

CJP summons JC's meeting

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umar Ata Bandial on Saturday summoned a meeting of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan on May 15 to appoint the permanent chief justice of Federal Shariat Court. It has been learnt that the Judicial Commission will consider to appoint Justice @ Iqbal Hamidur Rehman as the permanent Chief Justice of Federal Shariat Court.

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Maryam to join sit-in  
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Saturday said Vice President and Chief Organizer of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Maryam Nawaz Sharif had arrived in Islamabad to participate in the sit-in to be staged by the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) outside the Supreme Court on Monday.

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LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visits Services Hospital, Lahore to inquire after the health of injured DIG Operations.

# Torching of Corps Commander House

## Shehbaz holds Imran responsible

— directs immediate arrest of elements involved in vandalism, arson attacks in Punjab

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Saturday said that Imran Niazi was responsible for the barbaric act of torching of Corps Commander House in Lahore as he planned and instigated the act of arson.

Talking to the media during his visit to the Jinnah House, the prime minister said the planners, instigators and abettors behind the attack would not be given any relief. He said the Jinnah House was the home of Corps Commander Lahore which was tragically and cruelly burnt on May 9.

The rioters attacked and set the house on fire, he said adding that the arsonists did not care that it was a historical building and the army officer and his family were living there. The building was inhabited by the son of the land who was on duty to protect his motherland, he remarked. "This was a cruel and anti-state act which never happened before in the 75 years' history of the country."

The prime minister said that he was saddened while talking about the incident. Nobody could even think that such an incident would happen. The nation was feeling shame and was grieving over the episode, he added. He said those who had perpetrated the act would be brought to justice. Such elements would be dealt with iron hands and the long arm of law would catch them to exemplary punishment according to the law and the of the Constitution which would be remembered by the world for a long time.

Shehbaz Sharif said the barbaric act was committed against those sons of the soil who were eradicating terrorism for maintaining peace in the country. It was an act against those who sacrificed their lives to protect the country's borders and their wives became widows and their children became orphans, he added. During his visit to the Combined Military Hospital and the Services Hospital Lahore, the prime minister inquired after the well-being of the officers, including Deputy Inspector General Operations Ali Nasir Rizvi and other police personnel who were wounded while performing their duties during the rioting. Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, and senior army and civil officers accompanied the prime minister.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif also directed the concerned authorities to immediately arrest all those elements who were involved in different abhorrent and unpardonable incidents of vandalism, attacks and arson of May 9, inflicting massive damages to public and private properties across Punjab province.

Addressing a meeting during his visit to Punjab Safe Cities Authority, the prime minister set a deadline of 72 hours for the law enforcement agencies to arrest all those people involved in setting on fire different buildings and infrastructure including the historic Jinnah (Corps Commander) House. The prime minister said that the whole nation was in an utter state of grief over such painful incidents except Imran Niazi and his armed followers who had acted no less than the enemies of Pakistan as no Pakistani could ever think of such action or planning.

He said these people should be arrested and made to face the law in

accordance with the relevant legal and constitutional provisions. The prime minister also desired the enhancement of the number of anti-terrorism courts in the province where the legal proceedings against all these culprits should commence swiftly.

He further maintained that during a meeting in Islamabad the other day, he had already issued clear directives that all those people who were involved, planned, abetted and facilitated the terrible attacks across the country should be dealt with iron hand. They would have to stand trials in the anti-terrorism courts and he had already instructed the law minister to increase the number of these courts, he added.

"It is time to do or die or now or never. The real culprits who showed this kind of enmity against the motherland should be arrested and produced in anti-terrorism courts under the relevant laws. These elements should be arrested immediately, without fear or favour," he added. The meeting was attended by Caretaker Chief Minister of Punjab Syed Moshin Naqvi and other relevant officials.

The prime minister said on May 9, terrible incidents occurred in the history of Pakistan. The Corps Commander (Jinnah House) was completely destroyed which was a painful sight. During the 75 years of the country's history, the enemy could not inflict such harm nor accomplish its evil dreams, but unfortunately, on May 9, under Imran Niazi's supervision, planning and instigation, his armed groups set Jinnah House on

(Continued on Back Page)

## COAS: Forces will not tolerate any violation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: COAS General Syed Asim Munir, visited Corps Headquarters Peshawar on Saturday. COAS was given a detailed briefing on the prevailing security situation and ongoing counter-terrorism efforts. He appreciated the professional competence, performance and achievements of Law Enforcement Agencies in the ongoing fight against terrorism.

COAS also addressed

the officers of the Corps and emphasised on the evolving threats to national security. He said, "We shall continue with our endeavors of peace and stability and there will be no room for spoilers of the process". The Armed Forces will not tolerate any further attempt of violating the sanctity and security of its installations or vandalism and resolved to bring to justice all the planners, abettors, instigators and executors of vandalism on the Black Day of

9th May.

COAS also sensitised about challenges of information warfare and efforts to create misperceptions. He highlighted that a concerted effort is being made maliciously by inimical elements to target the Armed Forces. He pledged that such nefarious attempts will be foiled through the support of people of Pakistan. Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by Corps Commander Peshawar.

## Six soldiers embraced martyrdom in operation

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Six soldiers and a civilian embraced martyrdom during a clearance operation at a Frontier Corps (FC) compound in the Muslim Bagh area of Balochistan, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Saturday.

In a statement, the ISPR said the operation had begun on Friday after the repulsion of the "initial onslaught of terrorists" was completed early Saturday morning. "The complex clearance operation involved hostage rescue operation as well to save three families from a residential block. The terrorists had not even spared children of their horrendous approach," the ISPR said.

It said that all six terrorists in the compound, who were well-equipped, were killed by the security forces. It added that the "necessary intelligence follow-up" is underway to "trace their linkages and arrest facilitators and expose their sponsors". "In the process of clearance operation, seven sons of the soil including a civilian have embraced shahadat while another six individuals including a woman have been injured," the ISPR added.

The military assured that the security forces remain determined to thwart all attempts at sabotaging the peace, stability and progress of Balochistan. A day earlier, the ISPR had stated that at least two terrorists were gunned down since the heavily-armed assault began. The militants attacked the camp in the early hours of Friday morning. It had shared that since then the security forces were involved in an operation to clear the compound.

**Funeral prayers of Naik Aminullah offered:** Funeral prayers of Naik Aminullah, age 31 years resident of District Kalat, Lance Naik Abdul Manaf, age 35 years resident of District Chakwal and Steno Typist Ghulam Fareed, age 34 years resident of District Sahiwal, who embraced Shahadat while fighting gallantly against terrorists in FC Camp Muslim Bagh, were offered today at Quetta Garrison.

Corps Commander Quetta including serving & retired officers/ soldiers and civil government officials attended the funeral prayers. The funeral prayers of other martyrs will be offered at their respective hometowns with full military honours.

Armed Forces of Pakistan stand resolute against nefarious designs of the enemies of Pakistan, who are hell-bent to spoil hard-earned peace. These sacrifices will not go in vain and further strengthen our resolve to continue the fight against terrorism till it's conclusion.

## Imran urges SC to launch probe into May 9 violence

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has urged Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan to launch an investigation into May 9 violence, emerged following his arrest in Al-Qadir Trust case.

Addressing the party workers and supporters, the PTI chief urged them to come out of their homes and gather at a spot in their neighbourhood from 5:30pm to 6:30pm tomorrow (Sunday) with a placard inscribed with "Save Constitution, save country".

The PTI chief noted that the police stopped him for leaving the Islamabad High Court (IHC) premises despite the court granted bail in multiple cases. "The police wanted to arrest me under MPO [Maintenance of Public Order] outside the courtroom," he added. "The country's democracy is hanging by a thin thread", Imran Khan said, lauding the judiciary for 'saving democracy'. He urged the people of Pakistan to stand by judiciary, saying that the 'mafia was threatening and attacking the courts'.

He further said that 'the mafia was attacking the judiciary' as it was the only obstacle in their 'corruption'. Khan pointed out that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif had ordered attack on Supreme Court (SC) and kicked out the then Chief Justice. "In the past, Nawaz Sharif destroyed the independent judiciary for the sake of power", he alleged.

He noted that the country's freedom ends when independent judiciary is compromised, adding that the latter protects fundamental rights of the citizens. "The only reason Pakistan has not progressed because there is no rule of law," he added. Imran Khan went to say that the 145 cases filed against him are 'bogus', praising the higher judiciary for 'saving him' from being jailed in fake cases.

During his address, the PTI chairman maintained that his supporters had always maintained peacefulness during their 27-year struggle. He said he could never forget May 25 when the state unleashed violence on PTI supporters and activists. The former premier alleged that the policemen

told them that they received orders 'from the above'. He further said that he wanted to avert violence which is why he called off sit-in in Islamabad after May 25 state brutality.

He recalled that if they had instigated violence after his arrest, it would have occurred following the assassination attempt on him in Wazirabad last year. "Those who want to have elections would never want anarchy," he added. He recalled how the police launched an attack on his house in Lahore when he went to Islamabad for a court appearance. "The same day, another assassination attempt at the Islamabad Judicial Complex was foiled," he claimed.

Terming his party 'peaceful', Khan reiterated that PTI is the only political party in the country where families including children attend public gatherings, contending why they would ever want anarchy in the country. He asserted that those who provoked violence during PTI protests were not 'their people' and they were the one who instigated people on violence. "More than 3,500 PTI workers were imprisoned across the country and many were killed too," he alleged.

The PTI chief once again condemned the manner in which he was arrested from the Islamabad High Court (IHC). Defending himself, Imran Khan said that the aim to establish Al-Qadir University was to produce leadership for the country which was acquainted with Islamic teachings.

He said that the decision to establish the university was taken in November and then the groundbreaking ceremony was held in May when he was at the helm. The former premier claimed that he did not reap any personal benefit from Al-Qadir Trust. He explained that a trustee never gets any monetary benefit.

The PTI chairman urged the people of Pakistan 'not to bow to this slavery'. He announced that he would start the series of public gatherings from Muridke from Wednesday. He also urged the people to come out of their homes and gather at a spot in their neighbourhood from 5:30pm to 6:30pm tomorrow (Sunday) with a placard inscribed with "Save Constitution, save country".

## PM directs for measures to control wheat, flour prices in KP

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday while taking notice of price hike of wheat and flour in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, directed the concerned authorities to take immediate measures to control it, besides increasing supply from Punjab province.

The prime minister chaired a meeting to review procurement and supply and demand of wheat in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, PM Office Media Wing said

in a press release. During the meeting, the prime minister expressed his satisfaction over the current bumper wheat yield in the country and desired practical steps to provide its benefits to the farmers.

The meeting was appraised that KP was being provided with 300,000 flour bags of 10 kg on daily basis. The meeting was attended by Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javaid Abbasi, PM's Adviser Engineer Amir Muqam, Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister

Syed Mohsin Naqvi, federal secretaries, chief secretaries and other senior officials.

The prime minister directed for increasing the supply bulk and directed the chief secretaries of KP and Punjab provinces to jointly devise a mechanism in this regard. The prime minister said that hoarding and smuggling of wheat would not be tolerated in any manner and directed for strict action against the hoarders so that the supply of basic requirement of atta to general public could be ensured without any hindrance.

## Bilawal vows to root out politics of hatred

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that they have rooted out the politics of hatred and division in the country.

As per details, the PPP chairman thanked the people of Sindh for making them win the LG election across the province. He said PPP will be in government from Karachi to Kashmir. He said that the LG election in Sindh was just a trailer. PPP has kicked out Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) from Sindh and they will win the next elections too, Bilawal Bhutto added.

Bilawal Bhutto lambasted the PTI chief Imran Khan and said that they have faced all the selected they have countered the MQM head, Altaf Hussain. Imran is nothing in front of them. He will also be kicked out like them, Bilawal claimed.

He further said that the PTI chief has not spent even one night in jail and has not seen the real power of opposition yet. Bilawal claimed that Imran Khan has still some facilitators in every corner of the country. The former prime minister Imran Khan attacked the military instalments out of fear of getting jailed for a week. They have burned down the public building, people bus service and other important military instalments.

Meanwhile, talking to a 10-member delegation of the Azad Kashmir chapter of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) led by APHC Convener Mehmood Ahmed Saghar here Saturday, the Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has categorically stated that India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August, 2019 had vitiated the atmosphere and shut the door for dialogue. The minister said India would have to go back to the drawing



board of August 4, 2019 for any meaningful bilateral engagement.

The meeting with APHC's AJK chapter took place at a time when the entire pro-freedom leadership in the IOJK remained incarcerated. The delegation briefed the Foreign Minister on the situation in the occupied territory with particular reference to the ongoing human rights violations, efforts for demographic change and attempts at political engineering. The delegation expressed great appreciation for the Foreign Minister's unequivocal stance on Jammu and Kashmir during his recent visit to India.

## IHC directs Imran to join Al-Qadir Trust case probe

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): 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 Trust case till May 31.

It said that if Imran Khan obstructs the investigation, the NAB can request the cancellation of the bail. The order said that the investigation officer told the court that Imran was not asked about any documents. He said several questions were asked from Imran during investigation.

In the court ruling, it was said that the Advocate General and Additional Attorney General argued that since Article 245 has been invoked, so Imran Khan could not get relief. The court said that this position of the Advocate General and Additional Attorney is aggressive, and it means that

they want to usurp the fundamental rights which are the basis of a democratic and Islamic state. It cannot be imagined that a responsible government will create this obstruction in the access to justice for the citizens.

The court issued a notice to the Attorney General for Pakistan directing him to assist the court on the matter of access to the court while Article 245 is in force and it has sought his assistance on the important constitutional points.

The Islamabad High Court said that the Advocate General and the Additional Attorney General also raised the objection of the relevant forum being the accountability court. Imran Khan was presented to the high court on the orders of the Supreme Court. The objection of the Advocate General and the Additional Attorney General is not correct. The high court has the jurisdiction to hear this case under Section 561 A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the court ruling

said. **Imran moves LHC to stay arrest on post May 9 cases:** Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on Saturday moved Lahore High Court (LHC) seeking a stay on the arrest in any cases registered against him after May 9. The application was filed on behalf of the ex-PM by Barrister Salman Safdar and Intazar Hussain Panjutha Advocate, who presented compelling arguments in support of their plea.

The petition lists the Punjab Police Inspector General (IG) and the Advocate General (AG) as parties involved in the case. It aims to challenge the legality of Imran Khan's potential arrest in any of the newly filed cases against him. This development follows the recent ruling by the Supreme Court, which declared Imran Khan's arrest by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in Al-Qadir Trust case as illegal.

## LHC orders release of Yasmin

LAHORE (PPI): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Saturday ordered the release of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Dr Yasmin Rashid who was detained during her party's violent protests. LHC's Justice Safdar Saleem Shahid announced the verdict on a petition challenging the detention of Ms Rashid under 3 MPO. The judge suspended the notification and ordered the authorities to release her if she was not wanted in any other case.

In another case, the high court ordered the release of 17 women workers of the PTI while hearing a petition filed by a citizen. The women workers and leaders were put in detention by the government for allegedly inciting violence and creating law and order situation in Punjab. A spree of violent protests started on May 9 when PTI Chairman Imran Khan was arrested by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on the Islamabad High Court premises in a graft case.

During the protests, the angry PTI workers damaged several military, public and private properties across the country. The clashes between the PTI and police claimed eight lives while dozens were injured. In response, the army had been called in by the Punjab and KP governments to help the local administration and police maintain law and order. The Punjab Home Department said the army had been called in under Article 245 of the constitution to assist the local administration.

Meanwhile, Punjab police spokesperson said on Friday that the number of detained PTI workers in the province had reached 2,790. The arrested individuals were involved in violent protests following the arrest of former PM Imran Khan. The spokesperson added almost 152 police officers and personnel were injured due to the clashes between police and the PTI protesters. He said 72 vehicles of the Punjab police were burned. He added that those involved in attacking the security personnel were being identified and arrests were being made.





# Sharjeel criticizes court for decorating a "royal table" for Imran

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Minister of Information, Transport, and Mass Transit Sindh, Sharjeel Inam Memon, expressed his concerns during a press conference at Archive Complex Karachi.

He stated that a Sunday market has been organized for Imran Khan in the courts, where he is receiving both what he asks for and what he does not ask for. This situation has left people wondering whom they should demand justice from.

Sharjeel Inam Memon highlighted a recent court order that granted Imran Khan blanket bail, a unique decision that has raised concerns. He said that Imran Khan has been granted pardons for various serious offenses, including murder, constitutional violations, and plotting against the country's integrity. This bail decision has left legal experts, members of society, and those knowledgeable about the constitution feeling ashamed.

Sharjeel Inam Memon further commented on the past experiences of political leaders and workers of PPP, stating that they never received justice from the courts. However, Imran Khan seems to be treated differently, with special arrangements made for him. Sharjeel Inam Memon criticized the court for decorating a "royal table" for Imran Khan while he makes threats from within the court.

Imran Khan's statement implies that if he were to be arrested again, he would resort to damaging government property, setting fires, and disrupting institutions, businesses, and schools. Sharjeel Memon condemned this behavior, stating that one person should not hold the entire country hostage and disregard the law.

Sharjeel Inam Memon also mentioned a video from Imran Khan's court appearance, where he claimed to be kidnapped and held hostage by the judges. He further expressed his dismay over Imran Khan receiving blanket approval to avoid arrest in any case.

Sharjeel Inam Memon criticized Khan's immediate return home after obtaining bail instead of showing solidarity with his imprisoned workers and leaders. He said that the actions of the workers causing havoc are inconsequential. Sharjeel Inam Memon accused Imran Khan of exploiting and misleading the youth, using women and children as shields on multiple occasions. He said that

Imran Khan mobilizes the mothers and sisters of the nation to protest on the streets while keeping his own family in air-conditioned rooms.

According to Sharjeel Inam Memon, Imran Khan poses a threat to the entire nation and attempts to gain power by leveraging the court system. He said that Imran Khan is blackmailing institutional leaders to further his agenda. Sharjeel Inam Memon mentioned an interview in which Imran Khan allegedly targeted the head of a institution, tarnishing the image of the chief of the Pakistan Army. Sharjeel Inam Memon denounced Khan as a liar and hypocrite, claiming that he is attempting to defame and blackmail institutional heads.

He said that although Imran Khan may wish to defame the head of the institution like the former chief, such actions will not occur in the country. He criticized Imran Khan for damaging the country's economy both during his time in power and after ousting from power and said due to the chaos caused by Imran Khan, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is reluctant to assist Pakistan.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Imran Khan is lobbying in hostile countries of Pakistan, spreading false information about serious human rights violations in the country. He said that Imran Khan, along with Israel and India, established a social media network several years ago. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Imran Khan of being driven by a hunger for power and he should explain the alleged robbery associated with the Al-Qadir Trust. He also called on Imran Khan to disclose his income sources and methods of deception.

The minister expressed his concern about Khan's personal life, questioning why Khan has not publicly disclosed the number of children he has. Sharjeel Inam Memon argued that if Khan cannot ensure justice within his own family, how can he be trusted to govern the entire population of 220 million people? Sharjeel Inam Memon showed a video to the media representatives, in which an Indian journalist allegedly praised Khan for achieving what India couldn't achieve in many years.

He said that there are even reports of the PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) receiving funding from India in the UK. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that

these claims are made to create polarization and division within the country. He said that the events of the past two to four days were not solely the result of Imran Khan's actions, there are other forces at play and that the true motives and the way institutions are being utilized will become clearer.

He warned that if granting such blanket relief to Khan becomes a precedent, then others may also demand similar treatment. Sharjeel Inam Memon criticized the situation as the worst example in the history of Pakistan, where those who benefit the country are punished while no action is taken against others.

Sharjeel Inam Memon expressed his disappointment with the moral values of certain individuals, stating that based on the recent press conference, he has lost faith in the Chief Justice. He cited an incident where an accused judge greeted him, questioning the appropriateness of such encounters. Memon acknowledged that the current state of the country is crucial, comparing it to a mother. He recognized the past grievances people had with institutions but commended the patience displayed by the institutions in the face of self-defense options.

Responding to a question, Memon called for an investigation into anyone associated with the Al-Qadir Trust. He criticized the act of selling watches, deeming it the work of pickpockets. He specifically accused Imran Khan, referring to him as the biggest pickpocket for selling a watch featuring the picture of the Kaaba, claiming that only a thief could do such a thing. Memon stated that the Pakistan Peoples Party has supported Monday's protest and assured that their protest will be conducted peacefully.

He acknowledged the restraint and patience shown by all the country's institutions in abiding by the constitution. However, he criticized Imran Khan for receiving relief even in the corruption case of the BRT.

Sharjeel Inam Memon called for those responsible for setting vehicles on fire to come forward and face the charges instead of hiding. He expressed concern about an institution supporting an individual beyond what is expected, stating that this situation will persist until the demands of justice are met. Sharjeel Inam Memon cautioned against prioritizing personal preferences over the well-being of the country.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman and State Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi addressing a Press conference. —APP Photo

## Sindh heatwave like conditions to prevail with 45-47C temperature

KARACHI (NNI): Prevailing heatwave conditions likely to continue in most parts of Sindh with maximum temperature to range between 45-47Celsius, Met Office said on Saturday.

"Dadu, Jacobabad, Larkana, Sukkur, Nawabshah, Khairpur districts and suburbs will experience extremely hot weather".

"However, isolated dust-thunderstorm or light rain is expected in Dadu, Kambars-Shahdadkot, Larkana and Sukkur distts on May 15/16," weather office said in its report.

The Met Office had earlier predicted that the daytime temperatures likely to rise gradually in the country during the week may develop heatwave like conditions in southern half of the country.

Due to presence of high pressure in the upper atmosphere the day temperatures are likely to increase gradually particularly in southern half of the country from 10th to 13th May, weather department said.

Daytime temperatures are likely to remain 03-05°Celsius above normal in Sindh, South Punjab and parts of Balochistan, while 02-03°C above normal in upper and central Punjab, Islamabad, upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir, Met Office said.

General public has been cautioned to avoid unnecessary exposure to direct sunlight and judicious use of water.

## Governor promulgates ordinance to ease enforcement of Section 144

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rahman promulgated on Saturday the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance 2023, which will ease enforcement of Section 144 in emergency situations.

In the recent days, imposition of Section 144 under the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) caused legal complications for the government, and it was not possible practically to refer every case to the cabinet immediately in emergency situations. Now, promulgation of the amended ordinance has eased the enforcement of Section 144 in emergency situations, according to

official sources.

Under the amended ordinance, the deputy commissioner or any other officer, especially empowered by the Punjab government, would be authorised to issue orders under Section 144 of CrPC in urgent cases.

Governor Muhammad Balighur Rahman also promulgated the Punjab Agricultural Marketing Regulatory Authority (Amendment) Ordinance 2023. The provisions of the Punjab Agricultural Marketing Regulatory Authority Act, 2018 did not cater for immediate termination of politically appointed persons to the Punjab Agricultural Marketing Regulatory

Authority (PAMRA) and market committees.

However, through the amended ordinance, in the light of the directives of the Election Commission, the persons appointed on political grounds to the boards of the Punjab Agricultural Marketing Regulatory Authority and market companies, would be dismissed immediately.

The Election Commission of Pakistan had ordered for ensuring immediate termination of services of all heads of the institutions, appointed on political basis and to send their lists to the commission. The ordinance has been proposed in order to comply with the directions of the ECP.

## Those who deprived MQM of opportunities were to accept defeat: Siddiqui

KARACHI (NNI): MQM Pakistan's convener, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, said that those who oppressed and deprived MQM of education and employment opportunities were now left with no choice but to accept their defeat.

Addressing the All Sindh Officers Welfare Association convention, he stated that MQM was like the Noah's Ark for refugees and its survival depends on whether they work together to save their homes or their neighborhoods.

Siddiqui stressed the need for both a census and

demographic analysis and questioned the state's inability to properly count its people.

He also emphasised the importance of education and national identity and urged educated people not to hide their identities.

Siddiqui highlighted the injustice faced by the MQM workers and pointed out the responsibility of the movement is not just to provide rights but also to create a sense of identification. He questioned the ruler's blindness to the injustices faced by the nation and concluded that

non-violent means should be pursued for justice.

MQM chief said that the state that could not count its citizens accurately has to face the history. Siddiqui further said that after the 1992 operation that stuffed the jails with MQM workers and criminals arrested on brutal crimes were released to create space in jails.

Siddiqui also said that former prime minister Bhutto had captured major political backing from Punjab. He said that there was urban and rural quota now. He also questioned census results.

## Court gives Buzdar last chance to join investigation in assets case

ISLAMABAD (PPI) While exempting him from personal appearance for one day and extending his interim bail till May 18, an accountability court in Islamabad Saturday gave the last chance to former Punjab chief minister Usman Buzdar to join investigations in the case of an inquiry into his assets.

Accountability Court judge Sajjad Ahmed Sheikh conducted the hearing. "What's the progress [in the case]?" he inquired from the investigation officer.

"Usman Buzdar did not appear before the NAB office for investigation," the inves-

tigation officer told the court. "Where is Usman Buzdar?" the judge inquired further.

"Usman Buzdar's mother is sick. She has a heart problem. He is with her. The roads were also closed. One day exemption from personal appearance should be granted," Buzdar's lawyer pleaded with the court.

The court accepted Usman Buzdar's plea for one-day exemption from appearance. Barrister Momin Malik had appeared before the court on behalf of Usman Buzdar.

"Usman Buzdar did not submit the details of the assets," the investigation

officer told the court. The lawyer sought time to submit the details of the assets.

"You are pursuing the case in a homeopathic way. The accused sometimes skips court appearance, and sometimes he does not go to the NAB office," the judge remarked. "If Usman Buzdar does not join investigation, the results may become bad. He is not cooperating with the investigation process despite the court order. The court is giving him the last chance to join the investigation. On May 18, the court will announce the decision in the interim bail," he added.

## Imran Khan's game seems finished, last week of May is dangerous: Wassan

KARACHI (APP): Advisor to Sindh Chief Minister on Agriculture Manzoor Wassan has predicted that PTI chief Imran Khan's game apparently seemed to be finished and he had time but wasted it. He said that the last week

of May would be dangerous, according to a communiqué issued here on Saturday.

PPP's senior leader Wassan said that a lot was going to happen in the days to come. He said that Pakistan Democratic Movement

(PDM) was intending that the government should complete its tenure and held elections on October 08. Manzoor Wassan said that the elections seemed to be impossible then.

He predicted that a coali-

tion government could come into power or elections could be deferred for one year by making amendments to the law. He advised the politicians to make decisions after a thorough consideration.

## Pakistan linchpin of regional connectivity: Senator Mushahid

LAHORE (APP): Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, Chairman of the Senate Defence Committee, has said that Pakistan, being located at a strategically important location in the region, can play vital role in promoting regional connectivity.

"Regional connectivity is need of the hour for peace and prosperity in South and Central Asia, and Pakistan is the linchpin of regional connectivity," he said while speaking through video-link during the the concluding session of the three-day international conference titled "Central & South Asia Re-connected" at the Punjab University on Saturday.

The conference was organised by the Department of History & Pakistan

Studies, Punjab University, in collaboration with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. Policymakers, stakeholders, scholars, researchers and students got a chance for a fruitful dialogue while 60 subject specific research papers and policy notes were presented during the conference.

PU Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Khalid Mahmood was the chief guest at the concluding ceremony, while Regional Director Southeast Asia Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Dr Ellino Zeino was also present. In his special note, Governor Punjab/ Chancellor PU Muhammad Balighur Rehman thanked eminent scholars for sharing their experiences. He said that

through the conference, people could be able to understand the problems being faced in regional connectivity.

Scholars were of the unanimous viewpoint that South Asia has lagged behind in human and social development due to political, cultural and social conflicts, both in the nature of inter and intra-state, and these have seriously hampered prosperity and progress in the region.

Speakers were unanimous that peace and harmony, instead of war and confrontation, provide windows of opportunity for developing human potential of South Asian people and asserting themselves as civilised people of the world.

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# Governor visits burnt building of RPP, expresses solidarity with staff

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali and Provincial Caretaker Minister for Information, Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah here Saturday visited building of Radio Pakistan Peshawar that was set to fire by PTI workers during protest against arrest of Imran Khan.

The governor inspected each and every section of the historic building to assess damages caused by fire during violent protest of PTI.

He was also briefed by

Superintendent Operations, Haroon Rashid about the whole episode of violence that left the historic building of Radio Pakistan into ruins.

He met with Station Director Radio Pakistan, Muhammad Ejaz and other staff members and expressed solidarity with them. Condemning the violent incident, he prayed courage of Radio Pakistan workers to resist the onslaught of PTI hooligans.

The governor also assured Radio staff his cooperation and said that

their concerns would be conveyed to higher authorities.

Talking to media after visiting Radio Pakistan, he said that May 9 would be remembered as a black day when a political party ransacked public and private property to save a person who was accused of corruption and misappropriation.

He said that these incidents should be discouraged to save the country that is passing through a critical phase. He also directed police to take action against perpetrators

and urged people to identify the culprits and added that it would prevent occurrence of these incidents in future.

Later, he visited Combined Military Hospital and enquired after the workers of Radio Pakistan who sustained injuries during the violent protest. He also prayed for early recovery of the injured.

## Murad Saeed comes under NAB investigation

PESHAWAR (APP): National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has started the investigation of several allegations against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's former Federal Minister Murad Saeed and has sought records from Secretary Local Government, Livestock and Irrigation Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a letter to these departments, NAB letter said that there are other complaints against Murad Saeed, including bribery and illegal appointments as well, therefore, NAB has sought information from concerned authorities regarding alleged illegal appointments through a letter issued here on Saturday.

NAB has also sought details regarding the alleged corruption and corrupt practices from the Secretary of Local Government through the said letter.

Murad Saeed allegedly bought the property with the money through frontman Hameed and Fazale Mullah, the NAB letter clarified.

The NAB also sought information through the letter from the Secretary of Irrigation regarding alleged corruption in the Bagh Deri Swat Irrigation Channel.

NAB asked the Secretary of Irrigation to present the total estimated cost of the Bagh Dairy Project besides ongoing funds and project estimates.

## PDA demands restoration of 1400 seats

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial Doctors Association requested Governor, Caretaker Minister and Secretary Health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to restore 1400 seats in department hospitals and address pension issues emerged after Medical Teaching Institutions Act.

This was demanded by PDA president Dr. Amir Taj Khan, Dr. Zubair Zahir, Dr. Raheel and Dr. Rizwan Rajput in joint statement issued to media.

PDA claimed abolishment of 1400 seats had impacted seniority of doctors while on the other hand it has created in delivery of public services at hospitals across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

PDA also demanded probe into corruption in MTI within one month and argued placement of responsibility on culprits including Board of Governor members.

## Properties damaged

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar Zubair Ali on Saturday said that Peshawar is the city of flowers and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) violent protesters have damaged Peshawar's public, and private institutions.

He said that miscreants also attacked the office of Mayor Peshawar, which was repulsed by the officials of the Capital Metropolitan Government. He paid tribute to the government officials for repulsing the attack of the miscreants.

The forces and the people sacrificed their lives and property, they could never see it burning, everyone cried because of the spread of this fire.

He said that we as a nation have to block the path of this "Fitna" with our positive thinking and action.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali alongwith Caretaker provincial minister Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah inquiring after health of inured official of Radio Pakistan in CMH.

# Attack on PBC attempt to silence media: Muqam

PESHAWAR (APP): Adviser to the Prime Minister for Political and Public Affairs and National Heritage, Engr Amir Muqam here Saturday said that attack on the offices of Radio Pakistan and Associated Press of Pakistan at Peshawar was an attempt to silence the voice of media and shatter confidence of the state institutions.

He was talking to media persons after visiting the Radio Pakistan Station and Associated Press of Pakistan at Peshawar to express solidarity with its employees and officers following the May 10, 2023 attack.

The violent mob has ransacked and put on fire the Radio Pakistan's building including an APP Office in its fourth floor besides destroyed officials and private vehicles in its premises on May 10, 2023 that caused huge financial losses to both the national organizations.

Engr Amir Muqam said that he came here on the directives of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to express solidarity with the employees of Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation and Associated Press of Pakistan Corporation.

He said that Radio Pakistan was national institution that had played key role during Pakistan Movement and attack on its station was a deep-rooted conspiracy to silence

the voice of the national broadcaster besides tarnishing the country's image globally and demoralize the state institutions.

Amir Muqam said that restoration of the transmission of the Radio Pakistan has passed a strong message to the attackers that its voice could not be silenced through such nefarious acts.

The PM's Adviser said attacks on state and security institutions, national installations, law enforcement agencies, police, toll plazas on Swat Motorway, ambulances and government/public vehicles on May 9-10 was no service to the country and has exposed the evil mindset of the assailants.

Engr Amir Muqam said that investigation of attack on Radio Pakistan building was underway and strict punishment to the accused would be awarded.

He underscored the need for arresting facilitators as well mastermind behind the attack so that no one could dare to do such deplorable acts in future.

Amir Muqam who is also the provincial president of PMLN Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said that Imran Khan was arrested in a mega corruption case of Rs60 billion by NAB and violent protests after his arrest was illogical as Islamabad High Court declared his arrest legal.

He said that not a single flower was broken after

the disqualification of a three times Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on the baseless charges of not taking salary from his son.

He said there was no match between Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan as the former had made Pakistan an atomic power and constructed network of motorways while the latter deceived masses of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the name of so called change besides found guilty in corrupt practices in PTI foreign funding and Tusha Khana cases.

He said that Imran Khan's ill designs to make leadership of state institutions disputed and controversial would not succeed.

Muqam said that Imran was a certified liar and his bullets drama of Wazir Bagh and foreign conspiracy narrative was fully exposed before masses.

He said during tenure of Imran Khan government, PMLN and PPP leadership were put into jails without prior investigation in fake cases and were politically victimized.

He said that relief provided to Imran Khan in corruption cases were unprecedented while PMLN leadership were deprived of such relief forcing them to spend long time in jails despite not a single penny corruption was proved against PMLN leaders.

Amir Muqam said that

justice should be same for all as like and dislike was detrimental to supremacy for the rule of law.

Amir Muqam said that parliament was a supremacy institution and its supremacy would be ensured at all cost.

He said the country would make progress only when all state institutions work on its constitutional domain in harmony and cohesion.

Later, the Prime Minister's Adviser visited the destroyed offices of PBC and APP and assured full support of the Federal Government for rehabilitation and renovation of the entire building.

He expressed the hope that provinces would also contribute in the rehabilitation and renovation of the Radio Pakistan's building being a national heritage and vowed that it would be refurbished more beautiful than before.

Earlier, Station Director PBC Muhammad Ejaz Khan and Bureau Chief APP Peshawar, Fakhar E Alam briefed the Prime Minister's Adviser Engr Amir Muqam about the unfortunate incident and the massive losses incurred to their organizations.

Amir Muqam assured full cooperation on behalf of the Federal Government.

Director General, Press Information Department, Ashfaq Khalil was also present.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to Prime Minister Engr. Amir Muqam talking to media after his visit to Radio Pakistan Peshawar. — F.P. photo

# PPP KP to participate in PDM's sit-in in Islamabad

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial President of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Minister of State Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha on Saturday announced that the party's leadership 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.

In a statement issued here, he stated that caravans from Peshawar, Mardan and Malakand would be gathered at Mardan Motorway Interchange, while the party workers from Kohat, Bannu, DI Khan and Hazara divisions would be met at Hakla Interchange before moving towards Islamabad.

Mohammad Ali Bacha said, "PPP stands for transparency and justice and will protest against the double standards regarding the country's core issue."

He further mentioned that all provincial cabinet members, district heads and sub-organizations of the party had been directed to support the call for PDM's sit-in in Islamabad.

# Matriculation exam to start from tomorrow

PESHAWAR (APP): The schedule of matriculation exams in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) would start on May 15, said an official of the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) here on Saturday.

"The first paper will be Biology," the official informed.

However, he said, the decision was also made to open the educational institution on May 15 and those papers, which were postponed due to protests,

would start from May 19.

The official said, "The matriculation exams will be held as per the previously announced schedule as the Biology paper will be on May 15 and papers postponed due to protests will start from May 19."

## KP registers 11.9% decline in terrorism incidents

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has registered a decline of 11.9 percent in incidents of terrorism during the month of April 2023 due to the strategy of prevention through detection by Counter Terrorism Department (CTD).

According to four months progress report issued here Saturday by the Counter Terrorism Department KP from January to April 2023, the incidents of terrorism have been declined by 11.9 percent in the month of April.

In initial four months of 2023, a total of 309 cases of terrorism were registered out of which 213 were traced and 124 arrests were made.

Around 54 proclaimed offenders (POs) including 15 carrying head money were arrested as compared to 42 POs in the same period in the year 2022.

While 711 intelligence based operations were conducted in which 158 terrorists were arrested, the report said.

In 39 encounters with terrorists, 62 of them were neutralized and 53 attempts of committing terrorism were prevented through intelligence based operations wherein heavy recoveries of weapon and ammunition (53 cases) were made and 81 accused arrested.

Recoveries included 47 kg of explosives, 150 hand grenades, 01 suicide jacket, 105 arms and 2822 rounds of different bores.

Conviction in 08 cases were secured wherein eleven terrorists have been convicted as a result of successful investigation.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan talking to media after his visit to Radio Pakistan Peshawar.

# Appointment of DG IPR: PHC orders CS to address within 15 days

**Humayun Khan**

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Musart Hilali and Justice Shakeel Ahmad ordered Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to address of appointment Director General (DG) Information and Public Relation (IPR) within 15 days.

Senior Director IPR Muhammad Imran filed writ petition for neglecting him for DG position because it becomes his as Senior most Direct who

already severed the post as Acting DG for several months.

A No Objection Certificate from Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has obtained for appointment of petitioner as DG IPR but on 28th April Establishment department made appointment from Provincial Management Services cadre on the position, the petition stated.

Establishment department neglected senior officials of IPR while Senior Muhammad Imran approached PHC against the appointment of DG IPR

from PMS cadre.

PHC announced detailed judgment ordered Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nazee Aslam Chaudhry to hear the case as Departmental Appeal and provide opportunity to petitioner Muhammad Imran for forwarding his grievance then decide the within 15 days as per law.

It is worthy to mention that Information Officers Welfare Association gone on strike against appointment of PMS cadre officer on non schedule post of DG IPR which is continued from 28th April.

# JUI urges party workers to join PDM's protest in Islamabad

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Maulana Ataur Rahman urged the party workers to join Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) protest in Islamabad on Monday.

Addressing a press conference here at Mufti Mahmood Markaz Maulana Ataur Rehman directed district level party heads to join them at Hakla interchange along with party's flags at 10am.

Strongly condemning the damages of public and private properties by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf workers during protest on May 10, Maulana Ataur Rehman said that we have done 15 million marches, Independent March even breaking a pot cannot prove it.

He said that PTI has spread hatred against the military leadership in the protest.

Our leadership had earlier said that this is a sedition which cannot be called a political party, said Maulana Ataur Rehman.

Maulana raised a question that if Tehreek-e-Labbai Pakistan can be

banned then they should be banned too.

He said that our leadership has appealed to the people to reach Islamabad on May 15 at 11 am, adding preparation is going on in this regard.

Jamiat's volunteer force Ansar-u-Islam, Jamiat Lawyers Forum and other subsidiary organizations has also been instructed to participate in an organized manner.

District organizations have been directed to bring workers in a systematic manner to remove the fear of mischief, said Maulana Ataur Rehman.

The workers have also been instructed to bring goods and edibles according to the weather, Ataur Rahman added.

They will stay there till the final order and direction by the party leadership during protest, said Maulana Ataur Rehman.

## Education centers to reopen from tomorrow

PESHAWAR (APP): The caretaker government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided to reopen schools, colleges and universities from May 15 (Monday).

It's worth mentioning here that the examinations of 9th and 10th will be resumed from the same day, said notification issued here on Saturday.



PESHAWAR: Security officials standing alert near KP Assembly to avoid untoward incident as security has been high alert in city after violent protest of PTI.





## In brief

### Four of a family killed in Karak F.P. Report

KARAK: At least four persons of a family were killed in Makori area of Karak district. The shooting took place in the vicinity of Banda Dawood Shah. According to police, the firing incident claimed the lives of four members of a family including President of the PTI Village Council in Makori, Mehboob Khan, his father, and two nephews. Reason behind the incident was stated money dispute. The Bandah Dawood Shah Police Station have initiated a thorough investigation into the matter to uncover the motives behind the shooting and bring the culprits to justice. The entire region of Bandah Dawood Shah is in mourning, with the community coming together to offer condolences and support to the bereaved families.

### Policeman dead body recovered F.P. Report

BUNER: The dead body of missing head Constable Walid Shah of Jowar Buner has recovered at Shen Dandh in the popular Elum Ghar on Saturday after 4th day of missing on way to his duty at Guard Naway Band Elum Ghar. The dead body brought to You RHC Jowar and handed over to heirs after fulfilling medico legal formalities. The dead body has several wounds and bruises as the HC was subjected to sever torcher to death. The funeral procession offered at Jowar Play Ground. The DPO Shahasan Khan DSP circle Pir Baba DSP headquarter Daggar SHO Jowar other police officers police personnel key political social religious figures relatives friends colleagues and locals largely attended. The police party solute the coffin which was decorated with National and Police flags. DPO the DSPs the SHOs the police personnel shouldered the coffin and buried with full official protocol at ancestral graveyard. The Jowar police have registered the case against unknown killers and are investigating the case. He claimed the killers would be traced soon. However, the DPO official page confirmed it was cold blooded murder over personal enmity.

### Balochistan CM lauds police

QUETTA (INP): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudus Bizenjo on Saturday appreciated the performance of the police and other law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in maintaining peace in the province. He made this appreciation while talking to Chief Secretary Abdul Aziz Uqaili and Inspector General (IG) Police Abdul Khaliq Sheikh. Chief Secretary and IG Police briefed the CM about important provincial issues and they also discussed the law and order situation in the meeting. The IG Police briefed the CM regarding the protests of the last few days by a political party in the province. He said that police and law enforcement agencies took vigorous measures to maintain the law and order situation, adding that the people fully cooperated with the law enforcement agencies. The CM also appreciated the performance of the police and other law enforcement agencies in maintaining peace in the province. "The establishment of peace and the protection of people's lives and property is the first priority. No one will be allowed to take the law into their hands", he said. The CM directed that anti-social elements and those who create unrest should be dealt with iron hands in order to improve the law and order situation.



FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Anan Ali Qamar administering polio drops to a child at Allied Hospital to inaugurates polio campaign.

## PML-N to face situation in political manner: Abid

F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: Former state minister and central leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Chaudhry Abid Sher Ali said on Saturday that double standards in judicial system had surfaced, but the PML-N would face the situation in a political manner.

Addressing a press conference at his public secretariat in New Nazim Abad here on Saturday, he said Imran Khan was involved in the biggest scam in the history of Pakistan and the government was committed to exposing him publicly and taking him to the court of law.

He said that the National Crime Agency (NCA) of the UK had sent back 190 million pounds (Rs 70 billion), looted from Pakistan. That was public property but, Imran Khan, in connivance with his cronies, returned that amount back to real estate tycoon Malik Riaz, and in return, he got a piece of land worth Rs 7 billion transferred to him

and his wife under the garb of Al-Qadir Trust. He said the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) was investigating the case and it had issued warrants, but due to his failure to appear, Imran Khan was arrested and he was on 8-day remand when the judges apex court summoned and bailed him out.

He said Imran Khan was involved in attacks on sensitive military installations, residences of corps commanders, metro buses and toll plazas of motorways as well as Radio Pakistan and official news agency offices. On his directive, the PTI workers attacked the government functionaries, but despite all these facts, he was bailed out. Abid Sher Ali particularly mentioned the audio conversations of Imran Khan, Musarrat Jamsaid Cheema, Khawaj Tariq Rahim, Yasmin Rashid, and said those tapes clearly indicated that high command of the PTI hatched a conspiracy to attack the sensitive military installations. On the other hand,

the PMLN leadership was remained in NAB custody for 90 days, and no one was allowed to see them.

He said the current inflation was only due to the PTI government, as it had devastated the economy and mortgaged Pakistan to the IMF. He said PML-N supreme clearly said that if double standards were adopted, the dollar might cross the limit of Rs 500. Even the Indian media was appreciating what Imran Khan was doing to damage the country, he added. He praised the Pak Army, which handled the situation with wisdom and observed restraint when Imran Khan wanted it (army) to retaliate and kill protestors. Earlier, he had also played this ugly game in connivance with Tahirul Qadri in Model Town Lahore. He said that Imran Khan was threatening that if he was arrested, Pakistan would be set on fire. Trained terrorists were involved in violence in the country and they would be exposed within next few days.

## NIDM conducts 3-day training in Ghizer

GHIZER (PPD): The National Disaster Management Authority's (NDMA) think-tank National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) conducted a three-day training and simulation exercise (SimEx) for summer contingencies in Gahkuch, District Ghizer.

The event was held from May 10 to May 12, 2023, and was attended by over 55 participants from various fields, including academia, district authorities, rescue services, and related departments, according to a press release issued here on Saturday. The main focus of the SimEx was to prepare district-level stakeholders for potential disasters that may occur during the summer season. Air Commodore (r) Tanveer Paracha, Chief Coordinator of NIDM, emphasized the importance of disaster preparedness and training exercises like the SimEx, as they can significantly improve the response to an emergency situation.

Multiple scenarios for potential summer contingencies were simulated during the SimEx, including flash floods, landslides, and GLOFs. Syndicates were formed to represent specific roles like the GBDMA, DDMA, media, humanitarian support, and the local community. The first day of the event covered basic disaster management (DM) concepts, climate science, hazard mapping, quantification, and group-based activities on hazard analysis.

This day was essential for participants to familiarize themselves with the basics of disaster management and understand the potential hazards they might face in the region. Second day of the SimEx was devoted to vulnerability assessment at the district level, coordinating and managing camps, and issuing master scenarios that indicated above-average monsoon forecasts.

These scenarios highlighted the possibility of rain-induced landslides, flash flooding, and possible GLOF events in various parts of the district. Participants were issued an opening situation that required strong collaboration among stakeholders for better preparedness against potential hazards.

On third day of the event, three scenarios were issued, highlighting events of flash floods causing significant havoc to populations, settlements, and infrastructure, as well as a scenario of GLOF and landslide. Each syndicate presented its response, followed by a question and answer session. The exercise concluded with thanks from the CC NIDM and the distribution of certificates given by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) District Ghizer, Capt (r) Tayyab Sami Khan.

The DC Ghizer appreciated NIMA's efforts to develop the district stakeholder's capabilities. SimEx provided a platform to enhance the capacity of district-level stakeholders in disaster management and promote collaborative efforts towards ensuring preparedness and response during likely disasters. Participants gained valuable knowledge and skills to enhance their response during emergencies.

## SSC exams to restart from May 15

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Malakand Chakdara has rescheduled its ongoing SSC annual examination restarting from May 15.

According to a notification issued by the board's controller Muhammad Naseem the SSC exam would restart from May 15. It said the 10th grade Biology paper would be held on May 15, 9th Biology on May 16, 10th Pakistan Studies on May 17, 9th Pakistan Studies on May 18, 10th Mathematics on May 19,

9th Mathematics on May 20, 10th Chemistry on May 22 and 9th Chemistry on May 23. According to the notification the practical examination would now start from May 27 instead of May 23.

Anti-polio drive to kicks off: A total of 65170 children below five years old would be during a special anti-polio drive in six union councils of Lower Dir from May 15 to 19.

A meeting in this regard was held at Balambat with the additional deputy commissioner Abdul Wali Khan in the chair. The officials

of district administration, health department and district administrator Afghan Refugees Humayun Khan were in attendance.

The meeting was informed that an anti-polio drive in six union councils including Maskini, Darangal, Mian Kalay, Mayar, Timergara and Chakdara would be carried out from May 15 during which a total of 65170 children would be vaccinated. The ADC directed the assistant commissioners of Adenzai, Timergara and Samarbagh to take adequate measures to make the drive a success.

## Orakzai spring festival open's up F.P. Report

ORAKZAI: The two-day Jashan-e-Baharan festival, jointly organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Authority (KPCTA), Tourism Wing and Pakistan Army, started in Kharasha-Khwa Stori Khel Orakzai tribal district. The event was inaugurated by Director General Forests, Tahir Orakzai, and attended by Deputy Commissioner Tayab Abdullah, Commandant Orakzai Scouts Colonel Muhammad Tasneem Khan, Project Director Ishtiaq Ahmad and Tourism officials.

The festival aimed to introduce the tourism sector as an industry in Orakzai merged district and invite tourists to explore the beauty of the area and experience the traditions and culture of Orakzai district. A large number of people, including children, attended the event and enjoyed the festival. Stalls were set up in the festival to highlight the rich traditions of the area, besides pavilions of local cuisines and items representing the traditions of the five provinces.

Speaking on the occasion, Tahir Orakzai said that the event would project a positive image of the area and open new vistas of development for the local people. He added that Orakzai has abundant places of tourist attraction that need to be explored. He also mentioned that KPCTA is doing a tremendous job promoting the tourism industry and has taken remarkable steps for the facilitation of tourists visiting the Orakzai district.

Various events, including Khattak dance, paragliding, Motorcycle race, Marathon race, Jeep race, Tent-Paging, Karate, horse dance and camel dance, were also held during the festival. KPCTA also set up stalls of truck art, Cultural Dresses, Antique Jewellery, Charsadda khadar, Charsadda Chappal, Karakul caps, and paintings. Prizes were distributed among the winners of various games.

It is worth mentioning that KPCTA has arranged different events in collaboration with Pakistan Army and locals to promote tourism and project a soft image of the area worldwide. These events would help invite tourists to the area and create economic opportunities for the locals. KPCTA has opened Orakzai district for tourists with the help of Pakistan Army and the district administration before Eid, and more than 150,000 tourists have visited various areas of Orakzai so far. Sessions of training have also been arranged for local youth, enabling them to work as tourist guides and boost economic activities. The festival would also disseminate the message in the world that peace has been restored in the area with the joint efforts of Pakistan Army, law enforcement agencies, police, local elders, and people.

KPCTA has also introduced Samana Top, Nanwar Cave, Sampogh Top as a tourist destination, and the majority of work on the installation of camping pods has been completed. Facilitation centers and rest areas have also been established for tourists, and information-providing boards have been installed for them.

# Police arrests 119 PTI workers for violence, vandalism

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Lower Dir police have so far arrested a total of 119 people for allegedly being involved in violent protest and damaging government property, vandalism, blocking national highways, resisting government and violating section 144 in different parts of the district.

A spokesman for the district police informed local journalists at Timergara on Saturday that several key activists including former MPAs Malik Shafiullah Khan, Malik Liaqat Ali and Azam Khan were among the arrested accused. The spokesman said that raids were being conducted to arrest the rest of the people involved in the crime. He said that district police officer Tariq Iqbal, DSP headquarters Fakhr e Alam Khan, Timergara police lines officer Ghani Rehman, SHO Balambat Mahboob Shah, additional SHO Balambat Abdul Jalil Khan and several other police officials were injured by the PTI workers on May 9 in stone pelting.

According to the police report, 119 people have been arrested so far, including 3 former MPAs and other key PTI activists. The spokesman said that 22 people were arrested under 3 MPO, 52 under 7 ATA and 45 workers were arrested for vandalizing and damaging government

property and violating Section 144 crpc. According to police several accused including a former MNA Syed Mahboob Shah, Adenzai tehsil chairman Fairoz Shah, Balambat tehsil chairman Asim Shuiab and others had gone underground but raids were being conducted for their arrest.

Meanwhile the DPO Tariq Iqbal constituted a special investigation team under the supervision of SP investigation Zahoor Ahmad to investigate the May 9 cases in the jurisdiction of Balambat police station. DSP Timergara Syed Rahim, SHO Imran Khan, SHO Balambat Mahboob Shah, policelines officer Ghani Rahman and inspector Ismail Khan will be members of the team. Another team led by DSP investigation Syed Zaman Shah will investigate the cases registered by the Chakdara police station. DSP Akbar Muhammad, SHO Chakdara Muhibullah, inspector Akbar Shah, SHO Asbanr Shahabud Din, sub inspector Bahadar Shah and SHO Ouch Shah Faisal will be members of the team for Adenzai circle.

**Fort attack condemned:** The Gujjar Qaumi Movement Haji Zarin Khan Gujjar on Saturday strongly condemned the attack on the historical Chakdara Fort built in 1896 and ransack-

ing it. The GQM chief along with his general secretary Haji Muhammad Nazir visited the fort and met with the commandant Dir Scouts.

The visiting leaders condemned the May 9 incident of attacking the fort, setting it on fire and ransacking it by the violent protesters. Haji Zarin said that arms, ammunition, ration and private valuables of the personnel were also stolen by the mob while several vehicles were set on fire.

He said the GQM strongly condemned the attack and demanded the government to arrest the perpetrators and punish them exemplary. He also asked the looters to voluntarily return the guns and the ammunition and they would be pardoned. He said the GQM workers would help and support the law enforcement agencies in identifying the looters.

**One dead in road mishap:** One Adil Nawaz, a resident of Talash was killed when a vehicle he was driving met a road accident at Bandagai in the jurisdiction of Talash police station here on Saturday.

Similarly one Speen Gul 50 was injured when a Suzuki pick up and a motorcycle collided with each other at the Timergara bypass road. The Rescue 1122 emergency team shifted the injured to the district headquarters hospital Timergara.

## 13 foreigners among 14 held, weapon recovered

D I KHAN (INP): The district police on Saturday claimed to have arrested 13 foreigners for not having traveling documents and another accused of possessing illegal weapon and ammunition in the limits of Daraban Police Station.

According to a police spokesman, following the directions of District Police Officer Dera Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, the Daraban police led by SHO Abdul Ghaffar Khan took various actions against the anti-social elements under the supervision of SDPO Kulachi Circle Abdul Rashid Khan.

The police team detained 13 Afghan nationals including Josh Murad son of Kundi, Shafi Ullah son of Abdul Samad, Shafiullah son of Abdul Haq, Shukrullah son of Faiz Muhammad, Rustam Khan son of Muhammad Akbar Khan, Muhammad Alam son of Khairullah, Mujib ur Rahman son of Abdul

Rahman, Tahir Shah son of Mira Jan, Ibrahim, Najam son Abdul Rasheed, Shafiullah son of Jan Muhammad, Rahmat Ullah and Zaman Khel son of Momi Khel residents of Afghanistan when they failed to produce their traveling documents. In another action, the Daraban police arrested accused Moeed Gul son of Shah Malang resident of Zarkani, recovering a 30-bore pistol and 10 cartridges from his possession.

The police also registered separate cases against them. The district police also arrested five outlaws and seized arms and ammunition during a "search and strike operation" in the limits of Dera Town police station here on Saturday.

Sub-divisional police officer of Saddar Circle Sabir Hussain Baloch led the action along with SHO Khalid Javed Lashari in different areas in line with the directions of district police

officer Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani. During the search, the accused Ghazanfar son of Ghulam Raza was arrested after recovering a Kalashnikov with 30 cartridges from his possession.

Similarly, the accused Ghazanfar Abbas, son of Ghulam Yasin resident of Raknu was arrested and a 12-bore gun with 05 cartridges was recovered from his possession. The accused Naik Wali son of Sahab Khan resident of South Waziristan was arrested and 110 grams of hashish was recovered from the possession of the accused.

Another accused was arrested after recovering a 12-bore gun with a 07-cartridge, accused was identified as Ghulam Raza son of Imam Bakhsh, while 01 pistol of 30 bore with 05 cartridges was recovered from Yasin son of Imam Bakhsh. Police registered separate cases against the arrested criminals.



HYDERABAD: Vice Chancellor Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences Prof Dr Ikram Uddin Ujjan presenting certificate to participant of 'Three Days Hands on Train the Trainer Workshop'.

## Judicial complex security reviewed

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Superintendent of Police (SP) Operation Rukhanzeb reviewed the security arrangements of Judicial Complex Mardan and Kachehri Secretariat and District Session Judge Court in detail along with SHO Police Station City Muqadam Khan Inspected and issued instructions regarding security to all the police personnel including the security in-charge.

The operation also met with the DPP and the President of the District Bar Association and other lawyers and learned about the problems faced by the lawyers and said that justice Lawyers have a key role in the provision of police and lawyers together can improve justice and fairness in the society and police assured to provide all possible cooperation.

**Matric exams to resume from Monday:**

Under the auspices of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, matric exams will resume from Monday.

According to Board Chairman Farid Ahmad Khattak, the revised date sheet for the postponed papers has also been released. All regular and private students have been instructed to ensure attendance in their respective halls for re-exams from tomorrow.





Sunday, May 14, 2023

# Move forward galvanises Thai voters with vows of royal reforms

BANGKOK (Agencies): On a busy intersection outside the Thai capital Bangkok, a young woman with a heavy megaphone urged passersby to vote for her in Sunday's general election, promising a "new kind of politics" that would curb the monarchy and the military's stranglehold over the Southeast Asian country's affairs.

"It's time for change," 30-year-old Chonthicha Jangrew said, her voice slightly hoarse from months on the campaign trail. "We've been under military rule for nine years. It's time to remove the military from Thai politics." Chonthicha, who goes by the name "Lookkate", is at the vanguard of the youth-led Move Forward Party (MFP) that has energised Thailand's voters, young and old alike. For too long, the choice for voters in the country of 71 million has either been parties aligned with the royalist-military establishment or that of self-exiled billionaire Thaksin Shinawatra. The fierce power struggle between the two sides has kept the country at a political standstill for nearly two decades, with the governments of Thaksin and his sister, Yingluck, removed in military coups in 2006 and 2014, respectively.

In Chonthicha's constituency, Pathum Thani province, 41km (26 miles) north of Bangkok, the appetite for change appeared high. Many people on their morning commute paused briefly, rolling down their windows to flash a thumbs up and offer words of support. "Keep fighting", one woman yelled from her car while another on a motorcycle stopped for a quick self-ie and to drop off ice-cold drinks. It was 8:30am in the morning but the heat was already stifling.

"It's been nine years too long," the woman on the motorcycle said, referring to the near-decade rule of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha who, as army chief, led the 2014 coup. The retired general returned to power as the head of a civilian government in 2019, following elections the opposition claimed were rigged – allegations he denies. Prayuth is seeking re-election again but his United Thai Nation (UTN) party is trailing in polls, coming in third in recent surveys. Support for the party is a fraction of that for the Thaksin-aligned frontrunner Pheu Thai party and the second-placed MFP. Pheu Thai has



long held the lead in public surveys, but the MFP has been closing the gap in recent weeks. Pheu Thai is now polling at about 38 percent, down from 47 percent in April, while MFP is at 34 percent, up from 21 percent earlier, according to surveys by the National Institute of Development Administration. One large-scale poll published by The Nation newspaper last week showed MFP's nominee for prime minister, 42-year-old Pita Limjaroenrat, emerging as the public's favoured candidate for the post. The businessman had 29.37 percent of support compared with 27.55 percent for Pheu Thai's candidate, the exiled Thaksin's 36-year-old daughter, Paetongtarn Shinawatra.

Observers credit the MFP's popularity to its bold promises for reforms of the military and the monarchy. These include pledges to scrap the military-drafted constitution, abolish conscription, reduce the size of the armed forces and revise Thailand's strict lese majeste laws, which punish insults to King Maha Vajiralongkorn with up to 15 years in jail. Once taboo, the latter subject is now hotly debated among Thailand's public, thanks to tens of thousands of young protesters who took to the streets across the country in 2020 and 2021, calling for curbs on the king's powers.

MFP is the only party that is promising to address the protester's demands. "MFP is taking Thai politics to the next level by demanding structural reforms of established cen-

tres of power, particularly the military and the monarchy," said Thitinan Pongsudhirak, professor of international relations at the Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok.

"It turns the dial in Thai politics from a battle between the conservative-royalist establishment revolving around the military, monarchy and judiciary on one hand and Thaksin's political forces on the other. Thailand's new battlefield and the battle cry of its younger generations is the reform and adjustment of the military and monarchy." Formed in 2020, the MFP is a successor to the now-disbanded Future Forward Party. Led by the car-parts billionaire Thanatorn Juangroongruangkit, Future Forward stunned Thailand in 2019 when it became the third-largest party in the parliament, by winning some 81 seats in that year's general election. Within months, however, the outspoken Thanathorn was disqualified from the House of Representatives on allegations that he violated an election law by illegally holding shares in a media company.

Then, in early 2020, Future Forward was dissolved altogether on accusations that it received an illegal loan from Thanathorn. The popular politician was also banned from politics for 10 years. The dissolution of Future Forward was a key trigger for the student-led protests. Defying COVID-19 restrictions and borrowing pop-culture themes from the Harry Potter and the Hunger Games series, tens of thousands of young

protesters hit the streets in Bangkok and other cities, calling for systemic democratic reforms and curbs on the king's powers.

The authorities responded with force. Police deployed tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the huge crowds, and arrested dozens of prominent activists on seditious charges. At least 242 protesters also face charges of violating the lese majeste laws. The MFP was formed amid the chaos, with Pita – a Future Forward legislator – emerging as the new party's leader.

With its promise to revise the lese majeste laws, the MFP has attracted the backing of many activists in the student-led movement. This includes Chonthicha, who faces prosecution on two counts of insulting the king as well as 26 other criminal charges over the protests. "When we had the youth uprising here in Thailand, young people were risking their own lives on the streets to talk about one of the most untouchable topics in Thailand – the reform of the monarchy and royal defamation," she told Al Jazeera. "But if you look back at the parliament at the time, there weren't many politicians who tried to speak out about that. And that really disappointed me, a lot," she said. "I want to become a legislator to bring all the demands from the streets into the parliament," she said.

Recent polls indicate MFP will probably win between 70 and 100 seats in Sunday's election. Some 500 seats are up for grabs, including 400 that are directly elected and 100 that are allocated from party lists. The MFP's popularity is set to deny Pheu Thai the landslide it has long been aiming for. The latter party is currently on track to win about 220-240 seats in total, polls show. Pheu Thai and MFP have indicated a willingness to form an alliance, but even with a combined total of 340 seats in the 500-member chamber, they will not be able to form government. This is because Thailand's military-drafted constitution allows some 250 unelected Senators to take part in the vote for the prime minister.

Amid the projected shortfall, rumours have swirled that Pheu Thai may be considering a power-sharing agreement with smaller parties in the royalist-military establishment –

namely the Palang Pracharat Party, led by Prayuth's current deputy, Prawit Wongsuwan. These reports have not sat well with voters clamouring for change, likely helping the MFP close in on Pheu Thai's lead in the polls. During a party debate at the upscale Siam Paragon mall in Bangkok, it was MFP leader Pita who drew the most enthusiastic responses from the crowd. He was the only prime ministerial candidate to attend the four-party debate, with the others sending senior officials.

The youthful audience erupted in deafening applause every time Pita spoke, but booed loudly when officials from Prayuth's UTN and Prawit's Palang Pracharat took centre stage. Pita, smiling from ear to ear, pledged "full democracy" and equality for all in Thailand. "Go vote for us on Sunday and give us the opportunity to do things that have never been done before," he said. "Our main focus is the people. We will not ally with UTN or Palang Pracharat," he announced to loud cheers.

The surge in support for the party appears to have worried Pheu Thai. The party – which has focused its campaign on stimulating Thailand's pandemic-stricken economy – has now started to "include the words freedom, liberty in their campaign", said Titipol Phakdeewanich, professor of political science at the Ubon Ratchathani University in eastern Thailand.

"So, unlike past elections, where economic policy has dominated the campaign, we are now seeing a focus on democracy," he said. Earlier this week, Pheu Thai's Paetongtarn even pledged not to cooperate with Prayuth and Prawit. However, she refused to commit to revising the lese majeste laws, only saying that her party would table the matter for discussion in parliament – a stance many see as a possible bid to reconcile with the palace.

This appears to have further turned off young voters, some 3 million of whom will be casting their votes for the first time on Sunday. In Bangkok's streets this week, many young voters said they preferred the MFP over Pheu Thai because of the former's strong stance on the lese majeste law, known as Article 112. "MFP fights for democracy. They are clear in their stand," said 27-year-old

Patcharadanai "Fifi" Rawangsub in the working-class neighbourhood of Bang Na. "In 2020, we planted a seed for change and MFP is the party that will help see this change through."

In the centre of Bangkok, Natpatorn Tunyatarinun, who had dressed her poodle in the orange colours of MFP, echoed similar sentiments and said she was also voting for the party because of its promise to rewrite the constitution. A group of four women, all in their 20s, also praised MFP's "clear standpoint" on Article 112 and said they would be voting for the progressive party. MFP's popularity appears to have worried the conservative establishment, too. A candidate with the ruling Palang Pracharat petitioned the election commission, asking it to ban Pita from politics and claiming he holds undeclared shares in a media company – a similar charge to the one that led to the Future Forward leader's disqualification from parliament in 2019. Pita has denied any wrongdoing, claiming the company in question stopped broadcasting in 2007.

The politician's future now depends on the outcome of Sunday's vote, said Titipol of Ubon Ratchathani University. If Prayuth's UTN and Prawit's Palang Pracharat fail to cross the 25-seat threshold they require to nominate a prime minister, "they may try to attack Move Forward Party". This could entice its legislators to abandon the party and switch allegiances, as some Future Forward politicians did in 2019, said Titipol. "Money can do this in Thailand," he said. "It is a very lucrative market. Once you are voted in as an MP, you can be a millionaire overnight." MFP candidates and supporters, however, appeared unfazed.

"We are not worried," said Piyarat "Toto" Chongthep, an MFP candidate running for a seat in Bangkok. "We've already shown them we can come back stronger. Right now, MFP is much stronger than Future Forward." In Pathum Thani, Chonchita said MFP was in politics for the long haul. "When I go and campaign, I meet kids, who are 10, 12, 15. They tell me they support Move Forward Party... When those kids grow up, they will change the country," she said. "Change is coming to Thailand soon," she said. "Perhaps much sooner than we think."

## Sudan conflict: Grandmother died trapped by fighting in Khartoum

KHARTOUM (BBC): Azhaar Sholgami is trying to bury her grandmother. The elderly woman has been dead for days, no-one knows how many. She died alone, trapped in her house in Khartoum by the brutal battle between Sudan's two warring generals. Azhaar had been watching from New York, desperately trying to save her. Now, she is desperately trying to recover her body.

She's not alone. Intense fighting has made it dangerous to gather the dead in parts of Sudan's capital. The humanitarian agreement reached by the two sides in Jeddah specifically commits to helping aid workers collect, register and bury those killed in the fighting.

"We keep on seeing dead bodies on the street, and hospitals that are out of service," says Patrick Yousef, the Africa Regional Director for the International Committee of the Red Cross. "I hope the new declaration of humanitarian principles can truly allow for humanitarian corridors." So far it hasn't, because the parties have yet to secure a truce to turn their promises on paper into reality.

Azhaar's grandparents, Abdalla Sholgami and Alaweya Reshwan, got stuck in the heat of the fighting. They lived in the neighbourhood of Al Riyadh, next to the military head-

quarters. It became a battlefield for the two warring parties - Sudan's army, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Local volunteers who try to assist people in distress consider it a "red zone". Mr Sholgami, a British citizen, was shot three times, leaving his disabled wife alone at home. He somehow survived, and his family are now trying to evacuate him from Sudan.

But there was no word about his wife and Azhaar's grandmother, Alaweya. Weeks of Azhaar's frantic phone calls failed to get help. Three days ago she got a call from the Turkish embassy, located next to the house, saying her grandmother was dead. Azhaar didn't want to believe it. "I called back again and said, 'Maybe she's in a coma, did you check her pulse? Did you check her body, see if her heart is beating?'" And then he tells me that her body's been decaying," she says.

"It's quite painful to think that she was alone, with no electricity in the midst of the heat - it's really hot in Sudan right now - waking up to bomb sounds." Another woman we spoke to had an uncle, Ahmad, who lived in the same neighbourhood. She didn't want us to reveal her name because she fears she might be targeted, but told us this story. Ahmad's family was

gathering at the home of a relative so they could evacuate together. He realised he'd forgotten his paperwork, so he returned to his home in the Riyadh neighbourhood and never came back.

Six days later his brother got a call from someone trying to identify a body lying in front of Ahmad's house. The person said Ahmad had found RSF fighters in his home. The situation escalated, they killed him, looted the place, and left. Neighbours wrapped Ahmad in plastic bags until aid workers were able to arrive. They wanted to bury him right there because there's no garden, but the family refused to have him laid to rest virtually in the street. So his body still lies there, encased in the plastic.

Azhaar is still trying to arrange for someone to pick up her grandmother's remains. An organisation that tried on the day the Jeddah Declaration was announced had to turn back because they got caught in a gunfight. "I was very close to my grandmother," she says. "And in our last conversation before I left for New York she said, 'I'm scared you're going to leave me alone.'" "I laughed at her. I said, 'I'll never leave you alone, no matter what, I'll always be there... I feel I let her down.'"

## 500 believed to have died in Mali last year: UN

DAKAR (AP): Malian forces backed by foreign military personnel are believed to have killed at least 500 people over several days in a village last year, the UN said, significantly raising the death toll from what already has been called the worst single atrocity in Mali's decade-long fight against extremist groups.

The new report from the UN Human Rights Office details the violence that took place in the village of Moura in central Mali over the course of five days, and raises a previous toll of 300 dead given by Human Rights Watch. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk called the findings "extremely disturbing."

"Summary executions, rape and torture during armed conflict amount to war crimes and could, depending on the circumstances, amount to crimes against humanity," Turk said. Malian authorities have said that their operation last March neutralized extremists and didn't allow UN investigators to visit the village. UN investigators analyzed satellite imagery in addition to speaking with victims and witnesses, the report said. France and others have alleged that the Malian forces in Moura were aided by Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group. In report, investigators also cited similar evidence of foreign involvement.

"Witnesses reported seeing 'armed white men' who spoke an unknown language operating alongside the Malian forces and at times appearing to supervise operations," the UN Human Rights Office said. "According to witnesses, Malian troops were rotated in and out of Moura daily, but the foreign personnel remained for the duration of the operation." Despite nine years of help from the French military and a large UN peacekeeping mission, Mali has been unable to stem violence from Islamic extremist groups. In August 2020, an army colonel overthrew the country's democratically elected president, further destabilizing the West African nation.

Col. Assimi Goita became the country's leader after mounting a second coup nine months later, and relations between his government and France and the United Nations sharply deteriorated in the months that followed.

## Wendy Sherman, key US diplomat to retire

WASHINGTON (AFP): US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, who managed delicate relations with China and earlier led painstaking negotiations with Iran and North Korea, said she would retire, exactly 30 years after her first State Department job.

The 73-year-old fixture of Democratic Party foreign policy circles said she would step down at the end of June. Her successor, who will need Senate confirmation, was not immediately announced. "As deputy secretary, I'm incredibly proud of the work we've done to address an astonishing array of challenges -- Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, challenges in the Indo-Pacific, Covid-19 -- while uniting allies and partners to advance our shared vision of a brighter future," she wrote on Twitter.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken saluted his number two, especially for her

engagement in Asia and her efforts to unite allies to support Ukraine. "She has overseen our efforts to strengthen the Department's capabilities to manage our relationship with the People's Republic of China, and built greater convergence with allies and partners," Blinken said in a statement.

Sherman traveled to China after President Joe Biden took office in 2021, holding tense but quiet talks on the wide-ranging rivalry between the world's two largest economic powers. She also paid early trips to Turkey and Egypt, longstanding US allies from which Biden had initially promised a greater distance due to human rights concerns.

A veteran negotiator, Sherman brokered nuclear deals with North Korea under Bill Clinton and with Iran under Barack Obama. Both agreements collapsed under subsequent Rep-

ublican presidents. Sherman in a memoir gave an unusually personal account of negotiations with the Iranians in Vienna, recalling how her counterparts' last-minute raising of a new point of contention nearly brought her to tears. She wrote that her reaction stunned the Iranians into silence and they dropped their objections.

"That's when it clicked into place for me. When you bring values like authenticity, persistence and commitment to the negotiating table, both in work and personal life, you are enormously powerful," she wrote. Born to a Jewish family in Baltimore, Sherman began her career as a social worker and became active in Democratic Party politics. Before her career as a diplomat, she led Emily's List, which works to elect women who support abortion rights.

## France says 2 citizens held in Iran freed from prison

PARIS (AP): A French citizen and another holding dual French-Irish nationality have been freed from an Iranian prison, French authorities said, the culmination of a hard-fought effort to bring them home.

Benjamin Briere and Bernard Phelan, who both had been held in a prison in Mashhad, in northeast Iran, were heading to Paris, Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said. "Free at last," President Emmanuel Macron tweeted. "It's a relief." Colonna spoke with Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a statement from her office said, without elaborating.

Iran's state-run news agency, IRNA, said the French minister thanked Iran for releasing the two men and called the move an effective trust-building step. Briere, 37, was arrested three years ago, in May 2020, while touring, for taking photographs with a drone in an area where cameras were forbidden and asking questions on social media about the headscarves women are required to wear in Iran. He was convicted of spying and sentenced to eight years and eight months in prison, then reportedly acquitted this year. Phelan, 64, who holds both French and Irish nationality, was arrested

seven months ago while visiting Iran for consulting activities for a tour company, according to French daily newspaper Le Parisien.

He was detained during the anti-government protests that began sweeping the country after 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who was taken by the country's morality police for wearing her hijab too loosely, died in custody. IRNA reported. Phelan was sentenced to spend more than six years in jail. "We cannot tell you to what point we are relieved," Phelan's sister, Caroline, said in a statement, noting that her brother had been held for more than 200 days. Colonna, addressing colleagues at a European Union foreign ministers' meeting in Stockholm, Sweden, rejoiced with her Irish counterpart, Michael Martin, over the prisoners regaining their freedom.

Martin said that freeing the two prisoners was a team effort carried out "in very challenging circumstances." "They shouldn't have had to go through this ordeal," he said. Colonna said more diplomatic work with Tehran is needed "because there are, unfortunately, too many who are detained without reason in Iran." Four French people and numerous other

European citizens remain behind bars.

The French citizens include Cecile Kohler, 37, and Chuck Paris, 69, who were arrested on May 7, 2022, after meeting with protesting Iranian teachers and taking part in an anti-government rally. France identified the two as teachers' union official and her partner on vacation in Iran. French-Iranian academic Fariba Adelkhah, who was arrested in 2019, was freed from prison in February. She was released before then to serve part of her five-year sentence under house arrest but was ordered re-imprisoned in January 2022.

She was accused of "propaganda against the Islamic Republic's political system" and "collusion to undermine national security." Abdelkhah's companion, academic Roland Marchal, was freed in 2020, a year after his arrest in an apparent prisoner swap. His release came hours after French authorities released Jalal Ruhollahnejad, Iranian state TV said at the time. The Iranian TV report said French authorities planned to deliver Ruhollahnejad to the United States for his alleged role in violating US sanctions on Iran. The broadcaster said he was in jail in France for more than a year.

## Asylum-seekers are prey for gangs and officials

MEXICO CITY (Agencies): As the United States begins imposing border rules making it more difficult for migrants to claim asylum, many will most likely face swift deportation to Mexico, where they will be vulnerable to criminal groups and corrupt officials, according to human rights groups.

Mexico's role as Washington's enforcement arm to deter migrants from heading illegally to the United States through Mexican territory will become more significant with the lifting of a COVID-era policy known as Title 42, which halted the entry of many migrants at the border and allowed US authorities to rapidly expel them.

In talks last week with the Biden administration, Mexico said it would accept non-Mexican migrants sent back from the United States under the new rules and would process them for Mexican asylum. But if the asylum system in the United States is plagued by backlogs, the situation in Mexico is just as bad, with asylum cases lingering for years without resolution.

And many migrants expelled to Mexican cities along the US border face daily horrors at the hands of criminal organizations and, in some cases, the same government agencies that Washington is leaning on to help stanch the flow of migrants at the border, according to human rights groups. Since President Joe Biden took office in January 2021, there have been nearly 13,500 attacks against people deported to Mexico from the United States or blocked from crossing the border, according

to a recent report from Human Rights First, an advocacy group.

The report said that, in some cases, Mexican officials have colluded with criminal organizations to extort migrants. Mexico's National Migration Institute and the Foreign Ministry did not respond to requests for comment about the government's treatment of migrants. "This country is not a safe country," Yuri Hurtado, a 26-year-old Colombian migrant, said of Mexico.

She left her country in March with six members of her family to escape poverty and violence. She spends her days at a migrant shelter near the US border listening to threatening phone messages from members of a criminal group who, Hurtado said, kidnapped her relatives last week while they were riding a bus through Mexico. The shelter where Hurtado is staying, Casa Migrante San Juan Diego, is in Matamoros, a northern Mexican city that is notorious for violence and across the border from Brownsville, Texas. Hurtado said the criminal group holding her two sisters, a brother-in-law and two nephews, who are 2 and 5, had demanded she pay \$4,000 for their release or it would start harvesting their organs.

The sum is more than Hurtado said she could ever afford. Local police, she said, did not help her when she tried to file a report, a typical response by authorities, according to migrant rights groups. "It gives me so much fear what happens on the border and, yet, also I am full of fear that I will die alone on the border," she

said, adding that she hoped her relatives would be released before she tried to cross the border. Stories like Hurtado's are not unusual. Criminal groups often impose fees on migrants to travel through Mexico and then kidnap them. More than 2,000 migrants were kidnapped by criminal organizations last year, the Mexican government said last week.

At the same time, migrants are also vulnerable to being victimized by Mexico's migration authorities. "The abuses by state officials themselves is systemic," said Julia Neusner, a lawyer who co-wrote the Human Rights First report. "We heard hundreds and hundreds of stories from people who experience harm directly at the hands of these state officers, including kidnappings, rape, sexual assault, robbery, extortion." When President Andrés Manuel López Obrador took office at the end of 2018, he vowed that Mexico would never be used as a cudgel to "do the dirty work" of Washington's migration policy.

Instead, his government issued more visas to allow migrants to travel freely to Mexico and make their way to the US border. But López Obrador soon discovered, like other Mexican presidents before him, that it is nearly impossible for Mexico to forge a migration policy on its own. By June 2019, President Donald Trump was threatening to slap tariffs on Mexico unless López Obrador clamped down on the thousands of migrants using Mexican humanitarian visas to head to the United States.



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# Pakistan in the global prism

DEPUTY Spokesperson of the US State Department, Vedant Patel assured that the US wants to see a stable and prosperous Pakistan. While addressing a media query put forth by The Frontier Post at his press briefing at the US State Department, Mr. Patel said that Pakistan and the United States are cooperating on several fronts including trade, technology, agriculture, and combating terrorism. Meanwhile, the Frontier Post correspondent has raised queries regarding Pakistan-US relations and US interest in domestic politics in Islamabad, several American Spokesmen at the White House, State Department, and Pentagon had expressed multiple times that the US has no favorite in the politics of Pakistan and that the US wants to see a prosperous Pakistan.

Pakistan has witnessed persistent political instability, economic degradation, and a sharp upsurge in terrorism in the former Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) and other regions adjacent to the Pak-Afghan border in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan over the past several months. There had been continuous terrorist attacks on Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) and military installations that caused grave concerns in the government and the masses regarding the sharp rise of terrorism in the country, while the global community including the UN and the United States were also worried about the security situation in Pakistan's border regions and inside Afghanistan. Meanwhile, a particular faction of the media and anti-Pakistan elements had been continuously raising questions at the global forums regarding safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal to create doubts and constitute global consensus against Pakistan's nuclear program.

Realistically, an upsurge in violence and terrorism, continued political unrest, fragile economy coupled with a weak political government is a matter of concern for local authorities as well as global institutions and major nations in the world including the US because these situations can easily lead to a civil insurgency that would be disastrous for a nuclear-armed Pakistan. Therefore the global community perceives terrorism as a global challenge and is continuously engaged with Pakistan to collectively curb this menace through joint work and mutual collaboration. The international community, friendly nations, and civil society are surely worried about the prevailing turmoil and continued instability in Pakistan. The sane voices from across the world including political analysts think tank panels and scholarly institutions repeatedly forecast alerts and urge Pakistani warring political groups to pause their tussle, restore peace and stability, and collectively work for economic revival, elimination of terrorism and extremism from the country.

The recent political unrest and mob violence by the PTI workers had badly tarnished the image of the country, which is already embattled with terrorism, extremism, and ethnic polarization. Unfortunately, politics and ego are of high importance for Pakistani leaders, while national interests, public well-being, and global perception have no value to them. Amid heightened political violence and the tussle between the warring groups, the defense forces of the country are currently engaged in a four-front war with internal and external enemies of the country. The challenge of defending territorial frontiers, and national sovereignty, along with maintaining professionalism and national unity in the face of high-level defamation campaigns by the so-called ultranationalists and violent political groups is not an easy task for Pakistani institutions.

The Pakistani nation and its leaders must review the whole gambit of their national affairs ranging from increasing extremism and violence in the society, political ethics, corruption, the way of governance, unnecessary patriotism of military men, and over-activism of judges that derailed democracy, ruined the economy and badly destroyed the national unity. No enemy can harm Pakistan if our men and women do not attack the national institutions, uphold the law and respect their fellow citizens. The change is not possible, until and unless the public play the role of an adjudicator and prosecute disloyal politicians in the electoral process.

# How to ignore Israel’s apartheid: Learn from Ursula von der Leyen

Andrew Mitrovica

DIPLOMATIC tip: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will forgive and forget your country's outrages and crimes and wish you a happy birthday in return, apparently, for an honorary degree. That quid pro quo was on blatant and telling display last week when von der Leyen took to social media to congratulate Israel on its 75th birthday.

In lieu of a blue and white cake topped with 75 candles, von der Leyen posted a nearly 90-second video airbrushing Israel's long, cruel history of theft and violence visited on generations of imprisoned Palestinians. She also praised the apartheid state for its "dynamism" and "ingenuity". "Seventy-five years ago, a dream was realized," she said. "You [Israel] have literally made a desert bloom."

Her crude revisionism and recycling of a familiar, bigoted trope was condemned instantly and loudly by Palestinians who have not only endured the endless nightmare of Israel's ruthless occupation, but who have also been invaded, jailed, tortured, killed and had their homes and lands stolen by the dynamic and ingenious birthday boy celebrating Independence Day along with President von der Leyen. On Tuesday, Palestinian pris-

oner Khader Adnan was found dead in an Israeli prison after a nearly three-month hunger strike against his incarceration without charge or trial. Don't expect von der Leyen to utter a word about it. The birthday bash mustn't be ruined.

While her contentious comments triggered a broad backlash, I remembered that von der Leyen had spouted this historically illiterate, revisionist tripe just months before when she was given a lofty prize at an event imbued with ego-soothing pageantry. On June 14, a beaming von der Leyen was feted with an honorary doctorate from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. "Well, how exciting," the university's giddy president said before bestowing von der Leyen with the symbolic honour, which was a reflection in part, he added, of their "exceptional" guest's "long-term commitment to women's rights".

Von der Leyen sat in the centre of a raised dais, smiling as a short film tracing her accomplishments and applauding her commitment to promoting women's interests and equality was shown to the students, faculty and diplomats gathered in a round hall. Only weeks earlier, veteran Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh was fatally shot in the head by an Israeli sniper while covering yet another early

morning raid in the Jenin refugee camp by eager-to-harm soldiers. Still, von der Leyen couldn't resist travelling to Israel to get her sash and scroll.

In her effusive 22-minute speech in June, von der Leyen gave more fulsome expression to her blind, unqualified support and affection for Israel. "I feel honoured and humbled to receive this recognition," she said. "It seems like a miracle that a German like me is welcomed and honoured here in the state of Israel as a friend among friends." Needless to say, von der Leyen did not mention Abu Akleh's name - if she remembered it at all. Nor did she address, let alone condemn, the murder of a courageous female journalist who had dedicated her life and work to defending the rights and dignity of her sisters - Palestinian girls and women among so many others.

Instead, von der Leyen lauded a rogue nation that was not only responsible for Abu Akleh's assassination but also the state-sanctioned brutality that Palestinian girls and women in blockaded Gaza, the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem have suffered year after grinding year. It was a sorry performance by a preening politician more interested

in having her vanity stroked and absolving her hosts' complicity and guilt than confronting Israel's systemic violation of women and girls whose cause she claims to champion. Von der Leyen's at times hyperbolic acceptance speech veered into what can only be described as the surreal.

"Europe is the values of the Talmud: the Jewish sense of personal responsibility, of justice and of solidarity," she said. This will come as a surprise, I suspect, to enlightened Europeans who continue to oppose and denounce the failure of iron-fisted Israeli governments and too many obstinate Israelis to accept any measure of responsibility for the litany of injustices the occupiers have forced upon besieged Palestinians. This will come as a surprise, as well, to the string of human rights groups inside and outside Israel who have concluded - as a matter of international law - that the nation von der Leyen calls a "friend" has, since its inception, pursued a pitiless policy of apartheid towards Palestinians. All with the sinister intent to impose its ethnic supremacy and to crush Palestinians into ghettos with deliberate, inhuman efficiency. Von der Leyen didn't devote so much as a syllable to that egregious and exhaustively

documented record. She preferred to traffic in stubborn, facts-on-the-ground-allergic rhetoric like this: "Israel is a vibrant democracy. Its resilience is admired worldwide ... Israel is a small slice of land where people of all faiths and born on all continents live together."

Okey dokey. Of course, von der Leyen singled out Russia for "its aggression" against Ukraine's territorial integrity without bothering to note that Israel has launched calamitous ground invasions of Gaza in late 2008 to early 2009 and in 2014 that obliterated homes, schools, hospitals and livelihoods while killing, maiming and traumatising thousands of children, women and men who had no place to hide. The casualties included Palestinian Nobel Peace Prize nominee Izzeldin Abualaish's three daughters and their cousin who were dismembered when two Israeli tank shells were fired into their home as they huddled together on January 16, 2009.

It appears that von der Leyen has forgotten about those girls and women, too. What she didn't forget to do was to trot out the odious chestnut that, lately, has caused such an uproar. "I marvel at how ... you have, quite literally, made the desert bloom," von der Leyen told her appreciative

audience. Beyond erasing the history and presence of Palestinians in that "desert" for centuries, the clear and indeed, racist, implication is that the land was empty or neglected prior to the arrival of Jewish settlers. Again, I'm convinced that enlightened European parliamentarians and millions of Europeans who side with the Palestinians' just fight will reject outright the president's outrageous language and demand she retract her retrograde remarks.

Listening to both speeches, I was taken aback not only by some of what von der Leyen said but how she said it. The talks oozed with a grating, self-gratulatory quality: the by-product of her evident and over-arching aim to please rather than to challenge. Then there was the smug certainty of von der Leyen's goey sentimentalism that betrays a profound misunderstanding of the combustible region and an obliviousness to the hurt that her halting comments were bound to cause to appalled Palestinians and their equally offended allies. The European Commission's president should, at the least, apologise. You and I know she won't. A gift-wrapped bauble, it seems, is more important than the constant struggles, capricious fates and endangered lives of Palestinians. Shame on her.

Aljazeera

# Has France really gone to hell? Its catastrophist discourse is at odds with the facts

Alexander Hurst

THE French adventurer Sylvain Tesson may have put it best when he wrote: "France is a paradise inhabited by people who think they're in hell." The images from France over the past two months have seemed hellish enough - mounds of rubbish, sometimes on fire, serving as backdrop for violent clashes between some of the more extreme protest groups and body armoured riot police. Enough for my parents to repeatedly ask over FaceTime if it was really OK for me to be out and about in my neighbourhood, which borders a main protest square.

(It was, I assured them each time, just France being France: the over-aggressive nature of the confrontations and the dismissive and "arrogant" government response simply the self-fulfilling result of everyone assuming this was just how things would unfold.)

Of course, France isn't a literal paradise. It has had four decades of structurally high unemployment; a lost decade of stagnating incomes after the 2008-09 financial crisis; lower levels of social trust than its happier northern European neighbours (made worse by

Emmanuel Macron's use of article 49.3, which forced the legislature to choose between passing the unpopular retirement reform or holding new elections); a population shifting away from rural towns towards urban centres; and a slow, rolling recognition of its relative decline on the global stage. But there is an incredible disconnect between what tourists see, what foreigners living in France see, what French people living abroad see, what this recently naturalised français sees, and the hyperbolic, catastrophist nature of France's own domestic discourse about itself (that is, the French people convinced their country has gone to hell). In this tale, France has been submerged by immigration and Islam, or by ultra-neoliberalism, or by authoritarianism (or some combination of these). This doesn't correspond to measurable reality, but the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves are powerful. Several weeks ago I took a straw poll of my students - nothing statistically significant, but a snapshot of the general outlook of bright, politically aware first-years at Sciences Po, one of France's most prestigious and globally high-

ranking universities. I showed them a chart of inequality levels among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations, but with the country names chopped off. They had no problem identifying where on the chart the US fell: nearly every hand went up to indicate that it had the highest inequality of any rich democracy.

They were almost universally wrong when it came to accurately identifying France on the same chart. Nearly every student placed it just a few spots behind the US, easily in the top 25% of inequality. In truth, France's position is in the bottom portion of the chart, just shy of Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway. In fact, France's Gini coefficient, the measure of inequality in a society, is lower today than it was during les trente glorieuses (1945 to 1975), when postwar France regained confidence by helping to pioneer first Concorde, then the TGV, and then in the early 1980s the proto-internet (the Minitel). After all, France devotes a higher percentage of its GDP to redistributing market inequalities

than any of its wealthy peers - it even has an unparalleled income support and equalisation scheme for performing artists. As a result, it's near the top globally for life expectancy, with its workers retiring earlier, on average, than anyone else in Europe (yes, even after the widely opposed reform), and with the lowest rate of poverty among older people. Unemployment - the perennial problem - is almost below 7%, a level that hasn't been reached since before the 2008-09 financial crisis, partly due to the public investment made in promoting apprenticeships over the past two years. Intentions to hire are the highest they've been in 20 years, and in less than a decade France has gone from being woefully absent in the startup world to taking the continent's crown for startup investment. When you adjust economic performance for climate footprint (which we should do for every country), France leads all of its peers. Whereas the US generates 0.28 tonnes of greenhouse gases to produce \$1,000 of GDP, France does the same with only 0.14 tonnes of emissions. French per capita emis-

sions are the absolute lowest of any large, wealthy country, and have been continually declining - down 25% from 2005 - while since 1990, France's total forested area has increased by 7%. And France can still build big things. It has connected its major cities with the fastest trains in the world more cost effectively than China, and the Grand Paris Express (more than 200km of new metro track and 48 new stations) is being built for 20% of the per-km cost of New York City's most recent line extension. At a European level - the one that actually matters when it comes to most of the society-shaking, collective challenges we face - a French approach to public policy is ascendant: for the first time, the EU has issued collective debt, and is willing to counter protectionism from the US and China with support for its own green industries. The term "performative miserabilism" has been coined to explain France's confusing penchant towards self-cynicism.

There's something almost laudable to it - a type of solidarity, in the sense that endless optimism might actually seem boastful to those who are struggling; a negative nar-

rative is at least one that acknowledges their pain. But narrative can make perception more powerful than reality, and dangerously so. On the far left and far right, large swaths of the French electorate have bought into a nostalgia politics - ironically, for a time when the country was less well off and less equal, but more confident in itself. They are looking backwards, engaged in a debate that is almost past its expiration date. Both the climate crisis and AI are following the same type of exponential growth curve; who under the age of 35 honestly thinks the basic structure of work and retirement that we know today will look anything remotely similar in 2060?

How sad if the real narrative about France - a remarkably successful social democracy - were lost to the lowest common denominator of the challenges it faces. But far more worrying is that an angry debate, often played out in the media on skewed terms, is monopolising attention and sapping the country of the social trust needed for flexibility, creative public policy, and to resist populists selling a siren song of c'était mieux avant (things were better in the past).

# Is Georgia’s ruling party really pro-Russian?

Alexander Atasuntsev

THE notion that Georgia's ruling party, Georgian Dream, is pro-Russian has become a persistent stereotype pushed by the Georgian opposition, experts on the region, and global media. The party's founder - the billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, who made his fortune in Russia - is also plagued by accusations of holding pro-Kremlin views.

The rationale for such stereotypes is understandable at first glance. The Georgian authorities constantly accuse Ukraine and the West of attempting to involve Georgia in armed conflict with Russia. After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Georgia did not sanction Russia and refused to supply weapons to Ukraine, believing that would cross a red line for Moscow, and that Georgia remains as vulnerable to Russian threats as Ukraine.

Tbilisi even banned some Russian opposition figures and journalists from entering the country at a time when Georgia had become a key destination for Russian wartime exiles due to its geographical proximity and migration policy. The Kremlin has openly praised Georgia for its neutral position several since the invasion. When it comes to action, however, there is no basis for claiming that Tbilisi is acting in Moscow's interests. The

reasons for the tensions within Georgia and Tbilisi's recent disagreements with Brussels and Kyiv must be sought elsewhere.

The latest allegations of pro-Kremlin sympathies came in March during mass protests against Georgian Dream's attempt to adopt a law making it possible to stigmatize certain civil society organizations as "foreign agents," a label that Russia adopted over a decade ago. Protesters against the proposed law lambasted the authorities for pursuing a supposedly pro-Kremlin policy. Yet it is hard to see anything pro-Moscow in the actions of Georgian Dream over the past few years. Since Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia, Tbilisi has had no diplomatic relations with Russia, or any direct flights. The government condemns Russian aggression, supports the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and votes in favor of Ukraine in UN resolutions.

Despite the Georgian government's loud insistence that it would not join Western sanctions against Russia, as early as July of last year the US State Department released a report noting that Georgia was observing international restrictions imposed against Russia. The main criticism leveled against the Georgian government in terms of being pro-Russian is its intention to build a

pragmatic relationship with Moscow, but that is nothing new. Back in 2015, when a NATO training center opened in Georgia, then prime minister Irakli Garibashvili said that "the training center for military personnel is in no way directed against Russia. [...] We are called upon to maintain a pragmatic approach in our relations with Russia."

Indeed, Georgia - both the government and its opponents - considers itself the first victim of Russian imperial ambition in the post-Soviet space. Fear of Moscow is reinforced by the fact that every time Georgia has leaned too far West, relations with Moscow have soured, and the situation ended with Russia either stoking local separatism or launching a military attack against Georgia. And, crucially, every time Georgia was left to deal with Russia alone. It's true that Georgia's vector toward the European Union and NATO was initially set by former President Mikheil Saakashvili, under whom tensions between Georgia and its separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia culminated in war with Russia. Saakashvili is no friend of Georgian Dream, and is currently in prison on abuse of power charges that some argue are

politically motivated. Yet his departure from office did not change Georgia's westward turn. In 2014, an association agreement was signed with the EU, and in 2015, the NATO training center opened in Georgia. In 2017, Georgians were granted visa-free travel to the EU, and in 2018, Georgian Dream enshrined the country's Euro-Atlantic course in the constitution. Meanwhile, none of Moscow's tangible proposals, such as resuming direct flights, were implemented. Finally, in March 2022, the country applied for EU membership.

In a gut punch to the ruling party and a clear signal that the EU is dissatisfied with the state of affairs in the country, the European Commission granted candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova, but not to Georgia. Instead, it issued Georgia with a list of 12 recommendations. The European Commission's decision provoked protests in the country among Georgians who felt that their government had cost them their chance at EU membership. Georgian Dream found itself facing the difficult question of how to secure a European future without angering Moscow and still remain in power: in 2024, the party will fight for a fourth term at the ballot box. The ruling party's less

than intuitive response to the protests over the EU rejection was to draw up the "foreign agents" law, sparking mass street protests in March. There are several explanations as to why it chose this course of action. The simplest and perhaps most accurate is that Georgian Dream wanted to limit the ability of the opposition and independent media to constantly stir things up. Another explanation is a combination of factors: resentment at the Commission's rejection, an attempt to bargain with the EU, and the personal interests of the party's founder Ivanishvili, who has become embroiled in a protracted lawsuit with Credit Suisse.

Despite the impressive scale of the protests against the law, they did not make the opposition any more popular. The controversial law was withdrawn, and the demonstrations mostly died down. The opposition's attempts to ride the protest wave and dissolve parliament came to nothing. The opposition is not very popular in Georgia. It is fragmented, marginalized, and has been exploiting the same slogans for years. Constantly accusing the authorities of pro-Russian sentiment no longer wins the opposition political points. Surveys conducted at the end of last year showed the Georgian Dream was four times more

popular than Saakashvili's opposition coalition, with 25% versus 6%. All other parties together received 13%. According to the same poll, about 50% of respondents could not name a party that would meet their interests. Still, Georgian society agrees on one thing: an absolute majority - more than 80% - of Georgians want the country to be in the EU.

The success of Georgian Dream in the 2024 elections, therefore, will depend more on what the European Commission says in a year's time - and things are looking up. Almost as soon as Georgian Dream abandoned the foreign agents law, the crisis dissipated. In March, the British and German foreign ministers visited Tbilisi one after the other. It then became known that the European Commission was inclined to give Georgia candidate status. The conditions for this are not too onerous, and could be summed up as: just don't alienate the country from the EU in the coming months. It's obvious that Brussels is not happy with everything in today's Georgia, but there is no alternative force in the country on which it can rely. For this reason, Georgian Dream looks set to continue its balancing act between meeting the requirements of the EU while indulging its own authoritarian tendencies.



# DR Congo is heading towards another sham election

**APRIL 14 was an important date in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). My colleagues and I from across the spectrum of civil society and the political opposition met in the city of Lubumbashi to discuss the deteriorating state of our country and potential solutions. We are profoundly concerned about a number of issues that, if left unaddressed, will severely compromise the integrity of the upcoming election, scheduled for December. The problems are evident, and alarm bells are mounting.**

Since taking power after an election that was widely seen as fraudulent by both domestic and international observers, President Felix Tshisekedi has brazenly violated our constitution in a selfish pursuit to once again wrest power away from the Congolese people. He has appointed judges unconstitutionally; handpicked partisan members of the supposedly independent electoral commission (CENI); imposed or otherwise failed to reform unfair electoral laws that are favourable only to him; and declared a "state of siege" - which amounts to martial law - in North Kivu and Ituri provinces, areas known to be opposition strongholds. Meanwhile, CENI has been failing to meet its voter registration responsibilities. In January, the commission said it had managed to enrol only 7 million Congolese voters, from 10 provinces. Then for several months, CENI officials refused to release new figures upon repeated requests made by our coalition. In the past few weeks, CENI has declared that it has enrolled nearly

47 million Congolese out of an estimated 49 million eligible voters. There aren't many people in the DRC who believe these figures to be credible, not least because of the fact that they were not broken down by electoral district. The legal system continues to be used to quash dissent. Opposition leaders, as well as critical journalists, artists, and human rights activists, have been slapped with criminal charges or other trumped-up and arbitrary legal actions. This is creating a climate of fear, as documented by numerous international human rights groups - including the Committee to Protect Journalists and Human Rights Watch - and is meant to discourage opposition activity and participation as well as citizens' access to information in the lead-up to the election. As things stand today, the situation in the DRC is not conducive to a free, fair and credible election. Under the Tshisekedi regime, political rights and civil liberties in our country have sharply declined as its collapsing ratings on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Freedom House's Freedom in the World report and Transparency International's Anti-Corruption Perceptions Index demonstrate. Even the Catholic Church expressed public concern, much as it has in the past.

Nevertheless, the December election remains our best chance to peacefully address the failures of our government. We maintain that the only solution is to plan for and duly conduct a transparent, impartial, and peaceful poll. Our leaders

Martin Fayulu

must ultimately be accountable to us, the Congolese people, and we must avoid a repetition of past electoral failures, including the one in 2018, which have rubber-stamped illegitimate processes. The task of ensuring a free and fair election largely falls on us, patriotic Congolese. However, there are important steps that the international community, and the United Nations in particular, can take to help us move the DRC towards peace and stability. First and foremost, the UN and its relevant agencies must urgently assist with the needed resources and expertise to save our voter registration process from failure as CENI clearly struggles with its responsibilities. Millions of potential voters remain without the requisite documents to participate in the polls. And many more in the eastern part of our country remain deliberately disenfranchised, as they were in 2018, due to the regime's declared "state of siege" - a crisis of their own making and an expedient excuse to prevent those opposed to the current president from voting on election day. Second, the UN can assist in the lead-up to and during the election with independent monitors who are tasked with, and empowered to, speak up when irregularities or fraud occur, as they have in the past. As was the case in Nigeria this year, the threats of violence and insecurity can hamper voter turnout and undermine the credibility of the results. Having a respected and widely visible presence from the UN on the ground will help ease voters' minds and encourage them to go to the polls.

No Congolese citizen should fear physical harm or death simply for exercising their basic human right to cast a ballot. Third, the UN - with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights - can activate its special procedures, including country visits from special rapporteurs. These officials can be tasked with ensuring that the electoral context is conducive to a free and fair vote while also publicly acknowledging the shortcomings and providing informed remedies for them. As part of this mandate, UN special rapporteurs should engage in advocacy, raise public awareness and provide advice for technical cooperation - both inside and outside the UN - to ensure that our institutions fulfil their mandate to the Congolese people. Inaction ahead of the December election is unjustifiable and dangerous. Another inherently flawed election will further undermine stability and peace in the country, fortifying a sense of hopelessness among Congolese citizens that has prevailed for a generation. There is a palpable tension and widespread frustration, and we are getting close to a breaking point. Our country and the wider region can ill afford the disastrous and entirely preventable repercussions of an unfair presidential poll. We will continue doing all that we can on the ground to register citizens to vote, to encourage them to turn out on election day and to ultimately hold our leaders accountable. But we need help from international bodies - those who purport to stand for and support democracy worldwide - to join us in this endeavour. It is not too late to do so.



## Putin's gangster state is bleeding his forces dry

**IT comes as no surprise that Vladimir Putin rules Russia in spectacularly corrupt fashion. We all know how money is siphoned from the state and funnelled to his allies and oligarchs, as well as his own pocket. For years, this systemic corruption strengthened his grip on power, yet for his forces in Ukraine - despite the stalemate on the front lines, and undue pessimism from certain quarters - this criminality continues to do the opposite, slowly but steadily weakening the Russian ability to wage war and eroding Putin's ability to control events.**

Despite appearances, the Russian invasion is still falling apart - quite literally in the case of some poorly maintained vehicles and naval equipment - as a direct result of the rot at the heart of the Kremlin. The news that a Russian tank commander was arrested last week and accused of stealing the engines out of battle tanks comes as no surprise; neither are the recent revelations of the decrepit state of much of the Russian navy. It's the perfect illustration of the insurmountable moral rot plaguing Putin's gangster state. The spectacular losses of armoured vehicles suffered by Moscow's forces was initially a surprise to Western analysts; now I'm inclined to think they may well have been sitting ducks, with critical components sold for scrap or maintained on the cheap. In hindsight, we should have seen it coming: I can remember stories from my

time serving as a tank commander in the Cold War facing off against the Russians in Germany. It was common to hear about Russian tank soldiers stealing engine coolant to drink for its intoxicating properties or flogging diesel supplies to buy food.

As for the state of the navy, Russia's only aircraft carrier, Admiral Kuznetsov, has been out of action since 2018 thanks to a toxic combination of botched repairs and blatant illegality. In March 2021, the general director of the shipyard was arrested in connection with embezzlement of funds. The carrier is not predicted to return to active service until 2024 at the earliest. Meanwhile, the similarly antiquated nuclear-powered flagship of the Northern fleet, Peter the Great, will probably have to be scrapped because it is too expensive to modernise. So much for a country "bouncing back" from its earlier humiliations in Ukraine, such as the memorable sinking of the Moskva. It is worth remembering, too, that many in the intelligence community believe that even Putin's trump card - his much-vaunted tactical nuclear weapons - would not actually work properly because of age and mismanagement, even if the soldiers manning them could be persuaded to deploy them, which is far from clear.

As a former soldier, I remain certain this rot will inevitably deprive Russians of the will to fight. The most effective soldiers the

Kremlin has left are the criminals that have been sprung out of jails across Russia to fight with the mercenary Wagner Group. But the moral component to fighting spirit is embedded in the belief and right of the fight, and the "silver" shilling of encouragement will only glint for so long. Russian gold is now badly tarnished and the exploitation of the people by a small elite is now all too obvious. The Kremlin's coin will eventually poison those who cherish it and lead to Russia's capitulation. The timing of this implosion will entirely depend on Western resilience to keep giving Ukraine the weapons it needs to drain the Russians of their morale and ability to fight. Reports that Ukrainian units are having to ration shells when they have the might of so many advanced industrialised countries behind them shames us all. This is 2023, not 1915. To those who think Russia can still summon an unstoppable wave of men and materiel like in the Second World War, think again. Putin's gangsters have pillaged their own country, normalised corruption throughout the ranks of the military, and, in doing so, doomed themselves to defeat. The moral corruption endemic in Russia will bring Putin down, as it has countless tyrants before him. It is only a matter of time, if the West shows the same resilience in supporting Ukraine as the Ukrainians have in defending their country.

The Telegraph

## The SNP has declared war on justice

Matthew Scott

**YOU might think that sexual cases are often hard to prove because they frequently depend upon the credibility of just two people. You might also think that where juries find it impossible to be sure where the truth lies, it is better to let the guilty off than to convict the innocent. These views, however, are no longer held by the Scottish Government. For the SNP-led administration, the relatively high acquittal rate in Scottish rape cases is not attributed to the natural caution of ordinary people agonising over momentous decisions in the absence of conclusive evidence.**

Instead, it is attributed to what it calls "rape myths," such as the belief "that previous sexual contact between a complainant and an accused is indicative of consent." Since ordinary people can't be trusted to eschew such wrongthink, rape cases need to be decided only by those who have been trained in rightthink. In short: it does not trust juries to make the right decision. Whether all such "rape myths" are in fact "myths" is another question, but the belief that juries acquit because of them has long been an article of faith amongst campaigners. It was given some support by academic research on Scottish mock juries, although research on actual jurors who deliberated on real cases (albeit in England and Wales) reached a very different conclusion. The Victims Witnesses, and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill contains the most radical proposals for changes in criminal procedure in the British Isles since judge-only "Diplock"

courts were introduced for terrorist trials in Northern Ireland. In many ways the proposed changes are even more far-reaching. Central to the Bill is the establishment of a "Sexual Offences Court" to try any case involving a sexual allegation. It will be "trauma informed." Judges and advocates - whether prosecution or defence - will only be allowed to practise in it after completing an "approved" course of training on "trauma-informed practice." This vague expression is defined as: "...processes and practices, based on [the] understanding of the effects of trauma, to seek to avoid, or minimise the risk of, exposing the person to any recurrence of past trauma or further trauma." These are similar to the processes and practices which led the Metropolitan Police to "believe the victim," even when the "victim" turned out to be someone like the shameless liar Carl Beech. Taking care not to upset Mr Beech - by seeking to avoid anything, such as scepticism, that might have exposed him to a recurrence of past trauma - seemed to lead to a blinkered investigation which sadly increased the trauma for his innocent victims. We don't know exactly what these "approved courses" on trauma informed practice will teach, but it takes little imagination to guess that they will encourage practices that improve the chances of convictions. Courses focusing on the prevention of the considerable trauma of facing false allegations will certainly not be approved.

There are many other proposals which are also transparently designed to increase conviction rates, and not only in sexual cases. Scottish juries currently consist of 15 people, and - unlike in England and Wales and most common law jurisdictions where either unanimity or near unanimity is required - can convict on a simple majority. Scottish law thus provides the unique safeguard of a "not proven" verdict. Now it is to be abolished. Instead juries will be reduced to 12, with a two-thirds majority sufficient for a conviction. Without the safeguard of "not proven," to allow convictions on such a slender majority makes a mockery of the need for the jury to be "sure beyond reasonable doubt." But it is the proposal for the establishment of a judge-only court for rape cases that has attracted the greatest controversy. The court will run as an experiment for an indefinite period. If it leads to more convictions it will no doubt be judged a success and made permanent. Admittedly some of the criticisms of the proposal have been rather silly. Magna Carta has been cited, but King John's settlement with the English barons has no relevance to the Scottish legal system.

And nor is there anything inherently unjust about judge-only trials. Many minor criminal cases both north and south of the border are tried by Sheriffs or District Judges. What is truly objectionable about the proposals is that they are not being introduced to improve justice, but to ensure that those whom ordinary people would have acquitted will in the future be tried by a cadre of the elite who can be reliably trusted to find them guilty.

## Contempt for rules is shaking the foundations of British democracy

**ANY competition with a prize worth having attracts cheats. That is as true of politics as it is of sport. Whether cheats prosper depends on a combination of regulation and culture. There must be rules, enforced by independent institutions, but also an ethos of honouring the rules, policed by conscience. The introduction of mandatory voter ID for local elections in England this week is doubly insidious because it smuggles dishonourable intent in a measure purporting to strengthen the rules.**

On paper, the demand that voters show photographic proof that they are who they say they are is a protection against fraud. In reality, the crime being thwarted - lying about your name to steal someone else's ballot paper - is vanishingly rare. It is a cumbersome way to rig a poll. Each impersonation alters the outcome by just one vote. To swing the result, a cheating campaign would need an army of serial liars, probably with multiple disguises. An easier way to skew elections is to make it harder for some people to vote. Under the new rules, pensioners will be allowed into a polling both if they show their bus passes. Younger people with an equivalent travel document will be turned away. The bar for admissible ID is lower for older voters because they tilt Tory. It is hard to predict what the impact of this rule will be. Not much, perhaps. But changing the rules of a competition in ways designed to disadvantage one side is cheating, even if that side still does well. Making it harder to vote limits the number of voices that are heard in an election. It is a reasonable assumption that new barriers to democratic participation will obstruct those who already feel marginalised by the political process. Encouraging abstention is a way to boost incumbent power.

This is low-grade stuff by international standards of electoral malpractice. Britain is not a country where polling stations are pantomime scenery to flatter some despot's ego. Thursday's votes will be cast freely and counted fairly. The Tories are dabbling amateurs in democratic subterfuge compared with US Republicans, whose position in Congress is fortified by aggressive voter suppression and gerrymandered boundaries. But that comparison is hardly encouraging given how much British conservatism borrows from across the Atlantic in the field of campaign techniques and ideology. Stitching up elections is not a left or rightwing proclivity. People who like power resent the idea of giving it away, regardless of the doctrine that won it for them in the first place. Clinging on is easy for tyrants with tools of state repression at their disposal in countries that have little or no history of peaceful transitions between regimes. In established democracies, governed by the rule of law, methods of subversion have to be more subtle.

When supporters of Donald Trump stormed the Capitol on 6 January 2021 they were defeated by the resilience of the US constitution and a culture of democratic order still capable of pricking enough Republican consciences into repudiating the insurrection. But those safeguards are not enough to disqualify Trump from another run at the White House on a platform of denial that he lost in 2020. His supporters believe that democracy is an American virtue, but only if election results validate their choice of candidate and their prejudices. British politics is not that polarised. If the Tories lose the next election, there will be no mob storming the

Commons to insist that Rishi Sunak stay in No 10. There was a pale approximation of Trumpian denial in the campaign by Tory MPs for Boris Johnson's restoration to Downing Street when Liz Truss's government unravelled last autumn. Sanity prevailed. Johnson doesn't pretend to still be in power, but nor does he accept any responsibility for his downfall. He narrates the events of last summer as a spasmodic panic by lily-livered colleagues over-reacting to opinion polls, which had dipped in response to bogus scandals and slanders against a blameless leader.

That implausible configuration of events gets a conspiratorial twist from the recruitment of Sue Gray, the former senior cabinet office official who investigated Partygate, to be Keir Starmer's chief of staff. The move was not unprecedented, but hardly an advertisement for civil service impartiality. Johnson denounces it as evidence that Whitehall was agitating against him all along, in covert service to the opposition. The flaw in that theory is that he was guilty of attending lockdown parties and got a fixed penalty notice for breaking the rules. The public turned against him because they saw the facts and understood the kind of man he was. Also, Johnson claimed Gray's report exonerated him when it was first published, in which case she must have drafted it in betrayal of her mission as a Labour secret agent. The former Tory leader's model of the dutiful civil servant is not someone who upholds the integrity of the system but someone adept at moulding it to prime ministerial caprice; someone like Sir Simon Case. The cabinet secretary makes a significantly enigmatic appearance in last week's report by

Adam Heppinstall KC, investigating the recruitment of Richard Sharp as BBC chair around the same time that he was brokering a bailout scheme for Johnson's shambolic personal finances. Heppinstall describes a meeting between Case and Sharp at which conflicts of interest were discussed, but no minutes were taken. Both men declare hazy recollections of the episode.

Anthony Seldon, Johnson's most recent biographer, reports that Case was elevated to the top civil service job, despite never having run a department, because no properly qualified candidate would submit to the will of Dominic Cummings, then in command of No 10. Private accounts of the way Case serviced Johnson remind me of record company executives who squeamishly enable their biggest stars' self-destructive habits in order to keep the show on the road, because the show is also their career. That is not what the civil service is for. But its function as a non-partisan machine for the delivery of government policy is hard to maintain in a culture that values ideological purity over administrative competence and measures fitness for office in subservience to a party leader. The partisan impulse to capture the civil service - and discredit the parts that resist capture - is symptomatic of a wider corrosion of democratic traditions and institutions by winner-takes-all populism. It is a depletion of the pluralist spirit that allows rival parties to compete for power, confident of two things. First, a defeated party recognises the legitimate authority of the government. Second, the winning party doesn't change the rules to lock the losers out of power. The integrity of electoral politics rests on those twin pillars of trust. Thankfully they are still standing in Britain. But they are not standing straight.

The Guardian

## Pew study finds Asian Americans identify themselves in diverse ways

Liam Scott

**THERE is diversity in the ways Asian American adults identify themselves, a new report found, with about half saying they most often describe themselves by the ethnic labels that reflect their heritage, and the other half saying they describe themselves as American. The study, released Monday by the Pew Research Center, also found that 90% say Asians living in the United States have many different cultures. Among all adults in the United States, 80% say Asians in the country have many different cultures.**

The study is part of Pew's multi-year effort to better understand views and opinions of Asian Americans. The researchers polled 7,006 Asian adults between July 2022 and January of this year, making it the largest nationally representative survey of its kind to date. "Doing this survey was really important because in the polling industry and public opinion industry in general, you see very little on Asian Americans," said Neil Ruiz, head of New Research Initiatives at Pew. There are about 24 million Asian Americans in the United States, comprising about 6% of the US population, but public opinion polling historically gives the community very little attention, according to Ruiz. Pew wanted "to really understand the spectrum of Asian Americans views," Ruiz told VOA.

Pew found that although there is significant diversity among Asian

American communities, there is also a shared experience among all Asian Americans. There's a sense of "a linked fate" among Asian Americans, Ruiz said. Asian American adults report feeling connected with other Asian Americans, with about six-in-10 saying they feel connected to other Asians in the country. About two-thirds said it is extremely or very important to have a national leader advocating for the Asian populations in the United States, and about six-in-10 saying what happens to other Asians in the country affects their own lives. Of the 24 million Asian Americans in the United States, about 17.8 million are adults. The six largest origin groups in the United States -- Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese and Japanese -- account for 81% of all Asian American adults.

Pew found that 24% of Asian Americans say they are extremely or very informed about the history of Asians in the United States, compared to an equal share who say they are little or not at all informed. Most of those who are very or extremely informed say they learned about this history through informal channels like the internet. Most Asian American registered voters identified with the Democratic Party, according to the report. The study found that 68% of Indian registered voters, 68% of Filipino registered voters, 67% of Korean registered

voters, and 56% of Chinese registered voters associate themselves with the Democratic Party. In contrast, a little over half of Vietnamese registered voters lean toward the Republican Party. To avoid making over-generalizations about a large community whose members have widely varied experiences, Ruiz said Pew made sure the sample size was large enough. Still, research remains limited when it comes to less populous Asian origin groups in the country, Pew said. To help address that shortcoming, the survey was complemented by 66 presurvey focus groups of Asian adults representing 18 Asian origin groups. The Pew study follows a reported rise in anti-Asian hate crimes in the United States.

In March, the FBI released hate-crime statistics for 2021 that cited 746 attacks targeting people of Asian descent across the country, up from 249 the previous year and the most ever recorded in a single year. The report "Righting Wrongs" was released last week by Stop AAPI Hate, a coalition co-founded by AAPI Equity Alliance, Chinese for Affirmative Action and the San Francisco State University Asian American Studies Department. The report found that during the rise of COVID-19-related anti-Asian racism, nearly half of people from Asian American and Pacific Islander communities faced discrimination or unfair treatment. "Half of those who

faced discrimination reported negative effects on their mental health, 45% said discrimination changed their sense of belonging and roughly a quarter said their experience strained close relationships," according to the report. "Yet only one in five reported the violation and a majority of those who reported said the process was difficult," according to the report. It was based on a survey of 1,331 people was conducted by the 82-year-old NORC nonpartisan research institution at the University of Chicago from November 30, 2022 - December 22, 2022.

Meanwhile, the Pew study found that one-in-five Asian Americans adults say they have hidden part of their heritage from non-Asians, sometimes out of fear of embarrassment or discrimination. Asian adults between the ages of 18 and 29 were more likely to have hidden part of their heritage than Asians over the age of 65. Those born in the United States are also more likely to have done so than immigrants. Since Asian Americans are often ignored in polling and public opinion surveys, Ruiz said he hopes it will be meaningful for Asian Americans to see themselves represented in such an extensive study. "It's also about educating the general public, policymakers, schools, educators, philanthropists -- they will be able to use this data to really understand what are the needs of the Asian American population," Ruiz added.

VOA

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Economy and technology

# Pakistan, Ethiopia ready for significant progress

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Innovation and Technology of Ethiopia Dr Foziya Amin said on Saturday that visit of Ethiopian delegation to Pakistan would contribute to further strengthen trade ties between both countries. She said that there are vast opportunities of cooperation between both countries in various fields including economy, IT, science and technology. She stressed the need to should take full benefit of them as Pakistan is an important country for Ethiopia in South Asia due to its geographical location and similarly, Ethiopia is a gateway for Pakistan in Africa. She said this while

addressing a luncheon reception hosted by Engineer Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President, ICCI in honor of the visiting Ethiopian delegation. Dr. Foziya Amin said that women have an important role in the economic development of a country and appreciated the role of Pakistani women in various fields including business and economy. Speaking on the occasion President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that Ethiopia should play its role to get an observer state status for Pakistan in the African Union. He said that the African Union is a strong forum of the African nations and being an observer state,

Pakistan can play its role in developing economic and trade relations among the African, South Asian and Central Asian countries. He said that both countries should make joint efforts for economic integration and participation in regional and global economic and trade activities. Jemal Beker Abdula, Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan said that the start of direct flights by the Ethiopian airline with Pakistan would be helpful in improving business and investment relations between the two countries. Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that both countries can cooperate in textiles, agri-

culture, construction and many other fields. He termed the opening of a full-fledged Ethiopian embassy in Pakistan and start of direct flights as a welcome development between the two countries. Khalid Iqbal Malik, former President and Group Leader highlighted the investment potential for Ethiopia in Pakistan's tourism sector and stressed that they should take full advantage of it. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President & Secretary General UBG said that Ethiopia is a growing economy and start of its direct flights with Pakistan would help both countries to further strengthen economic ties.



ISLAMABAD: Chaudhry Anwar Ul Haq Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir meeting with Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Finance Division.

## Pakistan Chemical Forum to hold mega exhibition

LAHORE (APP): A three-day mega exhibition, 'Pakistan Chemical Forum', will be held here at Expo Centre from May 18, 2023. Pakistan Chemistry Council (PCC) Chief Executive Officer Moazzam Rasheed disclosed this to the media in a press conference, held here on Saturday. Mian Salman from Bazaar Industrial (Pvt) Limited, Imran Sluhria from DS Enterprises and Muhammad Ahmad from Shalimar Industries also accompanied him. Organised by B2B Media (Pvt) Limited and PCC, he added, the show would be serving as the biggest trade platform to showcase chemicals, raw materials, plants & machinery, analytical equipment and finished products etc. He mentioned that the event aimed at providing a platform for industry-academia linkage and also served as a good step for enhancing the exports of Pakistan. Caretaker Provincial Minister for Local Governments Ibrahim Hassan Murad would inaugurate Pakistan Chemical Forum where a vast range of products from local and

foreign companies of paint, footwear, construction, sealants, total lab solution provider for analytical instruments, consumables, testing services, textile and various other sectors would be displayed at over 250 stalls, he maintained. The CEO said that seminars and conferences would also be part of this show where participants would get a chance to attend presentations of key personnel from industry and academia. Workshops and training in the show would help the professional and student bodies to enhance skills through learning, knowledge sharing, capacity building and interactive session. More than 120 foreign delegates would be joining to understand and share their contribution towards Pakistan's industry. The 2nd PAKCHEM Expo would focus on speciality and commodity chemicals, petrochemicals and allied industries etc. having estimated revenue of US\$1.1 billion and exports US\$30.36 million; 9th Pakistan Coating Show would deal in coatings, paints, inks, sealants, construction chemicals and

surface finishes having estimated revenue of US \$16.9 billion and exports US\$1 billion; 3rd Pakistan Polyurethane Expo would deal in foams, construction, footwear, insulation - appliances, flexible and rigid application. The component of chemical sector has estimated revenue of US \$ 4.62 billion and export volume of US\$85.4 million; and 4th PAKLAB Expo would focus on total lab solution including analytical instruments, consumables, testing services and furniture having an estimated revenue of US \$ 600 million and export volume of US \$ 80.4 million. He said that a new concept of ChemSMART would be introduced where the basic concept behind the Smart Startups programme would be for the new graduate to present their innovative ideas to the business leaders in the relevant field during Pakistan Chemical Forum. Aligning with the objectives of the Pakistan Chemistry Council, the idea is to bring business leaders, academia and students with their smart/innovative projects under one roof, he concluded.

## PM AJK calls on Dar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar Ul Haq called on Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. He apprised the finance minister of development schemes and projects in the region and their financing, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Finance on Saturday. The finance minister expressed the commitment of the federal government to the development and progress of all regions including Azad Jammu & Kashmir. Ishaq Dar extended possible support of the federal government to the AJK government in its quest for economic progress and development. Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq thanked the finance minister for extending support for the progress of the people of Kashmir.

## Inflation stays above 48%

ISLAMABAD (INP): The weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator, witnessed an increase of 0.27% to jump to 48.02% on a year-on-year basis for the week ending on May 11, official data showed. The short-term inflation rose by an all-time high of 48.35% for the period that ended on May 4. Out of the 51 monitored items, the average price of 23 items increased, 7 items decreased whereas 21 items registered no change during the week. During the week under review, the items whose prices increased the most over the same week a year ago were: potatoes (112.80%), gas chafers for Q1 (108.38%), tea Lipton (106.09%), wheat flour (101.20%), gents sponge chpal (100.33%), diesel (99.39%), bananas (98.22%), rice basmati broken (90.76%), eggs (89.40%), petrol (87.81%), rice irri-6/9 (83.47%), pulse moong (66.91%), bread (62.83%) and pulse mash (58.79%).

## Pak to start exporting boiled meat to China

BEIJING (APP): With a huge potential to export meat, Pakistan is all set to start exporting boiled meat to the Chinese market in the near future, said Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counsellor, Pakistan Embassy, Beijing on Saturday. "China had agreed to import meat from Pakistan during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Beijing in November last. Now, both sides are in the process of exchanging documents and hopefully, the agreement would be implemented in a month," he told APP. He informed that before its export, the meat

would be boiled up to 70 degrees centigrade to make it foot and mouth disease (FMD) free. "Three processing plants of Fauji, Tata and Green set up in Karachi have already been approved by the relevant authorities of China. These plants have good reputation and capacity", Qadir added. He stressed a need to work on the value chain and adopt corporate forming to enhance quality to increase its exports. "The potential investors in Pakistan should utilize modern techniques and improve processing facilities

ties to grab this opportunity," Qadir urged. Responding to a question, he said that Pakistan's current meat export was about 66,000 tons annually but the Chinese market's demand was huge. He informed that one Chinese company had a plan to import 50,000 tons of meat but "we don't want to see a shortage of beef or high prices of this food item in Pakistan". The commercial counsellor opined that Pakistan could increase meat production through investment, technology and corporate forming.

## LCCI calls for national unity, Charter of Economy

LAHORE (APP): In the wake of four days of intense political unrest, the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) urged all political parties on Saturday to set aside their differences and prioritise revival of the national economy. LCCI President Kashif Anwar told the media here that due to tense political situation, the nation faced staggering economic losses worth billions of rupees as well as tragic loss of life and property. Citing the latest data, released by economic analysts, he said the ongoing political unrest had resulted

in an estimated loss of over Rs 10 billion to the country's economy. This figure included the direct impact on businesses, the decline in consumer spending, disruptions in supply chains, and the adverse effects on investor confidence. The unrest had also dealt a severe blow to multiple sectors including manufacturing, tourism, and services. President Kashif Anwar called for national unity and emphasised the need for a cohesive and concerted effort to address the economic challenges at hand. He proposed the signing of

a comprehensive Charter of Economy, which should be aimed to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and promote local investment as key drivers of economic recovery. Kashif Anwar said the proposed Charter of Economy would encompass a range of strategic measures including policies to enhance the ease of doing business, establish investor-friendly regulations, develop robust infrastructure, and foster a conducive environment for domestic and international investors. These initiatives were designed to revitalize eco-

nomie growth, generate employment opportunities, and stimulate sustainable development across various sectors. "As the nation grappled with the aftermath of recent political unrest, the implementation of a comprehensive Charter of Economy stands as a beacon of hope, offering a pathway to economic recovery and the restoration of investor confidence," he said and added that time was now for political parties to heed the call for unity and charting a course towards a resilient and thriving national economy.

## TEVTA to arrange summer skills camps for students

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Industries & Trade SM Tanveer chaired a meeting here on Saturday to discuss plans for a summer skills camp, aimed at imparting training to students from the government schools and colleges, at TEVTA (Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority) Secretariat. The provincial departments of Industries, Schools Education and

Higher Education would collaborate to organise the camps, and a formal agreement signing ceremony would be held on May 15. SM Tanveer said that the summer skills camps would provide training in 14 different trades to students from across Punjab. The Programme would offer free three-month short courses to 1500 students during the summer vacation. The minister highlighted the significance of

summer skills camp as a valuable initiative by the government. He acknowledged that it would contribute to a brighter future of students. Additionally, he suggested inclusion of trade-related courses and involvement of chambers of commerce & industry to benefit the local industry. Secretary Industries Ehsan Bhutta said classes would be conducted from June 1 to August 31. Male and female students would

be able to enroll in these three-month short courses free of charge, without any tuition or examination fees. The meeting was attended by Senior DG TEVTA Akhtar Abbas Bharrwana, COO Ahmad Khawar Shahzad, Chairman Punjab Board of Technical Education, and representatives from the School Education and Higher Education Departments. Furthermore, commissioners also participated in the meeting via video-link.

## SDPI, RPL sign MoU to reduce environmental footprint

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Roshan Packages Limited (RPL) here on Saturday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate in the promotion of circularity and recycling in product packaging to reduce the environmental footprint of businesses and consumption. Both the institutions will jointly organize capacity development initiatives on Governance and

Leadership, joint research, CSR activities and professional training for executives and senior management in the corporate, development institutions. In this regard, both institutions also agreed on holding national and international training, workshops, study tours and business development models to reduce the volume of single-use plastics and other products, said a news release. Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri,

Executive Director SDPI reiterated the SDPI's commitment to providing continued support to the public and private sectors in achieving and strengthening circularity by bringing research and evidence-backed international best practices in Pakistan. He said that unfortunately, the country transitioned from a circular economic model in the past to a high-consumption and waste-based model. He stressed that circularity was a gener-

ic concept in Pakistan and South Asia which had existed in the informal waste collection and recycling sector and said that the uptake of the circular economic model is not a far-fetched idea. Tayyab Aijaz, the CEO of Roshan Packages Limited, said that the journey of Roshan Packages started with high-quality packaging for export products and later the company introduced flexible packaging.

## TRT's Global Streaming Service "tabii" is live!

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Türkiye's public broadcaster, TRT, having won the hearts of viewers around the world with its popular productions, introduced its global streaming service, "tabii", to satisfy the demand for Turkish content. With the slogan "Stories That Bond Us", tabii was first announced by the Presidency's Director of Communications, Fahrettin Altun, in a star studded event in Istanbul on 2nd of May 2023. tabii offers fast and exclusive access to a wide range of high-quality, family friendly content that embraces different cultures, and appeals to common values of its international audience. tabii is starting with more than 30 exclusive original productions along with entertaining fan favourite TV series, blockbuster movies, award winning documentaries and kids content. The full streaming service is free of charge in Türkiye. For the global audience, tabii is initially available via third-party platforms such as YouTube and Roku at an affordable

subscription fee. International apps are scheduled to launch later this year in English, Spanish, Arabic and Urdu with more language options coming soon. With over 55 years of experience in broadcasting, TRT currently reaches 7 continents through 18 TV networks, 17 radio stations, and digital platforms in 41 languages and dialects. Always at the forefront of innovation, TRT through tabii offers a unique perspective to the global streaming market with its storytelling that explores the cultures, heritage and values of different geographies. tabii launched with a vast selection of content that includes new exclusive original series in different genres, licensed productions and popular TRT content from its extensive library. Turkish productions already have over 800 million viewers in 146 countries in Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa and the Americas with more than 150 TV series. Being a new player in the industry, tabii will become the leader of Türkiye's digital streaming sector

which projects a substantial increase in TV series exports starting from 2023. The Presidency's Director of Communications Fahrettin Altun reiterated this in his speech, "TRT's global streaming service tabii will be on its way as a crucial actor and will have a positive influence on the other streaming services in the global arena." He further stated that, "it will play a crucial part in the creation of even better quality content with real social and cultural grounds. Thus, this global streaming service will serve both the sector and our country adding to the strength of the Türkiye brand." "Stories That Bond Us" by tabii tabii aims to be a leading global streaming service where communities can unite and gather as a family around universal values, where everyone can find a piece of themselves and bond over shared stories. It provides its viewers with a wide range of original content ranging from the lives of beloved historical figures to superheroes' struggles against global disasters, action-packed produc-



tions to dystopian dramas, animations for kids to entertaining content for youth with new and fan favourite characters. Audiences can discover a vast selection of entertaining content in various genres including action, period, drama, sci-fi, comedy, mystery, romantic comedy, and thriller. In line with its mission for international accessibility, the global streaming service tabii's high quality content can be enjoyed by viewers dubbed and subtitled in Turkish, English, Spanish, Arabic and Urdu. More language options will be available soon to further expand tabii's reach.

tabii puts a spotlight on cultural diversity Built on Turkish stories admired by large audiences around the world, tabii set off with a unique streaming experience of rich content appealing to the common values and diversity of various cultures, with something for everyone in the family. These stories are woven with love, bravery, empathy and triumph creating inspiring storylines that represent the collective human values. In addition to popular and now classic Turkish productions, tabii offers a robust slate of exclusive originals and licensed content that put a spotlight on the stories of a

culturally diverse audience underrepresented in the mainstream media. In his speech, TRT's Director General Mehmet Zahid Sobac said, "Developed in line with our motto 'a fairer world is possible' on digital space as well, this streaming service is taking the first step of its adventure today to become our country's new global brand." And continued that "We dare to be the primary channel to meet the need for family-oriented content around the globe. We tell the stories of billions of people who are left out of billions of productions." Mr. Sobac further emphasised "Against the state of the current system, through tabii, we will share our culture, the value of tradition and family to tell the accurate stories of communities that are largely underrepresented in mainstream media." tabii starts with more than 30 original productions Drawing inspiration from the global success of shows such as "Resurrection: Erturul", "Barbarossa: Sword of the Mediterranean" and "The Inno-

cents", tabii launched with more than 30 original, family-friendly and high-quality productions exclusively produced for the streaming service. Stories such as the beloved "Rumi" which highlights the life of the scholar, poet and teacher; "Free Sky" shares the action-packed stories of the Turkish Air Force and fighter jets; TRT's popular production "Little Archer: Iskender" returns with its brand new adventures; "Say No More" with a dose of humour and an entertaining cast and "The Last Day" which brings together famous actors in the psychological thriller and "Altay" the first project of the new superhero universe. Other original shows that are available on tabii are: Reckoning, Akif, Marriage at al., Dayton, Gilani the Ascetic, Golden Apple: The Great Conquest, Off-White, Young Ibn Sina, Modern Tales of the East, Say No More, Independence, The Supporting Actor, Universally, Ramazan Bey's Mansion, The Biltmore Hotel Assassination, Metamorphosis, The Estranged, The Flop-Out,

The Network, Deep Purple, The Gate, Land of Loyals, Green Sea: Millennium and The Return of Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah. Brand new content for youth tabii offers various options for the most colourful and energetic members of the family and breaks new grounds by introducing a large volume of exclusive high quality originals dedicated to youth. tabii resonates with the youth through its dynamic tone, touching their lives by introducing them to different worlds. The global audience can access tabii content on YouTube and Roku The full streaming service is available free of charge in Türkiye. For global audiences, it is initially accessible via third-party platforms such as YouTube (youtube.com/@tabii) and Roku (depending on the availability of platform in respective country) at an affordable subscription fee in Turkish, English, Spanish, Arabic and Urdu, with more language options coming soon. International apps are scheduled to launch later this year.





In brief

Alcaraz beats Ramos-Vinolas

ROME (Agencies): Carlos Alcaraz marked his return to the world number one ranking by comfortably seeing off fellow Spaniard Albert Ramos-Vinolas 6-4, 6-1 in his first ever match at the Italian Open. In-form Alcaraz ensured top spot just by taking to the court to play his second round match in Rome as he seeks a third straight tournament win. The 20-year-old will overtake Novak Djokovic in the ATP rankings and is now assured of the top seeding at the French Open later this month. The Spaniard became the youngest ever world number one thanks to his US Open triumph last September, with Djokovic denied entry to the United States because of his Covid vaccination status. Alcaraz will begin his 23rd week at world number one on May 22. The second seed arrived in the Italian capital on a fine run after back-to-back clay court titles in Barcelona and Madrid, and he made short work of Ramos-Vinolas. He took control of the match in what turned out to be the final game of the first set, breaking Ramos-Vinolas to take the lead in what had been up to that point a hard-fought match. From there Alcaraz went through the gears, unleashing a wide repertoire of shots which left Ramos-Vinolas bamboozled and set up a third round clash with either Jiri Lehecka or Fabian Marozsan.

Real Madrid lose \$440 million sponsorship battle

M A D R I D (Agencies): Spanish soccer's Real Madrid have lost a \$440 million court battle with Abu Dhabi sovereign investor Mubadala over the proposed sponsorship of its stadium in Madrid, sources with knowledge of the case told Reuters. Real Madrid had claimed 400 million euros (\$440 million) from Mubadala because it said the Abu Dhabi sovereign investor failed to honour a sponsorship deal under which it would acquire rights to name the Santiago Bernabeu stadium for 20 years. "The arbitral tribunal constituted under the rules of the Court of International Trade in Paris has ruled in favour of (Mubadala)," the source told Reuters. In 2014, Real agreed a strategic partnership with Abu Dhabi Fuel International Petroleum Investment Co (IPIC), now Mubadala, to help finance a planned stadium overhaul. The project was meant to add a striking new roof and exterior to the current structure and include a hotel and a shopping centre, to help the world's richest club by income boost its revenue. However, in 2015, a Madrid court halted the original modification of the stadium. A later plan, approved by Madrid city council in 2017, was different to the one agreed by the soccer club and Mubadala. The court ruled the sponsorship contract had expired by the time the second expansion was agreed in 2017. Allen & Overy y GBS Disputes advised IPIC Mubadala and Alonso & Dfrez-Hochleitner Abogados y Pérez-Llorca advised Real Madrid Mubadala's holdings include Spanish energy firm Compania Espanola de Petroleos.

# Shahzaib's century gives Pakistan U19 one-day series win

RAJSHAHI (Monitoring Desk): Shahzaib Khan's unbeaten century led Pakistan U19 to an eight-wicket win over Bangladesh U19 in the fourth one-day at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi on Saturday. The win gives Pakistan U19 an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series.

Chasing 200 runs to win, the opening pair of Shahzaib and Azan Awaish provided a solid 152-run start to the innings. The left-handed Azan, who scored 105 in the second one-day match, was the first one to return back to the hut after scoring a 91-ball 52, which included seven boundaries.

Shamyl Hussain (7, 12b, 1x4) was next to join Azan

as Pakistan U19 were 167 for two in 32.4 overs. At that moment, captain Saad Baig partnered with Shahzaib to stitch an unbroken 35 runs for the third wicket to help the side achieve the target in the 37th over. In the partnership, Shahzaib brought up his century and returned unbeaten on 105 off 105 deliveries, smashing 14 fours and one six.

After being put into bat, Bangladesh U19 were dismissed for 199 in 46.4 overs. Ariful Islam top-scored for his side with a 95-ball 50, which included four fours and one six.

For Pakistan U19, right-arm fast Aimal Khan and left-arm spinner Ali Asfand bagged three wickets each.

Both sides will now feature in the fifth match of the

series at the same venue on Monday, 15 May. Pakistan U19, who have earlier won the solitary four-day match by 10 wickets played at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram, will aim to end the 50-over series 4-1.

Scores in brief: Pakistan U19 beat Bangladesh U19 by eight wickets

Bangladesh U19 199 all out, 46.4 overs (Ariful Islam 50, Mahfuzur Rahman Rabby 34, Parviz Rahman Jibon 30; Aimal Khan 3-34, Ali Asfand 3-39, Arafat Minhas 2-26)

Pakistan U19 202-2, 36.5 overs (Shahzaib Khan 105 not out, Azan Awaish 52, Saad Baig 29 not out)

Player of the match – Shahzaib Khan (Pakistan U19)

## Pakistan Shaheens hand Zimbabwe A an innings defeat

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Shaheens defeated Zimbabwe A by an innings and 41 runs on the fourth day of the second four-day match at the Mutare Sports Club in Mutare, Zimbabwe on Saturday.

It took only 9.3 overs for the visitors to wrap up the innings and take the remaining three wickets as Zimbabwe A could add only 37 runs to their overnight score of 238 for seven in 76 overs, according to information made available here by Pakistan Cricket Board.

For Pakistan Shaheens, right-arm fast Mohammad Ali bagged three wickets for 49 runs. He ended up with match figures of seven for 85. Shahnawaz Dahani and Aamir Jamal snapped two wickets apiece in the second innings. The win means Pakistan Shaheens have completed a clean-sweep over Zimbabwe A across the two four-day matches. Shaheens won the first four-day match by eight wickets which was played at the Kwekwe Sports Club in Kwekwe from 3-6 May.

Shaheens will now take on Zimbabwe's national side in the six-match one-day series starting from 17 May in Harare.

Scores in brief: Pakistan Shaheens beat Zimbabwe A by an innings and 41 runs.

Zimbabwe A 163 all out, 56.4 overs (Tadiwanashe Marumani 66, Dion Myers 50; Mohammad Ali 4-36, Mehran Mumtaz 3-36, Aamir Jamal 3-51) and 275 all out, 85.3 overs (Nyasha Mayavo 55, Tony Munyonga 43, Joylord Gumbie 42; Mohammad Ali 3-49, Shahnawaz Dahani 2-33, Aamir Jamal 2-45)

Pakistan Shaheens 479 all out, 116 overs (Haseebullah 117, Hussain Talat 74, Omair Bin Yousuf 65, Mohammad Huraira 64, Qasim Akram 36, Aamir Jamal 35, Imran Butt 27; Victor Nyauchi 5-125, Tanaka Chivanga 3-89)

Player of the match – Mohammad Ali (Pakistan Shaheens).

Tour schedule: 3-6 May – 1st Four-day match; KSC, Kwekwe (Pakistan Shaheens won by eight wickets) 10- 13 May – 2nd Four-day match; MSC, Mutare (Pakistan Shaheens won by an innings and 41 runs) 17 May – 1st 50-over match; TSC, Harare 19 May – 2nd 50-over match; HSC, Harare 21 May – 3rd 50-over match; HSC, Harare 23 May – 4th 50-over match; OH, Harare 25 May – 5th 50-over match; HSC, Harare 27 May – 6th 50-over match; HSC, Harare.

## Junior Age Group Squash C'ship concludes

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Junior Age Group Squash Championship concluded with Shahzeb Khan, Rania Qazi, Fawad Khan and Ahmad Ali Naz having secured their respective titles on Saturday.

Vice President (VP) Ehsanullah KP Squash Association and Director Blue Tones Squash academy Wazir Gul graced the occasion as chief guests.

Squash Legends Qamar Zaman, Mohibullah Khan, Maqsood Ahmed, Coach Majid Khan, Sajid Khan, Aamir Atlas Khan, Senior Coaches and Chief Organizer Manoor Zaman, Tahir Iqbal, Wasim Ahmed, Amjad Khan, Squash players and other officials including Chief Referee Adil Faqir, Executive Members Fazal Khalil, Sher Bahadur and other officials were present.

In the U11 final, Ahmed Ali Naz scored victory, the score was 11-6, 11-6 and 11-9, in the U13 final Fawad Khan scored 5-11, 9-11, 11-5, 11-6 and 11-9 victory and in the U15 Boys final, Shahzeb Khan scored 13- 11, 6-11, 11-5 and 11-9, while Rania Kazi secured victory by 5-11, 11-7, 11-9, 12-10 in the Girls U15 final.

In the end, trophies and other prizes were distributed among the players by both Ehsan Ullah Khan and Wazir Gul. Talking to the media, squash legend Qamar Zaman said, "The purpose of organizing age group competitions is to encourage new players to come forward.



ROME: Carlos Alcaraz celebrates after winning their singles second round match against Albert Ramos-Vinolas during day six of the Internazionali BNL D'Italia.

# PCB appoints Grant Bradburn as cricket team's head coach

LAHORE (APP): Grant Bradburn has been appointed as the head coach of the Pakistan national men's side following a robust recruitment process. He will lead the team's coaching panel for the next two years.

Bradburn served as the head coach of the side during the recently concluded home series against New Zealand on consultancy basis. The Babar Azam-led side defeated the tourists 4-1 in the five-match One-Day International series that took them to the top of the ICC Rankings in the format. The five-match T20 International series was shared 2-2.

Bradburn is well-versed about the strengths and challenges of the national side having previously served as the fielding coach of the national men's side from 2018 till 2020 before he moved to the National Cricket Academy to work on the coaches development. Prior to his roles in Pakistan, Bradburn, a former New Zealand cricketer, worked as the head coach of Scotland men's side.

PCB Management Committee chairperson Najam Sethi: "I am delighted to name Grant Bradburn as the head coach of our men's side. Bradburn joins the side with plethora of

coaching experience. After having worked with our men's side before and at the National Cricket Academy, he understands our culture and philosophy of cricket well and is an ideal candidate to take our team forward.

"After the announcement of Mickey Arthur as team director, Bradburn's appointment is another step in our endeavours of putting together a highly qualified coaching panel so our players can benefit from their experiences and dominate world cricket in all three formats."

With an eye on the prestigious ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 trophy, the Pakistan team management has also unveiled a playing style with which it will approach the tournament to be played in October and November. The style branded as The Pakistan Way will see the team approach the One-Day Internationals in the build-up and during the mega-event with positive and bold tactics and attacking strategies.

Pakistan are scheduled to feature in a three-match ODI series against Afghanistan before the 50-over ACC Asia Cup and the national side will use these opportunities to test their potential, experiment with

the bench strength and fine-tune the side ahead of the global event.

Reflecting on his appointment as the head coach of the men's side and unveiling the strategy, Grant Bradburn said: "It is a great honour for me to work with the highly talented and skilful side like Pakistan as a head coach. We have been working hard on our raising our game and are eager to showcase our growing skills. Mickey Arthur and I are excited to support, challenge and develop our players. The New Zealand series has been valuable to get game time and create clarity of roles, culture and brand to win.

"We have raised the bar of expectation and we will keep challenging our players. The process has started and our players are agreeing to take these challenges head-on. ODI cricket has evolved and our agreed expectations are aligned to being the best in the world. We have mutually agreed with our players they are capable of higher team scores, even when setting totals. There has been immediate positive signs during this series and this group of players is determined to continually improve, to put ourselves into contention to win major events."



LeBron James had 30 points, nine rebounds and nine assists as the Los Angeles Lakers eliminated the defending NBA champion Golden State Warriors.

# Lakers eliminate NBA champion Warriors with 122-101 victory

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): LeBron James had 30 points, nine rebounds and nine assists and the Los Angeles Lakers eliminated the defending NBA champion Golden State Warriors with a 122-101 victory Friday night in Game 6 of the second-round series.

The seventh-seeded Lakers will face Nikola Jokic and the top-seeded Nuggets in the Western Conference finals starting Tuesday night in Denver.

Anthony Davis had 17 points and 20 rebounds for the Lakers, who never trailed in a closeout victory that punctuated their increasingly incredible late-season surge.

Austin Reaves scored 23 points, highlighted by a 54-footer from midcourt at the halftime buzzer for the Lakers. They improved to 7-0 at home since the regular season ended with three wins in seven days over the Warriors. Los Angeles also snapped

Golden State's streak of 28 playoff series with at least one road victory – an NBA-record run encompassing Stephen Curry's entire career.

James, Davis and the Lakers are the first team since 2014 to eliminate Curry's Warriors from the playoffs before the NBA Finals. Golden State has played in six of the last eight NBA Finals, missing the playoffs entirely in the other two seasons.

Curry scored 32 points while missing 10 of his 14 3-point attempts for the sixth-seeded Warriors, whose pursuit of their fifth championship in nine seasons ended with three straight road losses and an inept offensive performance by Curry's teammates in Game 6, including a 3-of-19 effort by Klay Thompson, who missed 10 of his 12 3-point attempts.

The Splash Brothers were far too dry when it mattered against the

Lakers: Thompson went 10 for 36 on 3-pointers in the series' final four games, while Curry was 14 for 49.

HEAT 96, KNICKS 92 Jimmy Butler scored 24 points, Bam Adebayo added 23 and Miami beat New York in Game 6 to advance to the Eastern Conference finals for the 10th time overall and the third time in the last four years.

Miami became the second No. 8 seed in NBA history to make the conference finals — joining the Knicks, who pulled it off in 1999. The Heat will visit Boston or Philadelphia in Game 1 on Wednesday. The Celtics and 76ers play Game 7 of their series Sunday.

Jalen Brunson was spectacular for New York, scoring 41 points on 14-for-22 shooting. But his teammates combined for only 51 points — Julius Randle had 15 and RJ Barrett 11 on 1-for-10 shooting.



LEEDS: Elliot Anderson of Newcastle United (32) looks to control the ball during the Premier League match between Leeds United and Newcastle United.

# Leeds snatch 2-2 draw with Newcastle after penalty nightmare

LEEDS (Agencies): Rasmus Kristensen kept Leeds in contention to avoid relegation as his late leveller secured a dramatic 2-2 draw that dented Newcastle's bid to finish in the top four on Saturday.

Kristensen struck with 11 minutes left at Elland Road as Leeds hit back after conceding a pair of Callum Wilson penalties.

Leeds captain Luke Ayling had opened the scoring in a pulsating encounter with connotations at both ends of the table. Patrick Bamford missed a spot-kick that would have put Leeds two goals ahead before Wilson's penalties for Newcastle.

After Kristensen's equaliser, Leeds had defender Junior Firpo sent off for a second booking in second half stoppage-time.

Leeds moved up one place to 18th and now sit one point from safety, having played a game more than fourth bottom Everton, who host Manchester City on Sunday. Sam Allardyce's side travel to West Ham next weekend before hosting Tottenham in their final game of the season.

Leeds, without a win in seven games, face another nerve-wracking fight for survival after avoiding relegation on the final day of last season. For Newcastle, their attempt to qualify for the Champions League via

a top four finish is also set to go down to the wire.

Eddie Howe's men remain third but they are only three points above fourth placed Manchester United and four ahead of fifth placed Liverpool.

The Magpies need six points from their last three games against Brighton, Leicester and Chelsea to be sure of a top four finish.

Beaten 2-1 at Manchester City in Allardyce's first game last weekend, Leeds were playing at home for the first time under the former England boss. Allardyce's eight-month reign as Newcastle clearly left few fond memories with the Magpies fans who loudly jeered him before kick-off.

Even the reception from Leeds supporters for their new manager was polite as opposed to rapturous in an indication they viewed his appointment as a panic move after the sacking of Javi Gracia. But the mood in the stands changed from unconvinced to jubilant when Leeds made the perfect start after seven minutes.

- Leeds refuse to surrender-

Rodrigo met Bamford's cross with a header that Nick Pope could only push out to Ayling, who took advantage of Newcastle's sloppy marking to slot home from close-range.

Leeds squandered a golden opportunity to

extend their lead in the 28th minute. Firpo burst into the penalty area and Joelinton responded with a despairing challenge that sent the Leeds defender sprawling.

However, Bamford's penalty was far too close to Pope and the dived to his right to save the spot-kick. Allardyce held his head in his hands in disbelief, and there was more angst to come for the Leeds boss when Newcastle won a penalty of their own three minutes later. Bruno Guimaraes' pass picked out Alexander Isak and he was upended by Max Wober's rash tackle, conceding a spot-kick that Wilson smashed past Joel Robles.

Firpo was lucky to avoid a red card for a studs-up foul on Guimaraes, but that escape came back to haunt Leeds in the 69th minute when the defender conceded a penalty. Jumping to challenge Isak, Firpo's out-stretched hand made contact with the ball after a slight push from the Newcastle forward.

The spot-kick was awarded after a VAR check and Wilson drilled his strike high into the roof of the net. It was Wilson's 10th goal in his last nine appearances. To their credit, Leeds refused to surrender and they snatched an equaliser in the 79th minute when Kristensen's shot beat Pope via a hefty deflection off Kieran Trippier.



Le Mans, France: Francesco Bagnaia of Italy and Ducati Lenovo Team waves at the fans after claiming pole position during the MotoGP of France - Qualifying at Circuit Bugatti.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 146,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 146,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 113,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1433.49 feet and was 35.49 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 31,500 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1119.85 feet, which was 69.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 35,300 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 49,000, 56,900, 40,600 and 12,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 25,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 12,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Police reunites missing boy with parents

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police Phulgran police station team reunited a missing boy with his parents, a Police Public Relation Officer said. According to the details, a citizen namely Ibrahim submitted an application at Phulgran police station and stated that his son namely Zahid Ullah had been missing and could not be traced despite hectic efforts by family members. Upon receiving the application, the police team immediately started the investigation. The police team used technical and human resources and succeeded to trace the missing boy and reunited him safely with his family. The parents appreciated the police team's efforts and thanked the Islamabad capital police for immediate assistance.

### 8,600 fine tickets issued

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police has launched a massive crackdown against unregistered vehicles in the federal capital Islamabad, a police public relations officer said. He said that the Islamabad capital police issued tickets to 8,600 unregistered vehicles and motorcycles during the ongoing year. Special enforcement squads have been constituted at different checkpoints of the city for checking the unregistered vehicles. Chief Traffic Officer is leading the campaign initiated on the directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan. Citizens are also requested to get their vehicles registered at the earliest and affix only the Excise and Taxation department issued number plates on their vehicles. Islamabad capital police would show no leniency in this regard. Special enforcement squads have been erected at different boulevards of the city, in order to monitor the movement of the unregistered vehicles. All zonal DSPs have been given special directions to ensure the implementation of law.

### City's roads open for traffic

RAWALPINDI (APP): All the roads of Rawalpindi city were open for vehicular traffic and the traffic was normal, said City Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Taimoor Khan here on Saturday. The CTO informed that all the containers on the Mall Road had been removed. Traffic was normal on all the roads of the town, including Murree Road and Mall Road, he said.



ISLAMABAD: PML-N, leader Mian Javed Latif addressing a Press conference at PID media center. —APP Photo

## ANF recovers over 101 kg drugs; arrests eight

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), in six operations, managed to recover over 101 kg drugs, and 5500 intoxicated tablets and arrested eight accused including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Saturday.

He said in an operation at International Mail Office, Rawalpindi, 5,500 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a parcel being sent to America.

In the second operation at Karachi International Container Terminal, 30 kg of ice drug concealed in a salt container was recovered, and after a prelimi-

nary investigation, ANF arrested an accused resident of Karachi.

In the third operation near Karachi Gadap Town Northern Bypass Toll Plaza, 43.2 kg of charras was recovered from a truck while two accused, residents of Mastung and Kalat, were rounded up during the operation.

ANF also foiled a bid to smuggle 647 grams of heroin abroad which was recovered from the possession of a Sharjah-bound passenger arrested at Lahore International Airport. Heroin was concealed in a laptop and trolley bag.

In an operation, another

bid to smuggle drugs from Peshawar to Mansehra was foiled when ANF recovered 24 kg of charras from a pickup intercepted near Mansehra Road Qalandarabad Toll Plaza.

Three drug smugglers including a woman were arrested during the operation. In the sixth operation, four kg of heroin was recovered from the possession of a drug smuggler, a resident of Chaman, netted from Friendship Gate at Chaman Check post.

He said that separate cases had been registered against the accused while further investigations were underway.

### Tariq Ch urges PTI supporters to refrain from violence

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) MNA Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Saturday urged that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf supporters should refrain from violence and asked Chairman PTI Imran Khan to stop maligning state institutions.

The culprits involved in the anti-Pakistan agenda must be dealt with iron hands, he said while talking to a private news channel.

The political workers were provoked by their leadership to carry out the violent acts, he claimed, adding, PTI leadership for the sake of political gains was instigating its supporters to target the assets of the government and the security forces.

PTI had befooled the public and tried to spread anarchy in the country, Tariq Fazal said.

Replying to a question, he said that the top leadership of major political parties had been arrested in the past, but none of them were given any relaxation like Imran Khan.

He said the PTI had a history of violence as they had attacked PTV's building during the 2014 'dharna' under the supervision of Imran Khan and now they again attacked the Radio Pakistan and APP building in Peshawar which is a shameful act.

life and property of citizens is one of the top priorities of Islamabad Capital Police. The commendable efforts of the police force have ensured the safety of the citizens and have set an example for the rest of the country, he maintained.

## IGP praises officials for professionally handling recent Law and Order situation

ISLAMABAD (NNI): An important meeting was held at Police Lines Headquarters under the chairmanship of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan and was attended by divisional Capital Police Officers, SSPs, AIGs, zonal DPOs, SDPOs and SHOs attended, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, during the meeting, the IGP Islamabad praised the Islamabad capital police officers for their professional handling of the extraordinary law and order situation in the federal capital over the last four days.

IGP Islamabad said that, the recent situation was the biggest law and order situation in the history of Pakistan, presenting a challenge to maintain law and order while ensuring the safety of life and property of citizens. Despite the challenges, the Islamabad capital police ensured the arrest of the elements involved in provocation, vandalism, and arson, following all procedures in accordance with the law.

"We are Islamabad Police, we are Pakistan, and we are citizens of Pakistan," said IGP Islamabad. "Citizens of every religion,

color, and race are living in Islamabad, and ensuring their safety and security is our top priority.

All of you are my responsibility and your safety is my responsibility. I pay tribute to all of you for the way you have controlled all these situations according to the law, from DIGs ranks to constables who perform their duties, awards and rewards will be awarded to them and I am proud that we all worked like a team and we all worked together."

Maintaining law and order in the federal capital and ensuring the safety of

## Metro Bus Service resumes operation in twin cities

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Metro Bus service on Saturday resumed operation in the twin cities, after four-day suspension due to violent protests.

The Metro Bus Service between Rawalpindi and Islamabad remained suspended for four consecutive days after it was shut following the eruption of violent protests after the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chief Imran Khan.

The service was suspended on May 9 after Shamshabad, 6th Road, and

Faizabad metro stations were vandalized by the protesters. The protesters also broke glasses and CCTV cameras and damaged the washrooms of the Committee Chowk Station. The protesters also looted nearly Rs 0.5 million from the ticketing booth of the Sixth Road station. The whole station and ticketing booths were destroyed.

The suspension of the metro bus service also caused over Rs 100 million in losses to the exchequer. More than 160,000 people

travel in metro buses between the twin cities on a daily basis. The metro bus facility is a big relief for the working class, labourers, students, public servants and private employees who daily commute in Metro buses.

When Imran Khan was arrested on May 9, violent protests started in Rawalpindi and Islamabad and the protesters vandalized public and private properties and installations including Metro Bus Stations in the twin cities.

The protesters had set

the Sixth Road Metro Bus Station on fire.

The public was facing difficulty commuting due to the suspension of the metro bus service in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Asif, a private employee said that he works in Islamabad and the Metro Bus was the best and easy way to reach his workplace on time. He said that due to the suspension of the service, he had to hire private transport which was making a big hole in his pocket.



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of clouds hovering in the sky of the capital city. —INP Photo

## Judiciary saves country from anarchy, civil war: Sheikh Rashid

RAWALPINDI (PPI): Awami Muslim League chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said on Saturday the judiciary had saved the country from anarchy and civil war.

In his message on social networking site Twitter, Sheikh Rashid said the entire nation stood by the 'great' army.

The army did not need crutch of rallies, he said.

The army very much wanted the looters of national kitty and money launderers to be held accountable as per consti-

tution and law, Mr Ahmed said and added the looted wealth should be returned to the country. He said the people emerged victorious and the conspirators lost.

Instead of protesting outside the Supreme Court, Shehbaz Sharif should step down as prime minister. "If the vote sellers can get security, why it cannot be provided for elections," he asked.

The Awami Muslim League chief said those who attacked the Supreme Court in 1997 should remember that it's 2023.

"When the argument ends, the government is left with humiliation," he remarked.

Poverty and inflation-hit people had hate sentiment for the government. He said the deal with the IMF was in limbo and the sword of default was hanging over Pakistan.

"Government commits a mistake every day and cuts a sorry figure. The desire of martial law and emergency has also died down for the government," he said. He said an ill-intended sit-in had been planned.

## NADRA introduces new platform to identify sex offenders of child, woman

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) introduced a new platform National Sex Offenders Registry (NSOR), coupled with an SMS verification for citizens to identify sex offenders of child and woman.

The NSOR service helped citizens and institutions across the country to identify and track individuals who have been convicted of sex crimes against children and women. It is a dynamic database of sexual convicts, said a news release issued here on Saturday.

The links are established with various law enforcement departments and provincial governments so that updates are made in real time. This move is aimed at making the service more dynamic and responsive to the needs of the institutions and people at large in preventing sexual violence and abuse. An SMS-based verification service will alert citizens, employers and departments to beware of such culprits.

"This initiative has always remained closer to my heart, which is a critical step toward safeguarding women and children from sexual violence and abuse" said Chairman of NADRA Tariq Malik.

He announced that citizens can now use this service to verify the CNIC number of individuals being hired for household chores, at mosques, colleges, universities, or any other employment to ensure they are not sexual convicts, have a clean record and can be trusted around women and children.

The Chairman NADRA said, "Preventing even a single instance of child or woman from sexual abuse is not just an act of protection but also an investment in the future of our country. We owe it to the weakest of the weak, and our nation has to take this responsibility seriously. We must recognize that preventing children and women from sexual abuse is not just a matter of punishing offenders, but also of creating a culture of

safety and protection for the most vulnerable segments, Children and women. Only then can we ensure that the next generation has the opportunity to thrive and succeed."

It is pertinent to mention that the purpose of this service is to provide common citizens and institutions with quick and easy access to information about sex offenders, particularly those who may pose a potential threat to children and women in our well-knit communities. The information can also be used to locate offenders to prevent future crimes and ensure that they are held accountable for their actions.

Upon provision of CNIC by the individual being hired, the citizens of Pakistan can verify whether he is a convicted sex offender or not by sending a 13-digit CNIC number to 7000 (SMS short code). Upon verification he/she will receive a reply in Urdu: "Beware! ABC son of XYZ is a convict. Don't let him be around children and women."

## Tahira Aurangzeb calls for speedy, equal justice to all

ISLAMABAD (APP): Member National Assembly and Senior leader PML-N, Tahira Aurangzeb Saturday called for speedy justice for all and asked the former Prime Minister Imran Khan to stop spreading chaos in the country with aim to achieve his political motives.

Talking to a Private news channel, she criticized that Pakistan was faced with multidimensional challenges today but the PTI chairman was bent upon causing further instability in the country.

She said the democratic forces and the whole nation stand behind their armed

forces who have given immense sacrifices in the war on terrorism, adding that a self-interest person was befooling his innocent supporters with lies and deceit.

Khan is destroying our ancestors, our children and our country, which we will not allow at any cost," she added.

Replying to a question, she said that Imran Khan and his facilitators were responsible for all crises, including economic, being faced by the country today.

She said that negative elements only wished to keep Nawaz Sharif out of the upcoming general election process, but it was not

possible as the people of the country supported Nawaz Sharif's vision, adding that it was the people's belief that the country could make progress only under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif.

To another question, she said Khan took U-turn on his almost every stance whether it was related to the regime change conspiracy or the court arrest movement announced by Imran Khan.

She also appealed to the judiciary to take decisions on merit instead of popularity as everybody was equal before the law under the Constitution.

## Over 6 mln pilgrims perform Umrah during ongoing season

ISLAMABAD (APP): Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) Minister of Tourism Ahmed Al-Khateeb described the performance of the Saudi tourism sector during the first quarter of 2023 as unprecedented and historical in terms of the number of visitors and amount of tourism spending.

"Over six million pilgrims have performed Umrah during the current season while the percentage of incoming tourists for the purpose of entertainment and holidays shot up 581 percent in the first quarter of 2023 compared to the same period in 2019, thanks to the simplified electronic visa procedures and remarkable growth in facilities and services in the Kingdom's tourist destinations," he said.

The minister made the remarks while attending his monthly meeting with investors in the Saudi tourism sector. Saudi Tourism Authority Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Fahd Hamidaddin and a large number of stakehold-

ers and investors in the tourism sector from various regions of the Kingdom attended the virtual meeting.

Al-Khateeb stressed that the ministry would never neglect three issues that are at the core of its work, which were high quality, compliance with the necessary licenses to practice the activity, and Saudize jobs in the tourism sector.

The minister emphasized that the results achieved by the Kingdom's tourism sector during the holy month of Ramazan were amazing and unprecedented. The number of Umrah pilgrims from inside and outside Saudi Arabia has exceeded six million, and the occupancy rate in the hospitality sector in Makkah and Madinah recorded historical figures, Saudi Gazette reported.

"This strong start is promising and encouraging as the ministry is intensifying its efforts and readiness to launch the summer season campaign for this year. All sectors have completed their preparations for a

strong and attractive tourism season. More than SR600 million have been allocated to introduce the wonderful tourist destinations all over the Kingdom," he said.

The meeting reviewed the preliminary results achieved during the first quarter. It was revealed in the meeting that the growth rate of total domestic tourism spending in the first quarter of this year reached 45 percent compared to the first quarter of 2022.

"This was supported by the strong start of inbound tourism and the achievement of the highest quarterly number of foreign tourists for all purposes, which is estimated at 7.8 million, with a growth rate of 64 percent compared to the first quarter of 2019. The remarkable progress in the procedures.

"In addition to tourism promotion in the target countries, as well as the increase in demand for the Umrah visas have contributed to achieving these results," the minister said.



### Work on centers begins

ZABUL (Agencies): The Public Health Department officials in Zabul province said that people of 56 regions in the capital and district of the province have no access to health services. The Provincial Public Healthcare Department's Director, Dr. Mirwais Afghan said that 10 healthcare centers would be built to address shortage of health services in these areas. The establishment of these centers would be funded by a private organization, he said.

## The Frontier Post

# AFGHANISTAN

Shawwal 23, 1444 — Sunday, May 14, 2023

### 'Doha meeting unproductive'

KABUL (Agencies): The summit on Afghanistan held earlier this month in Doha yielded no constructive result, Russian Special Representative for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov, told TAAS news agency. Russian Special Presidential Representative for Afghanistan and Director of the Foreign Ministry's Second Asian Department Zamir Kabulov said that the Doha meeting did not open any good prospects for resolving Afghanistan issues.

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

## Afghanistan faces catastrophic food insecurity, says WB

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan is among one of the seven countries which face a catastrophic level of food crisis, the World Bank highlights in its report earlier in the week.

The seven food crisis-hit countries include Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen, according to the report.

The number of people experiencing food crises in these countries is the highest since the Global Report on Food Crises started reporting data in 2017.

Meanwhile, UNICEF also warned earlier in the week that it is facing a lack of critical food aid in Afghanistan due to a shortage of funding, amidst a

widespread humanitarian crisis in the country.

Melanie Galvin, chief of nutrition at the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in a video message on Twitter, said that thousands of vulnerable children could die from severe malnutrition in Afghanistan this year alone.

Galvin further added the global food organization faces an urgent funding gap of \$21 million to buy essential supplies for treating malnutrition and training health workers around the country.

The organization also faces a shortage of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF), she said. RUTF is considered an essential ready-made food supply-

ment that can cure children suffering from malnutrition.

Years of conflict, poverty, and the broken and donation-based economy have forced ordinary people to suffer acute hunger and food shortage.

Afghanistan is home to one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. More than 28 million people, including over 15 million children, need humanitarian and protection assistance this year—a staggering increase of 4 million people over 2022, UNICEF highlighted in its report.

Since the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan in 2021, the economy has failed to recover, keeping millions of people on the verge of starvation.

## Afghanistan reports first polio case of 2023

JALALABAD (Khaama Press): Afghanistan reported the first case of the poliovirus of 2023 as the health authorities detected it in Nangarhar province.

The first incidence of polio in Afghanistan since 2023 has been detected, according to the country's Ministry of Health on Saturday.

According to reports, a four-year-old child has been identified as having polio sickness in the region, and up to two cases of the wild poliovirus have been found worldwide.

In Afghanistan, polio cases have been dropping. A total of 56 cases of polio were reported in the country in 2020, while four cases were reported in 2021. Two instances of polio were reported last year.

Polio is a severely contagious and disabling disease typically spread through contaminated water or food. The infection can induce complete paralysis within hours after invading the nervous system.

According to the report, the contagious virus thrived in the borderland, where militants attacked anti-polio teams.

## Turkmenistan provided Afghanistan with aids

KABUL (Agencies): Turkmenistan has sent 62 tons of humanitarian aids worth over one million US dollars to Afghanistan, the Ministry of Natural Disaster Management of the Islamic Emirate said in a statement Saturday.

The aids include food and non-food items, medical supplies and textile products, the statement said.

"Due to recent natural disasters thousands of people have been affected and displaced and are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance across the country," a statement quoted one of the ministry's officials Ahmad Shah Zaheen as saying.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, while thanking the humanitarian aids of the friend country of Turkmenistan, asks the donor countries and other aid agencies to provide Afghan people with necessary humanitarian assistance, the statement added. A few weeks ago, the country has also provided the regional hospital of Torgondi with medical supplies.

## Basketball team make its way to final

KABUL (Agencies): The national wheelchair basketball team of the country won the preliminary competition of the Asian Paralympic Cup in its fifth game against the United Arab Emirates national team.

The national wheelchair basketball team of the country defeated the United Arab Emirates national team with a score of 57-70 goals in its fifth match in the Asian Paralympic Cup qualifiers, said a statement by Physical Education and Sports department.

After five wins, this team made it to the finals of the Asian Paralympic Cup qualifiers and will face Kuwait for the finals.

## First Afghan air cargo company takes off



KABUL (Agencies): Afghan officials inaugurated the country's first air freight company on Saturday at the Kabul airport.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by senior government officials including Nooruddin Azizi,

the minister of industry and commerce.

He said the country has faced challenges in this sector but that with the new company, export volume will hopefully increase.

Azizi said a competitive market was necessary to

grow the economy and he urged domestic manufacturers to ensure the goods produced were of good quality so as to build trust with customers.

He also said Afghanistan wants balanced trade with neighboring countries including Pakistan and Iran.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Yonus Mohmand, head of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said that the country's trade is stable but called on the government to support the new air cargo company.

## UN experts alarmed by Afghan SC-sanctioned punishments

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said in a statement that UN experts "expressed alarm at a recent announcement by the de facto Supreme Court in Afghanistan sanctioning the use of punishments."

"Stoning people to death or burying them under a wall constitutes torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment," the experts said. "These cruel punishments are contrary to international law."

"The Islamic government is obliged to pave the

way for a situation in which orders of (Allah) including Hudud be ensured and Qisas (retribution in kind) be implemented," said Hassibullah Hanafi, a religious cleric.

The statement said that experts noted with concern that "women are more likely to be sentenced to death by stoning, due to deeply entrenched discrimination and stereotypes against them, including deep-rooted stereotypes held by the exclusively male judiciary — a manifestation of the gender-based persecution that women and girls

endure in Afghanistan."

"It would be better that our punishment be based on international laws," said Sakina Rizai, a human rights activist.

This comes as the Islamic Emirate called on the international community to accept the "current realities" in Afghanistan.

"If some foreign sides are still concerned about the current situation in which the courts are active, nationwide justice is created, they might then have other intentions. It is important that they should know the realities," said

deputy spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, Bilal Karimi.

"The constitution should be based on religious principles and also international measures, conventions and charters of the UN should be considered in it," said Wais Nasiri, a political analyst.

Since November 2022, 274 men, 58 women and two boys have been publicly flogged and one judicially sanctioned execution has been carried out, according to UNAMA.

## Afghan national held

BELARUS (Khaama Press): The Belarussian authorities said an Afghan national holding a fake French passport, who intended to cross to Lithuania has been recognized and detained by the country's border officials.

During the investigations, the Afghan national has said he wanted to reach Europe, according to Belarussian media.

The Afghan citizen will be kept in detention until his real identity is recognized, as per the existing reports.

Belarus is the route for many migrants from different countries, including Afghanistan, to reach Europe.

Nearly a month ago, the Belarussian police announced that several Afghan nationals who had illegally entered the country were detained.

Since the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan in August 2021, millions of Afghans have migrated to the neighboring countries of Iran, Pakistan and elsewhere fearing persecution and death threats.

Many Afghans have taken rather risky routes to reach Europe through land and sea. Currently, thousands of Afghan families are stranded in Turkey and Greece hoping to reach Western European countries.

## Trans-Afghan railway project gets coordination office in Tashkent



TASHKENT (Agencies): The coordination office for the trans-Afghan railway project was inaugurated in the Uzbekistan capital Tashkent.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Mullah Bakht-ur-Rahman Sharafat, head of Afghanistan Railway Authority, and the ambassadors of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In a statement, the Afghanistan Railway

Authority said that at the office, the representatives of the three countries will jointly coordinate the affairs of the trans-Afghan railway project. There are also plans to establish such offices in Kabul and Islamabad.

Meanwhile, the 11th Trilateral Meeting of the Joint Working Group on trans-Afghan Railways Project was held in Tashkent.

During the meeting, an

agreement was reached to hold a meeting of high-ranking railway officials in Islamabad next month.

Additionally, the strengthening of railway cooperation and increasing movement of goods via the Hainatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railway were also discussed.

The trans-Afghan railway project connects Central Asian countries with South Asian countries through Afghanistan.

## Seven died, dozens injured

BADAKHSHAN (Khaama Press): At least seven people were killed and 14 others injured in a traffic accident in the northeastern Badakhshan province of Afghanistan on late Friday, local sources reported.

Taliban's provincial police officials said the incident occurred when a passenger minibus overturned on the way to Khash district in Badakhshan province, killing seven and

injuring 14 others.

According to Taliban officials, the victims included women and children who were on their way to attend a wedding party in the Baharak district of the province. The wounded people were carried to Faizabad Hospital for treatment, and the health conditions of some of them are reported critical.

Nearly two weeks ago, in two separate traffic acci-

dents in the Keshm and Ravghin regions of the province, one died and at least 15 others sustained injuries. Traffic accidents are not unusual in Afghanistan; annually hundreds of people die in traffic accidents on highways across the country — mostly as the result of high speeds and careless driving, inadequately constructed roadways, lack of rule of law, and poorly maintained vehicles.



## Online tuitions students demand reopening of girls schools, universities

ZARANJ (Pajhwok): After the ban on girls schools and universities in the country many, students have switched to online studies which according to them was not a bad option but they still demanded the reopening of universities and schools nationwide.

Girls' schools above class sixth were not allowed to be resumed last year while female were stopped from attending their universities last year in fall.

Acting Higher Education Minister Nida Mohammad Nadim said the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' (IEA) had no problem with

the women education and the issue would be resolved soon after the introduction of a new strategy in this regard.

Farzana Barakzai, the resident of Zaranj City, the capital of Nimroz province, said she graduated from Zaranj High School two years ago and added that she was very interested to be enrolled in the university but her future was uncertain from the past two years.

She wants to become a teacher in the future and serve the society thus she switched to online English Learning Course to make

sure that she remained in touch with the learning process.

"I am really happy to be part of online education. We should get advantage from every opportunity and learn. I want to be English Language teacher in the future," she said.

Farzana said the online course that she is part of it was attended by 200 more girls from 8:00 am to 9:00 am.

In order to arrange money for the internet, she said that currently she was doing tailoring and some handcraft work in part time. Shakiba, another girl

from Nimroz was student at the Bark Private University and currently she study online from the past six months since the closure of women higher education.

"Although, I am happy to participate in online classes and learn something, I want the IEA to reopen the doors of schools and universities to girls as soon as possible because online education can never replace face-to-face education," she said.

Shakiba added: "Online and face-to-face education are different. We used to do research and present semi-

nars, but now we listen to the teacher's lecture and ask questions."

She said the cost of internet access for girls who are currently unemployed was very high and it was major problem for online education, when we download the audio files of the slides it consumes more internet, but everyone somehow tried to reduce other expenses and save money for their studies.

She urged the government to remove curbs of women education sooner than later and let girls and women to play their role in

the development of the country.

Baran Ahmadi, head of the Aksina Higher Education Centre, said: "After the restrictions on education for Afghan girls, he established this foundation in Kabul with the cooperation of Farkhunda Qana so that girls can take advantage of the opportunities to stay at home and study."

"Personnel of this centre are the students of Kabul University who feel the pain of these students. This centre arrange seminars on different topics and provide free of cost learning oppor-

tunities for girls," he added.

According to Ahmadi the Aksina Centre so far 400 students in different batches have completed their courses though online facility.

"We teach basic school subjects online to girls in grades 10th, 11th, and 12th because school girls are under more stress mentally and we told them to use their mobile and learn something," he added.

Ahmadi said that although, online lessons have some difficulties due to the problem of poor speed and high internet

price, but he will continue this program until the doors of schools are opened to girls.

The Barak University Teacher and education expert, who wished not to be named, termed online education programs a positive step and demand such programs to be increased.

"The way these online course were effective during Covid-19, they were still effective. All the girls should get maximum advantage of this opportunity," he said.

He also demanded the reopening of girls' schools and universities.





**PESHAWAR:** COAS General Syed Asim Munir addressing officers during his visit to Corps Headquarters.

## Imran wants to bring the law of jungle: Sherry

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Saturday said the coalition government was not going to retreat on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s violence against the state.

In a news conference flanked by Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation Faisal KarimKundi here, she said that due process would be observed against IK and his supporters for jeopardizing country's peace and security for the sake of his ego. The minister alleged that Imran Khan wanted to bring the law of the jungle into the country and turn it into a battle zone.

Senator Rehman said Khan was compromising the pride, prestige and honour of the country. She accused Khan of singling out the Army Chief in his contestation for regaining power. It was condemnable but rather the matter has transcended the level of condemnation, she added. The Minister said Imran Khan came in a lavish car to the Court, whereas her party leaders were presented before the courts in armoured vehicles used for prisoners.

She queried Imran Khan that had he forgotten about what happened to women during his rule. How FaryalTalpur was arrested from the hospital at night? She alleged that Imran Khan considered himself above the courts and the state, whereas he did a pre-planned arson and siege of government and state installations in various cities across the country. Senator Rehman underlined that after the judicial murder of ShaheedZulfiqar Ali Bhutto and the martyrdom of ShaheedMohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) never attacked the military installations but rather resisted the martial laws in a political manner.

She added that after the burial of ShaheedMohtarma Benazir Bhutto, former President Asif Ali Zardari held a press conference and raised the 'Pakistan Khape' (We want Pakistan). PTI, she said, had turned into a movement of violence, adding, "He is clearly saying if I go down, everything should go down." "Imran Khan cannot threaten the government and state and no government will allow this."

Amid the evident economic crisis, he wanted to create instability in the country, she said. "He is wanting a national reconciliation ordinance (NRO—first issued by former President General Pervez Musharraf that provided an amnesty to politicians, political workers and bureaucrats involved in corruption, embezzlement, money laundering and terrorism from 1986-2007)," she added. Senator Rehman mentioned whosoever was arrested, in this case, would be trialled with proper evidence and all the proofs would be presented before the court.

She added that Imran Khan did not bother that the country's enemy state blew trumpet on all the violence perpetrated against the state. She said the PTI protestors did not spare the Edhi ambulances, flared up markets, livestock, government and state installations etc. The government would have to take action to restore peace in the country, she added. Imran Khan, she said, had been given blanket relief in nine cases, whereas he did not want to appear before the courts and demanded a VIP protocol. The minister alleged that Imran Khan was not ready to condemn the losses incurred to state installations in the court. He used to keep his ego superior to that of the nation and everything else and he was resisting the human, citizen and social rights of the nation, she said. Senator Rehman said Imran Khan was accused in an open and shut case of Rs60 billion corruption but no probe was being initiated against him.

Responding to media queries, she said the government in the Monday session of the National Assembly would decide concrete steps against Imran Khan through mutual consultation of the House. To another query, she said Former President Asif Ali Zardari gave his arrest to the police teams in a dignified manner at Zardari House as part of decent political norms. She replied to another query that PTI had no standards while PPP was unmatchedable. "Incitement of violence against the state was not allowed anywhere in the world, like in the UK prompt arrests were made against the perpetrators." "Imran Khan had no policy in the past and also in the future," she added.

## Special team constituted to probe attack on GHQ

RAWALPINDI (Agencies): The Rawalpindi police on Saturday constituted a special investigation team to probe the attack on the main gate of the military's General Headquarters (GHQ) by 'violent protesters' following the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan.

According to details, the special investigation team—constituted to probe the attack on General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi—will be headed by Rawalpindi SSP (Investigation) Zunaira Azfar. The committee also comprises the SDPO Cantt, SDPO City as well as the SHO's of RA Bazaar, Westridge, and Civil Lines police stations. The in-charge of the Investigation Support Unit will also be a part of the committee.

The committee will assist in the investigation of the case through technical and human intelligence sources. The investigation team will probe the incident in the light of the cases and submit a report. A case of the attack on the GHQ gate was registered at the RA Bazaar police station. PTI workers, including former provincial minister Raja Basharat, were nominated in the case.

Earlier in the day, it was reported that the Rawalpindi police registered 17 cases over violent protests by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. Around 250 PTI workers were arrested in overall 17 cases. "Eighty party workers have been produced before anti-terrorism court in violent protest cases," police officials said. "All arrested PTI workers have been sent to Adiala Jail on 14 days' judicial remand," according to police. Raja Basharat, Fayyaz Chohan, Wasiq Qayyum and other party leaders and workers have been nominated in cases pertaining to recent violent protest after arrest of PTI chairman Imran Khan.

## Internet service restored

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) on Saturday restored internet service while social media apps remain suspended across the country. The internet service was shut down for four days following the violent protests across the province triggered by the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on May 9.

The interior ministry, therefore, decided to shut down internet service across the country. Four people died and several were injured as a result of the violence, while the law and order situation seemed uncertain with several protestors barging into and damaging property in high-security zones.

In a statement, the PTA announced that internet service had been restored nationwide, but the suspension of social media apps continues, and a decision regarding their restoration is yet to be made. However, despite the resumption of internet service, the suspension of social media apps such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram continues to generate controversy. The suspension was initially imposed by government authorities, citing concerns over the spread of misinformation and its potential impact on public order and safety.

The decision to restore social media would be taken by the Ministry of Interior, the PTA added Earlier, the Global System for Mobile Communication Association (GSMA), had expressed concern over the shutdown of broadband internet in Pakistan

prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis, included Onions (9.40%), Chicken (2.25%), LPG (1.51%), Garlic (1.39%), Bananas (0.68%), Pulse Gram (0.13%) and Mustard Oil (0.05%). The commodities that witnessed an increase in price on Year-on-Year (YOY) basis, included Cigarettes (140.15%), Potatoes (112.80%), Gas Charges for Q1 (108.38%), Tea Lipton (106.09%), Wheat Flour (101.20%), Gents Sponge Chappal (100.33%), Diesel (99.39%), Bananas (98.22%), Rice Basmati Broken (90.76%), Eggs (89.40%), petrol (87.81%), Rice Irri-6/9 (83.47%), Pulse Moong (66.91%), Bread (62.83%) and Pulse Mash (58.79%). On a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, the commodities which recorded a decrease in their average prices included Tomatoes (39.70%), Onions (22.17%) and Chilies Powdered (6.48%).

Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption group from Rs 17,732-22-888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 witnessed an increase of 0.38 per cent, 0.36 per cent, 0.33 per cent, and 0.20 per cent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 23 (45.09%) items increased, 07 (13.73%) items decreased and 21 (41.18%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW), included Tomatoes (6.32%), Gur (3.41%), Wheat Flour (2.76%), Tea Prepared (2.66%), Potatoes (2.14%), Cooked Beef (2.12%), Cooked Daal (1.98%), Powdered Milk (1.91%), Eggs (1.83%), Rice Basmati Broken (1.42%), Pulse Masoor (1.19%), Beef (1.18%) and non-food item, Washing Soap (1.04%).

The items that recorded a decrease in their average

## Nobody can be allowed to damage national assets: Saad

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Railways and Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique has said that nobody could be allowed to damage or destroy national assets and warned that those involved in burning of Tarnol Railway station would be brought to justice.

Presiding over a meeting to review several matters held at the PR headquarters here on Saturday, he condemned the burning of Tarnol Railway station building during a protest by the PTI activists on May 09, saying that the culprits of the incident had been captured and soon they would face the punishment by the courts.

The minister also condemned the blasts on the

Quetta railway track and directed to arrest the culprits by chasing them. He directed the PR administration to present the forensic report of ablaze incident of Karachi Express train as soon as possible. The minister was given briefing about the restoration of Sibbi-Harnai railway track and removal of hurdles in it.

The meeting also discussed different options about the reduction of feasibility assessment of ML-1 project and auction of shops constructed on railway land. A progress report about scrap disposal was also presented to the minister. Taking the notice of the disturbance in the booking application, the minister directed to ensure provision of the facility without any discontinuation.

The minister also directed the Gawadar office to present a report about its performance and future plans. He ordered to study applicable suggestions about profit gain of sleeper-factories and other production units. He expressed his satisfaction over the popularity and number of passengers in the Shalimar Express train. The minister also directed to appoint heads of Railways Estate Department and Marketing Company (REDAMCO) and Pakistan Railways Freight Transportation Company (PRFTC) within a week. The meeting also decided restructuring of the railway divisions and a committee would present recommendations to the ministry of Railways in this regard.

## Pakistan's inflation soars to 48.02 per cent

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

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 48.02 percent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs17,732 witnessed a 0.38 percent increase and went up to 261.53 points from last week's 260.54 points.

Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption group from Rs 17,732-22-888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 witnessed an increase of 0.38 per cent, 0.36 per cent, 0.33 per cent, and 0.20 per cent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 23 (45.09%) items increased, 07 (13.73%) items decreased and 21 (41.18%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW), included Tomatoes (6.32%), Gur (3.41%), Wheat Flour (2.76%), Tea Prepared (2.66%), Potatoes (2.14%), Cooked Beef (2.12%), Cooked Daal (1.98%), Powdered Milk (1.91%), Eggs (1.83%), Rice Basmati Broken (1.42%), Pulse Masoor (1.19%), Beef (1.18%) and non-food item, Washing Soap (1.04%).

The items that recorded a decrease in their average

# Unprecedented relief given to Imran questionable: Asif

**F.P. Report**

SIALKOT: Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said that unprecedented relief given to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has raised questions about impartiality of courts.

Addressing to a press conference at his residence here on Saturday, he said the judiciary should act according to the constitution and law, instead of personal liking and disliking. He said facilitation provided to Imran Khan by the courts of law was highly questionable.

He said when a judge would tell an accused that he was happy to see him, what justice could be expected from him. He wondered where were such judges when verdicts were being given against Nawaz Sharif and his family members. Kh Asif alleged that the establishment and the judiciary had facilitated ouster of Nawaz Sharif from the government, and attempted to eliminate him from politics. However, he added, Nawaz Sharif could not be eliminated from politics, but all characters, who were involved in the conspiracy, had been exposed now. Kh Asif thanked God that Nawaz Sharif's younger brother, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, is still the prime minister of Pakistan.

The defence minister expressed deep sorrow over the heavy damage inflicted on the public property by the PTI activists. He said had the army and police reacted during the attack, the state would have suffered. But, in such a situation, ulterior motives of

Imran Khan would have been fulfilled, he added. The minister said the whole nation saw what the PTI leaders were telling their supporters. Imran's lust for power would destroy the peaceful environment of the country, he added.

The defence minister said the PTI supporters had been involved in attacking national institutions, adding that the government would take action against all violators. "No one will be allowed to take the law into his hands," he warned. He said action would be taken against those who would be found involved in attacking national security institutions.

Kh Asif recalled that during four-year rule of Pakistan-Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), false cases were registered against the PML-N leaders. He regretted that Mian Nawaz Sharif was disqualified for life only for not taking salary from his son's company. Why he was not given the same relief, which was given to Imran Khan the other day, he raised a question. "Today, Imran Khan is getting bail even in those cases also which he does not know about," he added. Where was the justice system when the PML-N leaders used to appear in courts; when Nawaz Sharif and his daughter used to appear before judges, Kh Asif said, adding that when Maryam Nawaz had visited her father in jail, she was arrested there.

The defence minister said that for the last four years, Imran Khan had been looting the nation, and now his followers were looting the country. It was Imran Khan, who gave orders for causing chaos and anarchy in the

country, he alleged. The federal minister said that Parliament was the supreme institution, and it would protect its jurisdiction, its rights and its authority in all circumstances. Whatever decision it would take, the executive was bound to implement it according to the constitution, he added.

Kh Asif said that the establishment was playing its role according to the constitution, but Imran Khan and his followers were not happy with it. That was why they were attacking the institution, he added. He said what Imran Khan and his followers had done to the country in the past week, could not be done even by the enemy in the past 75 years. He said the followers of Imran Khan targeted monuments of martyrs and Ghazis, and homes of their families. They also attacked and destroyed buildings of cultural heritage importance, he regretted. Despite all that, some people in the judiciary were giving relief to Imran Khan and his followers and facilitating them, he added.

In response to a question, he said that the purpose of the ruling alliance Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) sit-in on Monday was that the judiciary should play its actual role, instead of acting as a facilitator of an individual. In reply to another question, he said that some people in the judiciary were giving an 'NRO' [facilitation] to Imran Khan. Kh Asif also condemned the action taken by the district administration at the PTI leaders' houses in Sialkot. He said the PML-N did not believe in politics of revenge.

## Houses, installations burnt on Imran's directives: Sana

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan Saturday said for the last several years, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan had been training "terrorists" who actually took part in the arson and vandalism of May 9 after his arrest.

Addressing a news conference, he said the goons of Imran Khan burnt houses and defence installations on directives of Imran Khan who had instructed them to create violence and spread chaos and anarchy following his arrest. The minister said Imran Khan told his goons beforehand how to react to his arrest. It was not the nation's reaction, instead, it was the reaction of a group who got training and instructions from Imran Khan, he said.

The minister said that during the three days, only 40,000 to 45,000 people had participated in the protest against the arrest of Imran Khan across the country. Sharing the numbers of the protesters, he said, protests were staged at 12 spots in Islamabad on May 9, during which 650 to

700 people participated. Moreover, he added, during protests staged at 221 spots in Punjab on May 9, 15,000 to 18,000 people participated.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he said that protests were staged at 126 spots in which only 19,000-22,000 people participated. On the second day of protests, 1,900 participated in demonstrations in Islamabad, 2,200 in Punjab and 13,000 in KP, he added. Sharing the numbers for the third-day protests, he said 515 people participated in Islamabad, 5,000 to 6,000 in KP and 800-1,000 in Punjab.

He said that the violent protesters were involved in the looting of shops and residences. The minister 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." Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah reiterated the stance of PML-N which took exception to a relief given to Imran Khan by the courts, saying that no one else was given such relief in Pakistan's

judicial and constitutional history.

"After that, how can high courts and district courts dare to do anything then," he said, adding that Imran was given whatever he asked for. He said that the Islamabad High Court had given blanket relief to Imran Khan. The minister said that from day one, it was the stance of political parties that Imran Khan was not a political leader instead he was a "Finta".

He alleged that the prime objective of Imran Khan was to create unrest and chose in the country. The interior minister said that Imran Khan should be removed from politics through votes, otherwise, he would put the country in danger.

Rana said that it was not the culture of the political parties to set defence installations on fire and attack the houses of political opponents. The minister said that in past, despite the political differences, no political parties attacked each other homes. "Specific culture of attacking political opponents had been injected by Imran Khan in the country's politics" he added.

## Khan playing in hands of enemies of country

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Javed Latif has claimed that the recent acts of vandalism and violence were not authentic protests, but rather a rebellion orchestrated by Imran Khan through paid miscreants.

Talking to media persons, he said paid miscreants, and not workers, were the ones who resorted to violence in different parts of the country on May 9 and 10. "These individuals were deliberately hired and trained to incite unrest, rather than being peaceful demonstrators," Latif claimed. Starting on

Monday, he said the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) would initiate nationwide protests and corner meetings as they find it unacceptable to depict the PTI chief as innocent while depriving Nawaz Sharif of justice.

According to the minister, Imran Khan was playing in the hands of enemies of the country. "Imran Khan is responsible for instigating this rebellion, which was disguised as a protest. The accused Imran Khan, who is alleged to have embezzled Rs. 60 billion from the people, has been provided with facilities despite the harm he has

caused to the country," he added.

Latif said Imran Khan's blackmailing of the country's institutions had brought shame to the people. Those who facilitated him, retired or incumbent, should have been apprehended, as they were only concerned about Imran's welfare, rather than thinking about the people who are dying of hunger. Regarding the search for the miscreants who vandalised Jinnah House and state buildings, he suggested that newspapers should also publish the pictures of the handlers along with those of the agitators.

## Imran responsible

(Continued from Page 1)

fire reducing it to ashes, besides harming the historic articles there.

"Alas, as a Pakistani, I would not have lived to watch such a dreadful day," he regretted, adding the people who were indulged in this abhorrent act, would be made to face criminal proceedings. Those who made plans and armed their rioters with weapons and batons to attack the law enforcement personnel and buildings would be dealt with iron hands, "so that they could become a permanent example for all that those who might act against Pakistan," added.

The prime minister observed that the armed forces and the law enforcement personnel had been ever ready to sacrifice their lives to foil designs of the enemies, whether it was 65 war or in the fight against terrorism in which about

80,000 Pakistani lost their lives, including the armed forces officers, personnel, police, paramilitary forces and every member of society had sacrificed which led to crushing the scourge of terrorism. "They have protected the motherland with their blood while leaving behind their bereaved families," he said, adding the PTI rioters also defiled the 'shuhada' and attacked their monuments.

He said such were the heart-wrenching scenes and had not been witnessed in the past, adding that those armed groups should be made an example so that no one could dare to cast an evil eye on these institutions. He said about Rs. 12 billion were spent on safe cities authority and it was the latest and biggest institution in the entire South Asia which was established during his tenure as Khadim-e-Ala Punjab

under Nawaz Sharif's leadership.

But in the last five years of PTI's rule, cameras had been lying dysfunctional, showing the sorry state of affairs of the past government which also reflected the criminal negligence. Separately, on his Twitter handle, the prime minister said that he had given the law enforcement apparatus, a target of 72 hours to arrest all those involved in facilitating, abetting and perpetrating the disgraceful incidents of arson, ransacking, sabotage and damaging public and private properties.

He said all available resources including technological aid and intelligence were being deployed to chase down these elements. "Bringing these people to justice is a test case for the government. Their cases will be tried by the anti-terrorism courts," he further posted in his tweet.

## PDM prepares for sit-in outside Apex court

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) is preparing for a sit-in outside Supreme Court (SC), as political crisis intensifies in the country. According to the details Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), has begun the preparations and will go from Lahore to Islamabad to participate in the protest.

Sources confirmed that the daughter of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and PML-N chief organizer, Maryam Nawaz, will lead the rally to participate in the sit-in. The preparations for the rally have already begun, with Malik Saiful Muluk Khokhar, the president of the Muslim League-Nawaz in Lahore, heading the efforts.

According to reports, Khokhar has been appointed as the convener of the rally, which is set to depart from Thokar Niaz Baig towards Islamabad on Monday morning. PML-N directed to employ as many workers as possible in the rally, Khokhar is leaving no stone unturned in ensuring a massive turnout. PDM head Maulana Fazl had announced sit-in outside the apex court on May 12 after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan was granted bail in several cases against him from Islamabad High Court a day after his release on the orders of a Supreme Court bench.

## Rs200,000 reward for informants announced

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: The Punjab Home Department on Saturday announced that it would give Rs200,000 as bounty to a person who would help the authorities track down the attackers of the Corps Commander House in Lahore. The department also shared the photos of the hooligans and asked the public for support, adding that the identity of the informants would not be revealed.

Violent protests shook the country following the arrest of PTI chief Imran Khan and clashes took between the party workers and security personnel in which several people were killed and others injured. Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the Punjab government to move swiftly and arrest the vandals in three days. "I have given law-enforcement apparatus a target of 72 hours to arrest all those involved in facilitating, abetting and perpetrating the disgraceful incidents of arson, ransacking, sabotage & damaging public & private properties," the PM said after chairing a meeting at the Punjab Safe Cities Authority Headquarters in Lahore.