to come in their remaining fixtures this was a missed opportunity for West Ham to put their lingering relegation fears to bed.

West Ham are dreaming of a first major trophy since the 1980 FA Cup after beating AZ Alkmaar 2-1 in the Europa Conference League semi-final first leg on Thursday. But they have now only won one of the seven top-flight matches that have come within three days of them playing in Europe this season. Moyes had made nine changes with Thursday's second leg at Alkmaar looming.

Declan Rice and Jarrod Bowen dropped to the bench, with Michail

Antonio missing out due to a calf injury. The gamble backfired and Brentford's lively start was rewarded in the 20th minute as a flowing move cut through the West Ham defence. Mathias Jensen's pin-point pass teed up Mbeumo and he caressed a cool finish past Lukas Fabianski.

Brentford had lost just once when opening the scoring this season, while West Ham had only one victory when conceding the first goal. There looked little chance of those sequences reversing as Brentford kept up the pressure.

Damsgaard spotted Aaron Hickey's run into the area and the defender squared for Wissa, whose low strike was saved by

Fabianski. It was a warning West Ham failed to heed as Wissa doubled the Bees' lead in the 43rd minute. Jensen's long throw was flicked on by Ben Mee and Wissa headed powerfully past Fabianski.

Danny Ings' shot was pushed away for a corner by David Raya in a rare moment of menace from West Ham. Wissa fired wide after a sloppy mistake from Tomas Soucek that summed up West Ham's lethargic display. Mikkel Damsgaard should have made it three for Brentford but he volleyed over after Jensen's corner was flicked on by Mee. West Ham were denied a lifeline when Ings' goal was chalked off for a handball by Divin Mubama.



LONDON: Brentford's Yoane Wissa, center, is tackled during the English Premier League soccer match between Brentford and West Ham at the Gtech Community Stadium.

# Pakistan to play three Tests in Australia in December-January

## F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan will make a trip Down Under later in the year to take on Australia for the Benaud-Qadir Trophy. The three Tests — part of the third World Test Championship cycle — will be played at Perth, Melbourne and Sydney in December and January.

The tour will open at the Perth Stadium on 14 December and it will mark the first instance of Pakistan playing a Test at the venue. The two teams will face off in the Boxing Day Test at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground from 26 till 30 December and the third and final match will be played at the Sydney Cricket Ground from 3 January, 2024. Pakistan have played 10 Tests at the

MCG and eight at the SCG — at both venues they have won two matches each.

In the lead-up to the series, Pakistan will play a four-day warm-up to acclimatise to the conditions Down Under. This will be Pakistan captain Babar Azam's third Test tour of Australia. The prolific stroke-maker previously landed on the Australian soil in December 2016, under Misbah-ul-Haq's captaincy, and November 2019, when Azhar Ali was the captain of the side.

The right-hander has 278 runs — including a century — in five Tests. On the 2019 tour, Babar scored a century in the second innings in the first Test in Brisbane and followed it up with a 97 at Adelaide. Naseem Shah made his Pakistan debut at

Brisbane in November 2019 and since has evolved as mainstay in Pakistan's bowling line-up across all formats. The right-arm speedster has 80 wickets in 42 matches. Pakistan last toured Australia for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup and finished as the finalists.

The Benaud-Qadir Trophy was launched in 2022 when Australia arrived in Pakistan after 16 years for a three-Test series. Pat Cummin's side bagged the first iteration as they bagged the series 1-0 after defeating Pakistan in Lahore in the third and final Test.

Schedule  
14-18 Dec: First Test, Perth Stadium  
26-30 Dec: Second Test, Melbourne Cricket Ground  
3-7 Jan: Third Test, Sydney Cricket Ground

## Swiatek sweeps into Italian Open last 16, Medvedev triumphs



ROME (Agencies): Iga Swiatek cruised into the last 16 of the Italian Open on Sunday after thrashing Lesia Tsurenko 6-2, 6-0, while Daniil Medvedev won his first ever match in Rome, 6-4, 6-2 against Emil Ruusuvuori.

Losing finalist in Madrid last weekend, Swiatek looked again in imperious form in the tournament she won last year before going on to blitz the French Open.

The 21-year-old is trying for her third straight Rome title and made light work of Tsurenko after a slightly bulky start. Swiatek lost the first two games but then rattled off 12 in a row in a powerful demonstration of why she is world number one and favourite for Roland Garros.

"I'm just trying to be consistent and trying to play my game, I treat every match as a final, I try to have the right mindset,"

said Swiatek on court.

Swiatek now faces either Donna Vekic or Ljudmila Samsonova in the fourth round after extending her winning streak in the Italian capital to 13 matches.

Her bid for a Rome hat-trick will be helped by five of the world's top 10 women players being eliminated early, world number eight Maria Sakkari the latest victim after she was beaten 7-5, 6-3 by Marketa Vondrousova.

Sakkari joins world number two Aryna Sabalenka, third-ranked Jessica Pegula, world number four Caroline Garcia and seventh ranked Ons Jabeur in being dumped out of the tournament.

In the men's draw Medvedev came through in straight sets against Ruusuvuori to claim his first win at the Foro Italico courts. The former US

Open champion won a second round match which was postponed to Sunday due to the torrential rain which hit the Italian capital on Saturday.

In much balmy conditions the world number three was dominant on a clay court surface he is famous for not liking.

Few would back him to go deep in Rome but his performances on clay have improved, reaching the quarter-finals at the Monte Carlo Masters. Medvedev will face Bernabe Zapata Miralles in the third round.

"Every time I come to a tournament I know I can play well, so I'm happy to finally get the win here in Rome," said Medvedev. "I want to win as many matches as possible, I know it can be a little bit trickier for me on clay but honestly this year I'm playing really well."

"The matches I lost I lost against great opponents who just played better than me... I'm just trying to play my best tennis until the end of the clay season."

Stefanos Tsitsipas will take on home hero Lorenzo Sonego after finishing off Nuno Borges 6-3, 6-3 in a match interrupted by Saturday's rain with the world number five already well on his way to victory.

## Pakistan football team to travel to India for SAFF tournament

NEW DELHI (Agencies): The Pakistan football team will travel to India for the upcoming South Asian Football Federation Championships which will be played from June 21 to July 4 in Bengaluru.

With Pakistan confirming its participation, the AIFF said it does not see any problem with the neighbouring country featuring in the international competition.

The eight-team tournament will also see participation of Lebanon and Kuwait.

The SAFF executive committee earlier in March decided to feature teams from outside the south Asian region with a view to make the championship more competitive.

"We don't see any problem in the coming of players from Pakistan to India to participate in the SAFF Championships," All Indian Football Federation secretary general Shaji Prabhakaran told PTI.

He was asked if there could be any problem on the issue of granting visas to the Pakistani players in view of the political tension between the two countries.

"I think the Indian bridge team recently took part in a regional tournament in Pakistan and so we don't expect any issue on their (Pakistan's) participation," he added.

Besides hosts India, Lebanon, Kuwait and Pakistan, the other four participating countries are

Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Maldives. Sri Lanka is not taking part as it is serving suspension from world governing body FIFA, while Afghanistan has left SAFF to join Central Asian Football Federation a few years back.

Pakistan failed to feature in two tournaments out of the 13 editions held so far since 1993.

The Pakistan Football Federation could not send its team in the 2015 edition held in India due to internal issues. The country missed the 2021 edition as it was serving suspension from FIFA. The suspension was lifted last year.

Prabhakaran also said that all the participating countries, including Kuwait and Lebanon, will send their best national teams.

"Yes, Lebanon and Kuwait, as well as all other participating countries, will send their first national teams," said Prabhakaran who recently became a member of Asian Football Confederation executive committee as a representative of the SAFF.

India has won the regional tournament a record eight times. Defending champions Maldives have won the title twice while Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka lifted the trophy once each.

India will be hosting the tournament for the fourth time. The draw of the tournament will be held here on Wednesday.

## Int'l Tennis players need support: Qudsia Raja

ISLAMABAD (APP): International Tennis Umpire Qudsia Raja on Sunday said that there was no shortage of talent in the country, but concrete steps were needed to support players from the grassroots level to come into the game.

She while talking to APP said, "There is immense tennis talent in the country but the game of tennis is a very expensive game. The tennis racket and ball are beyond the reach of the common player, so it is difficult to attract players to this game."

She said, "The private sector, relevant departments, institutions, etc. need to come forward for the development of tennis."

"Departments will have to form their own teams and then the government and private sector will join hands in the development of this sport and organize tournaments from the grassroots to higher level. This way good quality players will come to the fore."

To a question, Qudousia Raja replied Pakistan has won many medals at the international level in the game of tennis.

"Not only as a normal player, but special wheelchair players have also won medals in the world championships."

She was of the view that many tournaments should be organized in educational institutions to bring out the immense talent of tennis and to improve the game in the country.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 150,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 150,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 122,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1432.10 feet and was 34.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 32,200 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1118.95 feet, which was 68.95 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 39,800 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 64,900, 56,700, 43,300 and 13,400 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 28,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 13,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### 3-day 'Tablighi Ijtama' concludes

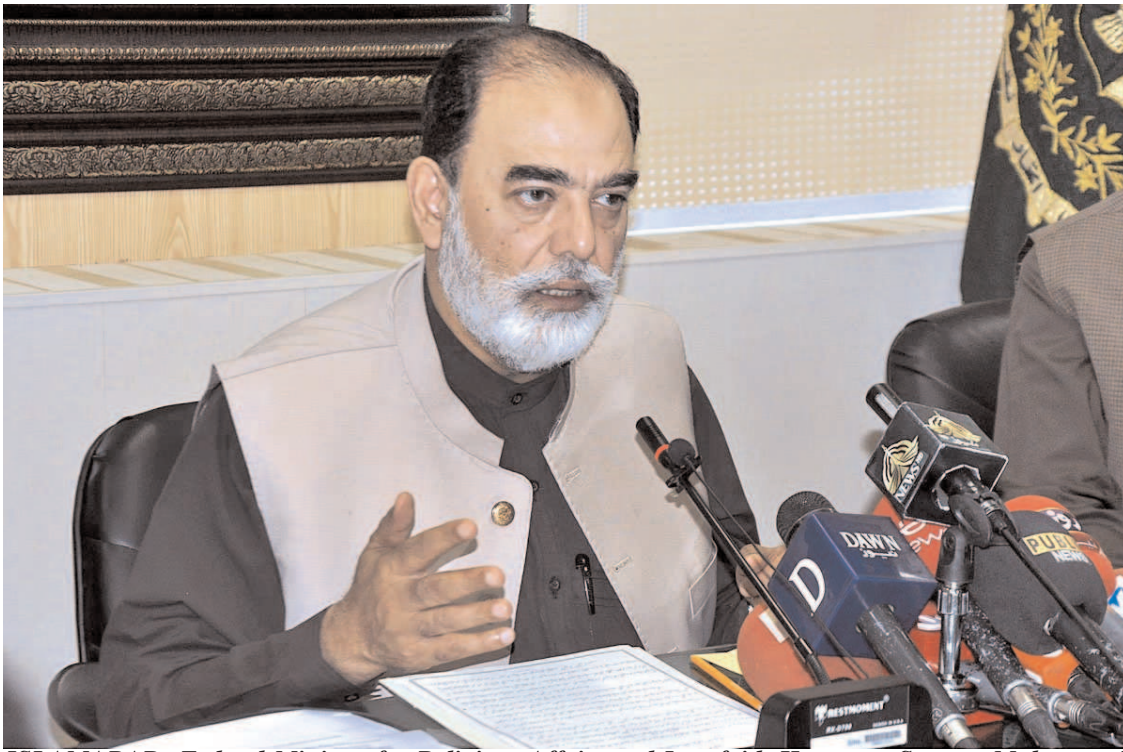
ISLAMABAD (APP): The three-day 'Tablighi Ijtama' organized at Masjid Abdul Qasim, concluded here on Sunday afternoon. "Over three hundred thousand people participated in the Ijtama that started on Friday," said a spokesperson of the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP). He said that all the participants in their vehicles safely had moved towards their respective destinations. Under the supervision of Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Motorway North Zone, Muhammad Yusuf Malik, special monitoring of the traffic situation was carried out by the NHMP and additional staff was deployed to ensure the smooth flow of the traffic. The spokesperson said, "Now traffic flow on Link Road Motorway is normal." The organizers of the congregation thanked NHMP for the excellent traffic arrangements.

### Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Sunday issued a power suspension programme for Monday 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, Highway, Iqbal Town, Zia Masjid, Service Road East, Farash Town, Karpas Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Dhok Hasu, Major Masood, Gulshanabad, Industrial, Dhok Mangatal Feeders, Jhelum Circle, Fatehpur, Sarai Alamgir, Shukrila, Mandi Bhalwal, Military College, Samot, Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Kallar Kahar, Manara, Daultala, Raman Feeders.

### Inter-district gang busted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested an inter-district gang involved in various crime cases and recovered gold ornaments worth thousands of rupees, stolen amount Rs 3,50,000 from their possession, informed a police spokesman here on Sunday. Police also recovered weapons, and vehicles used in crime. In April, Salamat Ali, along with other co-accused committed a robbery in a house in a private society. The accused Salamat Ali is already registered in dozens of cases including theft and robbery.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood addressing a press conference.

## Ministry includes Qurbani's expenses in existing Hajj package

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood on Sunday announced that the ministry would bear the expenses of Qurbani for the pilgrims performing Hajj on government scheme.

Addressing a press conference accompanied with Secretary Religious Affairs Dr. Aftab Akbar Durrani here in the Ministry, he said Qurbani had been included in the same package as the decision was made to provide a sigh of relief to the intending pilgrims performing the most expensive Hajj of the history.

The minister informed that the pilgrims performing Hajj on government scheme would be provided a coupon of Qurani by the Director General Hajj

Abdul Wahab Soomro before the start of Hajj days in Saudi Arabia without charging any extra money.

It is worth mentioning here that earlier, the expenses of Qurani were not included in the exiting Hajj package, in fact, the ministry had some savings that were being used for pilgrims' ease and comforts. Putting a question mark on the Hajj expenses of 2019, he said after passing through a period of four years, the ministry was hiring buildings and airlines services on a low cost despite inflation in the international market adding that he had asked the ministry to prepare a comparative study of last a couple of years Hajj expenses and promised to make it public.

Highlighting the main factors of increase in Hajj

expense, the minister said due to surge in dollars price and depreciation in Pakistan's rupee, the Hajj expenses were risen in the country. Regarding mandatory Hajj training, he mentioned that it was compulsory for all intending pilgrims but those who could not attend it due to some serious issues, no hurdle would be placed on their way to pilgrimage.

Senator Talha said as many as 26,000 pilgrims would take benefits of 'Road to Makkah' project as their immigration process would be completed at the Islamabad International Airport. He was of the view that this facility should be at other airports of the country like Lahore, Karachi and Multan but due to time constraints, the radius of this project could not be expanded at these airports.

### DC asks for focusing on high-risk dengue breeding areas

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner Hassan Waqar Cheema has directed the officials concerned to focus on high-risk Union Councils vulnerable to dengue larvae spread. According to the DC office spokesman, he directed the officials to register FIRs against commercial building owners if dengue larvae were found on their premises.

The DC said the prevailing weather was suitable for breeding dengue larvae, therefore, strict compliance with the anti-dengue SOPs was needed to prevent larvae breeding.

Cheema asked the officials of the health authority to mark houses with Red stickers from where dengue larvae were detected.

He directed to adopt arrangements for the drainage of stagnant rainwater as accumulated rainwater was a leading cause of dengue breeding.

The DC informed that anti-dengue surveillance activities were underway to control the growth of dengue larvae, however, no campaign could be successful without people's active participation. He urged the residents to remove stagnant water, especially after rain in outdoor and household settings to stop mosquitoes from breeding.

## Hina calls for enhanced cooperation between Europe, Asia-Pacific

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar Sunday called for enhanced cooperation between Europe and Asia-Pacific particularly in trade, investment and sustainable development.

She was speaking at the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum in Stockholm at the invitation of the EU High representative Josep Borrell and Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström.

While taking part in the roundtable discussion on "Building more Sustainable and Inclusive Prosperity Together", the minister underscored Pakistan's role as a trade, investment and connectivity hub in the heart of Asia which seeks to deepen its engagements with the European partners. She appreciated European sustainability and connectivity initiatives like the EU Global gateway Strategy and the Green Deal. She expressed the hope that the new EU GSP Plus facility would continue to focus on its primary aim of promoting sustainable development and poverty alleviation. She stressed on the importance of recognizing the symbiotic relationship

between sustainability and inclusivity in line with UN sustainable development goals. She also called for avoiding distortions, economic de-coupling, new forms of protectionism and selective application of norms which can undermine free trade, win-win economic cooperation and interconnectedness. The state minister emphasized the need for partnerships to deal with emerging global challenges and non-traditional security threats such as climate change, pandemics, water, energy and food security. She proposed greater collaboration between the EU and Asia-Pacific countries for research and capacity building with focus on sustainability, green economies, agriculture and digital connectivity. In Stockholm, Hina also held bilateral meetings with Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Tobias Billström, EU High Representative Josep Borrell, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of UAE Noura Alkaabi, UK Minister of State Lord Tariq Ahmad, Counsellor of the US Department of State Derek H. Chollet, and Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand Vijavat Isarabhakdi.

## 10,86,187 children to be immunized against Polio

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of District Health Authority Dr Saadat Ali Khan has said that a week-long anti-polio drive will commence in the entire district on Monday (May 15).

The CEO told APP that 4,199 mobile teams, 527 fixed points, 214 Union council medical officers and 765 area incharges, would vaccinate polio drops to over 10,86,117 children under five years of age during the campaign from May 15 to 21.

He informed that anti-polio drops would also be administered at 129 transit points while teams would be deputized at

toll plazas so that no child could miss immunization. Meanwhile, Commissioner Rawalpindi Laiqat Ali Chhatta directed the official concerned to improve the anti-Polio micro plan devised during the previous campaign.

He said the crippling disease was a national issue, and it was the responsibility of all to play an influential role in making the country polio-free.

The Commissioner warned the officials that strict action would be taken against those responsible for fake entries. Laiqat said hiding facts was not a solution to any problem, but it complicated the issue.

## 'Khan's politics of propaganda aims to 'return back in power'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senior leader Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz MNA Maiza Hameed Sunday criticized that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan was destabilizing the country through his 'propaganda tactics' that only revolved around returning to power again.

The incompetent former premier had conspired against the country and

ruined its economy since he was involved in foreign funding and Toshakhana theft, she said while talking to a private news channel. PTI leadership "destroyed" each and every sector of the country and today the people were suffering from its worst consequences, she said.

She added that the chairman of PTI was only promoting confrontation, abusive culture and training the youth towards his

vested interests. PTI chief's only objective is to spread chaos and anarchy in the country, she said, adding that the poor economic and financial policies of Imran's government had put the country on the verge of bankruptcy. Replying to a question, she said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government came to power just to save the country from bankruptcy.

## Tapping local Thar coal reserves, a way forward to ensure Pakistan's energy security

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan, being an energy-deficient country, spends hefty and precious foreign exchange on import of fossil fuels like coal, oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) to generate electricity for meeting domestic and commercial demand of consumers.

In many countries around the world, coal is used as a cheap source for generating electricity, though the process has some repercussions for the environment.

The global coal reserves are estimated to be around 1 trillion tons, while coal-fired based power plants contribute nearly 37 per cent of global electricity generation. Pakistan is blessed to have the world's 28th largest coal reserves with 175 billion tons in Tharparkar alone, equivalent to 50 billion tons of oil which is more than Saudi Arabian and Iranian oil reserves. These reserves are equal to 2,000 trillion cubic feet of gas which is 68 times higher than Pakistan's total gas reserves. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) Amir Iqbal told APP that unlocking indigenous Thar coal reserves can generate approximately 100,000 megawatts (MW) electricity for the next 250 years. Thar coal alone can ensure energy security of Pakistan besides reducing power tariff significantly, he observed.

He went on to say that in Pakistan, coal was considered a cheap energy resource to catch up future energy requirements of both the domestic and commercial consumers, adding in the last five years coal-based power production had also witnessed a significant increase.

The CEO said in order to scale down fuel import costs, the country needed to shift towards local coal resources. Even in India, coal fired power plants produce more than two third of total electricity. India import 200 million tons coal annually besides utilizing 500-600 million tons domestic coal while Pakistan's coal production stood at mere 14 to 15 million tons per annum, he added.

Amir Iqbal said currently SECMC was extracting 7.6 million tons per annum coal from Block-II and its capacity was being expanded to 11.2 million tons. Thar coal had total 13 blocks but presently coal was being mined from two blocks, he added.

Terminology coal reserves future of Pakistan, Amir Iqbal said Thar coal could not only be used for power generation but also in cement and steel industries.

However, he said Thar coal had not yet been connected through railway network. Once, Thar coal was connected with railway network, it would not only open to the entire world but also pave way for economic prosperity of the country, he remarked. In power plants, the average coal consumption is approximately 0.62kg/kWh. However, the new efficient power plants utilize 10% less coal as compared to the ordinary plants.

Energy sector experts emphasised the significance of utilising indigenous Thar coal in addressing Pakistan's energy needs. They pointed out that the global increase in the price of oil and gas makes it even more crucial for Pakistan to explore its own ample coal reserves.

Former Chief Economist of the Planning Commission, Dr Perviz Tahir was of the view, "The energy crisis in Pakistan remains a pressing issue with energy efficiency not being prioritized." "Even the private sector contributes

to the problem through the use of outdated boilers and equipment," he added. He pointed out that majority of the energy mix was thermal, primarily relying on fossil fuels and acknowledged the difficulties in discussing coal due to climate concerns, but emphasized that Pakistan's energy crisis was so dire that we could not survive without it.

The government is also mulling over a multi-pronged strategy to cope with upcoming power shortage issue during summer despite economic turmoil and rising fuel prices following International Monetary Fund demands.

"We are taking pragmatic steps to overcome load-shedding by focusing on generation, transmission and energy conservation to provide maximum relief to people," stated Minister for Power Division Khurram Dastgir Khan.

Since uninterrupted power supply is considered crucial for development of industrial, agricultural and domestic sectors, its smooth supply to domestic consumers is equally important. "The present government has already added 1,980 MW cheap electricity to the system from Thar coal reserves in just 10 months besides 720 MW and 1100 MW from Karot Hydropower and K-3 Nuclear Power Plants," he added.

The minister informed that total power generation from Thar coal stood at 2640 MW with formal commissioning of 1320 MW Shanghai Electric Thar Coal Project under the CPEC. "Another 330 MW Thal Nova Thar coal project has already been synchronized in February that would help reduce load-shedding in summer and cut the power tariff."

Rising fuel prices and new energy situation after Ukraine war also necessitated Pakistan to utilize its indigenous resources like hydel, solar, wind and Thar

coal as it has already announced not to build any new power projects depending on imported coal and ensure 60 percent of its power through local sources by 2030.

Khurram Dastgir said the PML-N government led by the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had successfully added over 10,000 MW electricity to national grid through China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects during 2013 to 2018.

"Efforts of the then PML-N government had not only controlled load-shedding but added surplus power to the system," he remarked. "The criminal negligence of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government had delayed number of projects dragging the country to darkness once again," he mentioned.

Meanwhile, National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) has completed the construction of 220 kilometers long 500kV Thar-Matiari transmission line from Shanghai Electric Company Limited (SECL) to Matiari Converter station in record time on the directives of prime minister Shehbaz Shaifir aimed at timely evacuating power generated from local Thar coal.

It is the most important project for Pakistan's future energy needs through which coal-fired power generation in Thar would be integrated to the National Grid System. The project has been completed with an estimated cost of Rs 15 billion by the NTDC's own resources. The transmission line is undergoing testing and will be energized soon. The federal government in collaboration with the Sindh government has also chalked out a policy framework on the Thar Coal mines project aimed at connecting it with other coal-powered power plants in the country producing 4,000 MW.

## HSSC annual exams 2023 to start on May 20

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (RBISE) has finalized all the arrangements for Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) annual exams 2023 which would start in Rawalpindi division on May 20, Saturday.

According to Chairman RBISE, Muhammad Adnan Khan, foolproof arrangements have been made for the HSSC annual exams. Controller Examinations RBISE Prof. Sajid Mehmood Farooqi informed that the roll number slips of regular students had already been sent to the concerned institutions and those of the private students were uploaded on the board's website /http://www.biserawalpindi.edu.pk besides dispatched at the addresses mentioned in their admission forms.

He informed that the board on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi

Division Liaquat Ali Chatha, had made best possible arrangements for the exams. The date sheets of the exams, lists of the examiners and the examination centers and other officials had been sent to all the Deputy Commissioners of the division, District Police Officers and to the special branch.

The district administration and the special branch would send lists to the commissioner office and the board office after completing the verification process.

Apart from the board's office at Morgah near Attock Oil Refinery Rawalpindi, the students could also contact at phone number 051-5450917-18, Assistant Controller Inter Branch Rana Ilyas on cell phone 0333-5464775, focal person Inter Branch, Riasat Abbasi on 0332-8500846 and 051-5450920 in case of any problem, he added.

He said, 196 examination centres had been set up in the division, including

33 in Attock, 40 in Chakwal, 26 in Jhelum, 47 in Rawalpindi district and 50 local centers.

He said strict monitoring of the examination centers would be ensured by the board and the district administration.

Strict action in accordance with the law would be taken against 'Boti' mafia, he added.

The district vigilance committee, chairman squad, special squad and mobile inspectors would visit the examination centers to check the exam process and send their reports to the board on daily basis.

A central control room had also been set up to monitor the examinations, he said adding, all the officials concerned were directed to ensure the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures issued by the board. Negligence on part of the officials concerned would not be tolerated, he added.

## NUMS to bolster collaboration with NAEAC of HEC to excel in Agri-research

RAWALPINDI (APP): The National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) organized a seminar on Sunday in a bid to bolster its collaboration with different organizations to ensure quality education and excel in research in agriculture – a linchpin of the country's economy.

NUMS Department of Nutrition & Dietetics (NDND) took the initiative to implement a comprehensive program of accreditation of agriculture and related education degree programs, specifically BS program in Human Nutrition and Dietetics based on policies, procedures, and criteria set up by the NAEAC of Higher Education Commission (HEC) to ensure high-quality standards of agriculture education.

The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Awareness Seminar held by NAEAC was in line with SDG 4, that is, Quality Education.

Dr Abdul Momin, heading NDND said that Pakistan's population had already crossed the 230 million mark and given its current growth of 1.8 per cent per annum, the projection was that it would almost double by 36 years. Hence, if efforts were not mounted to achieve maximum crop yields, the supply of food to cater to an

ever-growing population and in the face of squeezing agricultural land, would emerge as a serious challenge.

He said it was necessary that the standard of agriculture-related courses should be raised to the level where less land could produce maximum yields by using the latest agriculture research. He also referred to the concepts of vertical farming in Japan, the use of trickle irrigation system to water crops in a water-stressed country like Pakistan and intercropping concept for boosting the yield of crops.

Secretary NAEAC Dr Abdul Ghaffar, in his remarks on the occasion, assured that NAEAC would fully support the universities across Pakistan to raise standards of agriculture-related courses for producing students, well-equipped with the latest techniques to significantly increase crop yields. He dwelt at length on the internal and external evaluation criterion and emphasized on four major areas like strength & quality of faculty, curriculum design & development, infrastructure & learning resources, and students support & progression. The seminar was attended by Prof. Dr Aisha Mohyuddin, Dr Umar Farooq and other senior faculty members and students.



Precious stones recovered

KANDAHAR (Agencies): 200 kilograms of precious stones have been discovered and seized in Spin Boldak ground port of Kandahar, police said. A man on charge with the trafficking of the stones to the neighboring country has also been arrested by the police personnel, a statement said. A few weeks back, hundreds of kilograms of precious stones have been discovered and seized in the country's eastern ground of Torkham.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Shawwal 24, 1444 — Monday, May 15, 2023

Afghan team come 2nd

KABUL (Agencies): The Afghanistan national wheelchair basketball team were runners up in the China Para Asian Games quota tournament with four wins and one loss. The team lost to Kuwait in its final match on Saturday 56-58 to scoop second place out of six participating teams. Afghanistan had previously defeated Philippines, Hong Kong, United Arab Emirates and Chinese Taipei, but was defeated by the Kuwait team.

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

OIC: Agreements signed for projects for Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) said in a statement that a series of agreements have been signed to carry out a group of projects under the Humanitarian Trust Fund for Afghanistan.

The OIC said that on May 12, 2023, an official ceremony was held by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Jeddah "where the signing took place."

The ceremony was attended by Hissein Ibrahim Taha, the OIC Secretary-

General, Muhammad Sulaiman Al-Jasser, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the IsDB Group, Sultan Al-Murshid, CEO of the Saudi Fund for Development, and Fahad Al-Osaimi, Director of the Emergency Relief Department at KSR relief in Saudi Arabia.

Additionally, Tarig Ali Bakheit, the Special Envoy of the OIC Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and other representatives from international organizations and partners attended the meeting, according to the statement.

The OIC Secretary-General "emphasized that the OIC's commitment to humanitarian aid in Afghanistan is demonstrated through the signing of agreements that facilitated the implementation of specific projects.

He also highlighted the need for sustained involvement, which can be achieved by securing additional financial support from both Members and non Members of the OIC, as well as regional and international financial institutions," the statement said.

9% increase in revenue announced

MAZAR-E-SHARIF (TOLONews): The officials of Mazar-e-Sharif municipality, in a meeting to present the annual report of the department, announced a 9% increase in their revenue in the year 1401.

Mazar-e-Sharif municipality added that in one year they collected 555 million Afghani in revenue.

"We had a target to collect 512 million Afghani in 1401, but we collected 555 million Afghani," said Naqibullah Karimi, the mayor of Mazar-e-Sharif.

"All of this money will be spent on our city, and our city will be built," said Noor Hadi Abo Edris, deputy governor of Balkh.

While the mayor of Mazar-e-Sharif talked about the implementation of more than 20 development projects during the last year, some residents of Mazar-e-Sharif want the implementation of more development projects from the municipality of this province.

"The schools are necessary, and the clinics are necessary, and the municipality promised them to us," said Naqibullah Karimi, a community leader.

The officials of Mazar-e-Sharif municipality mentioned projects including the operation of four roads in the center of the city, planting saplings, the activation of traffic signals, graveling, concrete, and paving of some roads as the most basic activities of the administration in the past year, saying the implementation of another 25 development projects in different parts of this city will be announced in the solar year.

Earthquake strikes Kabul

KABUL (Khaama Press): An earthquake of magnitude 4.3 jolted the Capital city of Kabul, Afghanistan, on Sunday, the National for Seismology (NCS) said.

The earthquake of magnitude 4.3 occurred at 7:14 am local time today with a depth of 66 Km in Kabul.

"Earthquake of Magnitude: 4.3, Occurred on 14-05-2023, 08:14:29 IST, Lat: 33.34 & Long: 69.94, Depth: 60 Km, Location: 151 km SSE of Kabul, Afghanistan," the Indian National Center for Seismology tweeted.

So far, no casualties have been reported; further details are awaited.

Earlier, the NCS also reported an earthquake of magnitude 4.5 struck at a depth of 99 Km southwest of Faizabad capital city of Badakhshan province, Afghanistan, on Thursday.

The earthquake, measuring 4.5 on the Richter scale, shook the Afghan capital city of Faizabad, NCS said.

Earthquake took place on Thursday at 4:51 am local time at a depth of 172 Km, Tweeted NCS "Earthquake of Magnitude: 4.5, Occurred on 11-05-2023, 05:51:03 IST, Lat: 36.33 & Long: 69.98, Depth: 172 Km, Location: 99km SSW of Fayzabad."

Afghanistan to call for tenders to extract oil, gas

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum of Afghanistan will announce tenders for oil and gas fields soon.

The acting minister of Mines and Petroleum, Shahabuddin Delawar, announced on Sunday that the ministry would shortly begin the bidding process to extract some of the oil and gas fields in the country soon.

Delawar brought up this matter in a meeting with the board of a Chinese company in Kabul.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Company reportedly expressed interest in investing in oil and gas in Afghanistan, a statement said by the ministry.

The ministry welcomed the Chinese interest in investing in the oil and gas fields, saying: "Afghanistan has rich oil and gas resources, and the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum will shortly announce a part of the country's oil and gas



fields for bidding." Those who are interested may lawfully participate in the bidding, he continued.

On January 6, the Taliban authorities signed a contract with Xinjiang Central Asia Petroleum and Gas Company (CAPEIC) to extract oil from the Amu

Darya basin.

According to the Taliban officials, the Chinese company will initially invest \$ 150 in the project and \$450 over the next three years.

According to experts, signing such projects is of utmost significance for the

Taliban administration because they provide cash for the current regime and encourage future investment in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is rich in natural resources, but the untapped resources have yet to be exploited due to political unrest.

Fresh \$40 million cash aid package arrives Kabul: DAB

KABUL (Khaama Press): Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) on Sunday announced that a fresh \$40 million cash package arrived in Kabul, and said this is the second cash shipment Kabul receives in less than four days.

On Thursday, Afghanistan's central bank announced that \$40 million cash aid, as part of the United Nations humanitarian aid had arrived in Kabul, and was deposited in a private commercial bank.

Since the return of the Taliban to power in 2021, the cash aid shipped to Afghanistan exceed \$2 million. Afghanistan's central bank welcomed the shipment as part of the United Nation's humanitarian cash aid and called on the international community for further cooperation across fields.

The way these funds are spent has always been a topic of debate, and donor countries, especially the United States, have pre-

vented probing the use of these funds.

Previously, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) had revealed that the United States donations to Afghanistan is not very clear, and the US Department of State had denied providing details in this regard.

Some Afghan politicians have criticized the UN for continuously delivering cash to the Taliban administration, which helps the

group finance their de facto regime.

Whereas, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan had earlier clarified that cash shipped to Afghanistan is deposited in UN accounts in a private bank, and will be used by UN agencies solely for the purpose of humanitarian aid and other supportive programs.

The money will not be handed over to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the announcement said.

Over 45 various military vehicles repaired: MoD

KABUL (Agencies): A total of 47 various destroyed and unusable military vehicles, have been repaired by the engineering team of the 209th Al-Fatah Army Corps, the Ministry of National Defense said in a statement.

The repaired military vehicles included 10 Rangers, 10 Humvees, 27 international, said the statement. A few days ago, as many as 1,535 various military vehicles had been repaired by the engineering team of the Joint Military Training Command of the Ministry of National Defense, the statement added.

The engineering teams of the Ministry of National Defense are making efforts to repair further destroyed and unusable military vehicles, as they have repaired thousands of destroyed military vehicles so far.



10 killed in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Kabul, Beijing and Islamabad last week pledged to further strengthen trilateral cooperation on security and counterterrorism, with China calling on the Islamic Emirate to reform its policy regarding women and girls.

However, Kabul said issues related to women were Afghanistan's internal matter which would be resolved based on Islamic laws.

**Casualties** Last week saw violent incidents claiming 10 lives across the country.

Unidentified gunmen killed a cleric in Baghlan, a judge in Ghor, a man in Parwan, and two women in Badghis and Uruzgan provinces last week.

Three children were killed when an unexploded landmine went off in Kandahar, a person killed his wife in Balkh and another person killed his sister's husband as a result of a dispute over land in Takhar and injured his sister.

In the previous week, eight people were killed and as many others were injured in various incidents of violence across the country.

Before the regime change, hundreds of civilians, government forces and insurgents would get killed and wounded every week as a result of the conflict.

**Trilateral meeting in Pakistan** Foreign ministers of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan

held the fifth dialogue meeting in Islamabad on Sunday and Monday and pledged to further strengthen trilateral cooperation on security and counterterrorism.

In the meeting, the ministers agreed to uphold good relations, deepen political mutual trust, respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and properly address differences and disputes through equal consultation.

The joint statement said the three sides stressed the need to prevent any individual, group or party "to use their territories to harm and threaten regional security and interests or conduct terrorist actions and activities."

On the heels of the mini summit, China said it was ready to help Afghanistan in the fields of economy, reconstruction and fighting terrorism, but asked Kabul to adopt a moderate approach and form an inclusive government.

However, Muttaqi told a ceremony at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Islamabad that the current acting government was inclusive and represented all Afghans.

**Continued interaction with caretaker govt** The United Nations Mission in Afghanistan last week condemned the restrictions on women's work in UN agencies, but said it could not stop interacting with the new rulers

despite problems.

Also, the European Union said it would continue diplomatic interaction with Afghanistan.

Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said interaction with Afghanistan was in the interest of both Afghans and the world, adding pressure and freezing Afghanistan's assets or holding Afghanistan's political status and relations hostage was not a solution.

He also said that interaction and discussion should be held with the ruling party about Afghanistan's issues.

On Friday, Qatari prime minister and foreign minister Mohammad Bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani and Qatari spymaster Abdullah Al-Khalifi and their delegation met with Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund in Kandahar.

The Qatari officials promised to strengthen relations with Afghanistan, increase trust and cooperate in education, health and economic fields.

**Respect for human rights** On Wednesday, UNAMA claimed in a recent report that a number of UN women workers in Afghanistan faced 'harassment, detention and other restrictions' in the past three months.

"UNAMA is concerned by increasing restrictions on civic space across Afghanistan," Chief Human Rights Service, Fiona

Frazer said in an update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan.

In the report, Frazer criticized corporal punishments and executions and called for the suspension of the death penalty in Afghanistan.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told a press conference in Qatar that all Islamic countries were against the ban on education of girls and women in Afghanistan as it had no religious justification.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also called on the Islamic Emirate to reform its policy towards women and girls in Afghanistan, but the Islamic Emirate called it an internal issue which would be solved under Islamic laws.

On Thursday, deputy prime minister for administrative affairs Maulvi Abdul Salam Hanafi once again asked neighboring and regional countries not to meddle in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

**Aid** Last week, a humanitarian aid package amounting to \$40 million arrived in Kabul and was handed over to a commercial bank.

Qatar has pledged provision of medicines to hospitals in eleven provinces of Afghanistan and Japan and World Food Program also said they were committed to continuing their humanitarian activities in the war-torn country.

Afghan officials arrest 4, recover 1187 kgs of drug



GHOR (Khaama Press): Taliban authorities detained at least four people in connection with the trafficking of 1187 kilograms of hashish in the Pasaband district of central Ghor province.

The counter-narcotics department of Ghor province has arrested several people who have been allegedly accused of drug trafficking in the province. The accused individuals have been handed over to the judiciary organ for further investigations, the provincial police of the province said in a

statement.

Taliban's Ministry of Interior Affairs has already commenced the eradication campaign of poppy farmlands in certain provinces, as thousands of acres of poppy farmland have been destroyed by the counter-narcotic personnel of the Ministry of the Interior of the IEA across the country so far.

At the international level, Afghanistan's drug dilemma has turned into a major challenge for regional countries and beyond. At the Shanghai Cooperation

Organization (SCO) meeting held in Goa India, and the Summit on Afghanistan held in Doha Qatar in the past couple of days, participating envoys placed major importance on fighting drug trafficking emanating from Afghanistan.

Since the Taliban seized power in 2021, they have promised to seriously deal with the drug issue, however, drug dealers deliver hashish and other forms of drug to the regional markets and beyond through different channels.

Refugees accuse embassy officials of corruption

KABUL (Ariana News): Representatives of Afghan refugees living in India have accused officials at the Afghanistan embassy in Delhi, India, including the ambassador, of corruption.

In a letter seen by Ariana News on Sunday, the representatives of the refugees accused the ambassador, Farid Mamundzay; the financial and administrative officer, Ziaullah Hashemi; and the officer of the political department, Ibrahim Shakib Ayazi, of financial and administrative corruption and embezzlement.

The letter, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), states that Mamundzay, Hashemi and Ayazi "illegally and

against the diplomatic values, leased two buildings, which will be six apartments, and a free area called 'Chaman', which is about half an acre of land, to an Indian company without any legal process, permission or guidance from the capital [Kabul]."

The representatives of the Afghan refugees living in India also stated in the letter that "this contract lasted for about 10 months, but later they faced pressure from the Afghans living in India and finally a case was made with the Indian company."

According to the letter: "Currently, the Indian company has sued Farid Mamundzay and Ziaullah Hashmi in the Indian courts

for forgery and corruption of 2.5 Indian crore (\$304,132). The plan of the Indian company is that after several years, based on the decision of the Indian courts, about half an acre of land worth millions of dollars will be transferred into the company's name.

"With this, the diplomatic properties of Afghanistan will lose their diplomatic status, the historical and national capital of Afghanistan will be lost due to the oppression and treachery of several corrupt and treacherous officials and, God forbid, with the evil plans of Indian businessmen will be grabbed," the letter read.

Ariana News tried to get comment from the embassy, but got no response.

Over 2,000 acres of poppy fields destroyed in ongoing campaign

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Interior said on Sunday that so far 2,183 acres of poppy fields across nine provinces have been destroyed in the ongoing campaign to rid the country of poppies.

According to the ministry, 777 acres of land in Pashtun Kot, Bilchiragh,

Almar, Kohistan and Khyber districts of Faryab province have been destroyed along with 520 acres of land in Badakhshan province, 400 acres of land in Paktika province, 292 acres of land in Nangarhar province, 127 acres of land in Takhar, 38 acres of land in Kunar province, 13 acres

of land in Baghlan province, 11 acres of land in Balkh province and 5 acres of land in Pasaband district of Ghor province were cleared from poppy cultivation. Poppy fields in Kabul province have also been destroyed.

Last week the Ministry of Interior of the Islamic

Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) said that anti-narcotics police destroyed 800 acres of poppy fields in several operations across six provinces.

The Islamic Emirate's spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid, said that there is a serious fight underway against the cultivation and trafficking of drugs in an attempt to eradicate all traces of narcotics in the country.

Mujahid emphasized that efforts are being made to prevent drug trafficking, and that since the IEA's takeover in August 2021, a large number of drug traffickers have been arrested and imprisoned.

He also assured neighboring countries and the region that they need not be concerned about drug smuggling from Afghanistan but to cooperate with the government and people in the fight against drugs and help find alternative crops to poppies.





# Imran hiding behind courts, says Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal said on Sunday that Imran Niazi had created polarization in the judiciary.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal said that Imran Niazi used to ask for receipts from others but on his own turn of furnishing receipts, he started crying because he had no receipts and no answers. Mr Iqbal said dozens of PTI accounts had been discovered.

The federal minister said that Imran used to run politics by collecting donations from foreign countries. Pakistanis living abroad were asked to send money through Hundi. He said 190 million pounds were seized under money laundering and the proceeds of money laundering were transferred to the Supreme Court account.

"Why didn't you sue the Financial Times in the UK?" he asked. "If you move the court in UK, your own theft would have been caught as well," he maintained.

The federal minister criticized former prime minister Khan and said that now he was hiding behind the courts. Dozens of his illegal accounts have been discovered.

"What you have done is the worst kind of corruption and you have to answer for all that. You will not be able to hide under the umbrella of your favorite Chief Justice," Mr Iqbal continued. The minister further said that Mr Khan had ruined the unity and solidarity of Pakistan.

"Mr Khan wants to hide behind vio-

lence and lawlessness. After the banned TTP, PTI is the second party which burnt schools," Mr Iqbal added.

He said Pakistan was facing an undeclared war. He accused Mr Khan of destroying economy and CPEC. The federal minister said that the PTI chairman played the game of thief and bandit. The minister said that as per Mr Khan he was arrested and he had no idea what happened after his arrest.

"After your arrest, Murad Saeed said that all the workers should complete their task. Radio Pakistan building was burnt, this target was given by you," Mr Iqbal added. He said PTI could become a threat to the federation and democracy. The PTI created division and hatred in society. He said Mr Khan will not be allowed to play dirty game. He said that Nawaz Sharif was disqualified in a false case. Seeing Harmalism in Pakistan, I must say I am glad to see you.

A criminal is being welcomed in the Supreme Court. The minister said had 'come out as a dirty dealer'. The planning minister called on Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial to direct all judges to 'welcome suspects' in the same manner he welcomed PTI Chairman Imran Khan at his Supreme Court appearance on May 11. Iqbal said the "suspect who had stolen Rs60 billion" from the nation was welcomed by the CJP in an honourable manner and demanded that all suspects be treated in the same manner.

## Imran created fake trust to whiten black money: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Interior Attaullah Tarar Sunday said that the Al-Qadir Trust case was the biggest scandal of corruption as PTI Chairman Imran Khan created a fake trust to whiten his black money.

Addressing a press conference, he said, that Imran Khan and his wife were trustees of Al-Qadir Trust and both were accused of corruption of Rs. 60 billion and Imran Khan would have to answer in this case. "Being an office holder, he has to answer for Rs. 60 billion corruption in an open

and shut case," he added. He said that loot and plunder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief during his government tenure had been caught. Tarar alleged that Imran Khan caused a loss of billions of rupees to the national exchequer. Tarar claimed that a direct bribe was caught in the case, adding a sealed envelope was shown to the cabinet, where two to three ministers objected.

He further alleged that Imran Khan had received 458 kanals of land from the property tycoon for illegal benefits. Tarar added that no written answer was sub-

mitted by the PTI chief in the accountability court and that Imran Khan would have to answer for his theft.

He said that the PTI chief had registered fake cases against his political opponents. He vowed that "the gangs produced by PTI chief Imran Khan" would never be given forgiveness. "They will be identified through CCTV cameras and will not be allowed to go free." To a question, he said the terrorists trained by Imran Khan burnt houses and defence installations and the violent protesters were involved in the looting of shops and residences.

## Rioters damaged 23 premises, burnt 108 vehicles: Mohsin Naqvi

LAHORE (NNI): Punjab's caretaker chief minister Mohsin Naqvi while delineating losses in protests Sunday said that 108 vehicles were gutted in the province. "In Lahore, police vehicles, 12 buses, motorbikes, six Wasa vehicles, eight Rescue 1122 vehicles and a car in a car showroom were set on fire," Naqvi said. "Protesters damaged 23 buildings including Corps Commander's house in Lahore," he said.

The provincial chief minister said that military installations and government properties were attacked under a plan. "Around 34 attackers were involved in attack on Jinnah House Lahore," he added. The rioters and arsonists burnt safe city cameras on May 09 and two metro stations in Lahore, he said. "Each and every attacker is being pointed out and all will be brought to justice," he said. "Around six billion losses have been estimated in rioting incidents so far,"

CM Naqvi said.

"In Gujranwala an Army check post and a private building was gutted, while in Multan buses and police coasters were burnt," he said. Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi has said that the attack on Mianwali Airbase was not symbolic, rather it was carried out after a comprehensive planning.

The chief minister claimed that the whole footage of the airbase attack was in their possession. "The Mianwali airbase attack was not symbolic. It was orchestrated after a thorough planning," Naqvi said, vowing to take this case to the logical conclusion and punish every attacker. Mr Naqvi said the attackers of the airbase were armed and they wanted to destroy all the aircraft parked at the base. The rioters also tried to torch the GPO office in Mianwali.

"There are pictures and video of each person, and everyone being followed," Punjab CM said. "We won't arrest a person

wrongly despite any pressure," he said. "Bringing attackers to justice will be our priority," he said.

"These were the targets, which Tehreek-e-Taliban wanted to attack," chief minister said.

"Arrested persons being investigated and Yasmeen Rashid is the main character of this incident," he further said. "Women being respected thus Yasmeen Rashid being kept at hospital," he added.

Also, Rawalpindi Capital City Police Office (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani addressing the media persons said that 276 people involved in violent mob attacks on public buildings have been arrested. He said Police lodged 17 FIRs and a person who used petrol to torch General Headquarters (GHQ) gate has been arrested via video footage. Hamdani said protesters wanted to uproot GHQ main gate.

26 accused involved in the GHQ attacks were presented before media persons on Sunday.

## 33 civilians killed in Burkina Faso attack: governor

O U A G A D O U G O U (AFP/APP): Armed attackers killed at least 33 people when they opened fire on vegetable farmers in Burkina Faso, the governor of the Boucle du Mouhoun region said on Saturday.

Much of the country, including parts of western Boucle du Mouhoun region, has been under a state of emergency since March as the government seeks to combat militant attacks. "On the evening of Thursday, May 11 at around 5:00 pm (1700 GMT), the village of Youlou in the department of Cheriba, Mouhoun province suffered a cowardly and barbaric terrorist attack," Governor Babo Pierre Bassinga said in a statement. "The gunmen targeted peaceful civilians" who were farming along the river, he said, adding the "provisional death toll" was 33 people killed.

Local sources confirmed the presence of heavily armed assailants on motorcycles who fired indiscriminately. The victims were buried on Friday.

In Cheriba, people also said three others were wounded in the attack, and that the perpetrators had burned property before shooting. The governor said that security in the area was being enhanced.

Burkina Faso, which saw two military coups in 2022, has been battling a militant insurgency that crossed from Mali in 2015.

## Citizens of Karachi will receive a significant gift: Inam F.P. Report

KARACHI: Minister of Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, announced that the citizens of Karachi will receive a significant gift in the form of the People's Marine Walk. He extended his congratulations to Nasir Hussain Shah for this achievement.

During the inauguration ceremony of the People's Marine Walk, Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that a water park and restaurant would be constructed in the area. The groundbreaking ceremony for this project was carried out by Nasir Hussain Shah.

Sharjeel Inam Memon further commented on a recent video featuring Imran Khan, stating that it made the arrest of Imran Khan highly likely. He emphasized that all courts would likely reject Imran Khan's bail, and those who granted him bail would need to compensate the national treasury.

Sharjeel Inam Memon believed that Imran Khan was deeply entangled in this case. He said that Imran Khan would opt for plea bargaining, returning the money he had transferred here and there. Sharjeel Inam Memon criticized PTI and Imran Khan for inciting people to break into others' homes, considering it completely unjustifiable. Sharjeel Inam Memon raised the question of why Imran Khan did not encourage his family to come forward. He said that Imran Khan's properties be sold to compensate for the damages caused, as these assets were not acquired through legitimate means. He also mentioned the people of Karachi's appreciation for such amenities.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Imran Khan supported his family in fraudulent activities.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Imran Khan had accommodated his father and sister, Aleema Khan, at Shaukat Khanum. He claimed that Imran Khan's father had been dismissed from his job due to corruption charges and that corruption was a recurring theme in his family history.

## PML-Q to hold rally in support of armed forces

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) announced on Sunday that they will be holding a rally to show their support for the Pakistan armed forces.

The decision was made during a party meeting presided over by Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, and was attended by several party leaders including Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar and Chaudhry Shafay Hussain. During the meeting, PML-Q leaders expressed their concerns over the ongoing chaotic situation in the country.



ISTANBUL: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan casts his ballot at a polling station in Istanbul, Turkey.

# Zelensky meets Pope as Germany unveils more arms for Ukraine

ROME (AFP/APP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met Pope Francis Saturday during a trip to Rome, as Berlin unveiled a huge new weapons package ahead of an expected Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Zelensky spent 40 minutes with the 86-year-old pontiff at the Vatican, after earlier meeting Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who has strongly backed Kyiv in the wake of Russia's February 2022 invasion. "I am very grateful to him for his personal attention to the tragedy of millions of Ukrainians," Zelensky said on Telegram after his audience with the pope, the first since February 2020. He said they had also discussed the fate of "tens of thousands of children" that Kyiv says were deported to Russia, as well as his plans for peace.

Francis has repeatedly called for peace in Ukraine and has sought to play a mediating role, although his efforts have yet to yield any results and he has faced criticism for failing to put the blame on Russia for the war. The Vatican, without mentioning Russia, said the pair discussed "the humanitarian and political situation in Ukraine caused by the ongoing war", and the need for "human gestures towards the most fragile people". It was Zelensky's first visit to EU and NATO member Italy since Russia invaded its neighbour and was due to be followed by a visit to Berlin Sunday.

Germany on Saturday announced a new weapons package worth 2.7 billion euros (\$2.95 billion) for Ukraine, reportedly the biggest from Berlin since Russia's invasion.

Zelensky had a 70-minute face-to-face with Meloni, who has pledged Italy's full support for Kyiv despite a

history of warm ties with Moscow in her country -- and among her coalition partners. In a joint press conference, Zelensky thanked Meloni "for helping to save lives" while detailing what he called fresh aggressions by Russia. "I have not come to complain, I have come to talk about our cooperation and to thank you once again for helping us, for the sake of our country, because we want peace," he said.

Italy has sent weapons and aid to Kyiv, although it has never disclosed exactly what it has delivered.

Meloni, who visited Zelensky in Kyiv in February, said Saturday: "I am convinced that Ukraine will win and be reborn stronger, more proud and more prosperous than before."

The new package from Germany will include 30 additional Leopard-1 tanks, Marder armoured vehicles, air-defence systems and surveillance drones. "We all hope for a rapid end to this terrible war by Russia against the Ukrainian people, but unfortunately this is not in sight," Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said in a statement.

"This is why Germany will supply all the help that it can, for as long as necessary," he said.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Zelensky, hailed the announcement, saying it indicated that Russia was "bound to lose and sit on the bench of historical shame".

Western allies have delivered increasingly powerful weapons to Ukraine. Britain this week announced it was sending Storm Shadow missiles, becoming the first country to send longer-range arms to Kyiv.

Russia described it as "an extremely hostile step" and on Saturday accused Kyiv of using the British

missiles to target civilian sites in eastern Ukraine, and wounding six children. But EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on Saturday urged other European nations to provide long-range weapons for Ukraine, while accelerating arms deliveries overall.

"The Russians are bombing from far away so the Ukrainians have to have the capacity to reach... the same distance, the same range," Borrell said after a meeting with Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba in Stockholm.

"But we have to speed up," he said.

On the front line, meanwhile, near the eastern flashpoint town of Bakhmut, both sides claimed to be making progress.

"Our soldiers are moving forward in some areas of the front, and the enemy is losing equipment and manpower," commander of the Ukrainian ground forces Oleksandr Syrskiy said on social media.

Russia said its forces were still pushing inside Bakhmut.

"In the Donetsk direction, assault detachments liberated a block in the northwestern part of the city of Artemovsk," the defence ministry said, referring to Bakhmut by its Russian name.

The conflicting reports from the battlefield suggest an increase in fighting after months of relative stability, as expectations grow over Kyiv's spring counteroffensive.

The question of when and where Ukraine might launch its high stakes battle to push Russian forces from occupied land has been the subject of steady speculation, although Zelensky insisted earlier this week that his army needed more time to prepare.

# Pakistan's external financing requirements for IMF deal unchanged: IMF

NEW YORK (Reuters): Pakistan's external financing requirements have not been changed in talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over bailout funds, the IMF Resident Representative in Pakistan said, denying local media reports that the Fund was seeking fresh financing. "There is no truth to reports that the IMF is asking Pakistan to raise \$8 billion in fresh financing," Esther Pérez Ruiz said in a text message sent to Reuters on Sunday.

The clarification comes after a report published by the Express Tribune on Saturday, which quoted sources as saying that the IMF had raised the demand for additional financing

from an earlier unmet condition of \$6 billion to \$8 billion aimed at ensuring debt repayments coming up for the May-December 2023 period.

On Sunday, Pérez Ruiz said that external funding requirements had not changed throughout the discussions, under a review that would unlock \$1.1 billion in financing for the cash-strapped South Asian nation as part of a \$6.5 billion IMF package. A staff-level agreement on the review has been delayed since November, with nearly 100 days passed since the last staff level mission to Pakistan — the longest such delay since at least 2008.

On Thursday, the Fund reiterated that obtaining commitments on external

financing from friendly countries would be essential before the IMF approves the release of bailout funds.

The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and China came to Pakistan's assistance in March and April with pledges that would cover some of the funding deficit. Pakistan's central bank reserves fell \$74 mln to \$4.38 billion, barely a month's worth of imports, according to data released on Thursday. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said during a seminar on Thursday that Pakistan would not default, with or without the IMF, and that the country could not afford to take any additional harsh measures to accommodate the IMF.

## PTI Senator Saifullah Niazi 'arrested'

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has claimed that Senator Saifullah Niazi has been arrested in Islamabad amid a crackdown against party leaders and workers following 'violent protests' after arrest of party chairman Imran Khan.

Taking to Twitter, the PTI stated the Islamabad police arrested the leader and have moved him to an undisclosed location now. The PTI has demanded the immediate release of party leaders who were "illegally arrested" following the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan. It is pertinent to mention here that the police have launched a crackdown against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders and workers following the 'violent protests' held after the arrest of party chairman Imran Khan in Al-Qadir Trust Case.

# President directs FOSPAH to probe into alleged ICT Police workplace harassment case

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has directed the Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace (FOSPAH) to conduct an inquiry into the matter of alleged harassment of a female employee by another employee of the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police and conclude the proceedings within 90 days.

While referring the matter for inquiry, the president said that right to fair trial was the inalienable fundamental right of every citizen as enshrined in the constitution, which envisaged that not only the rights of the complainant but also the rights of the accused were to be protected. President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Sunday.

The president observed that right to fair trial entailed that each party could be sure that the process would be transparent and the authority would refrain from abusing its powers. Since mistrust had been shown by the accused upon departmental inquiry committee (DIC), therefore, it was appropriate to entrust the inquiry proceedings to FOSPAH to meet the ends of justice, he added.

The president gave these directions while deciding upon the representations filed by the woman complainant and the accused against the order of FOSPAH to remit the case to ICT Police through IG Police Islamabad for de novo inquiry into the matter and setting aside the order of DIC to suspend the

accused and allowing him to resume his normal duties.

As per details, a woman employee (the complainant) of the ICT Police had filed a harassment complaint before the departmental hierarchy of the ICT Police against a male employee (the accused) alleging workplace harassment.

The matter was referred to DIC which recommended that the accused might be placed under suspension and charge sheet along with the statement of allegations be issued for conducting regular inquiry against him.

The accused filed a representation with FOSPAH which passed the order for de novo inquiry. Both the parties, then, filed separate representations with the president.