

Nawaz flays double standards

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former prime minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday criticised “double standards” in the justice system, saying a system that “prioritizes corruption over integrity” could not command public respect. Nawaz Sharif, in a tweet, said on one hand he was disqualified for not receiving a salary of mere few thousand Dirhams from his son, and then thrown in jail.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif witnessing the signing ceremony of Memorandum of Understanding between Saudia Arabia and Pakistan ‘Road to Makkah Project’ aimed at facilitating Pakistani Hujjaj.

PM: Imran’s speeches behind attacks

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that roots of the mutinous attack on the state, its symbols and sensitive installations on May 9 lay in the contents of Imran Niazi’s speeches over the past one year.

On Twitter, the prime minister said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan had liberally deployed religious imagery to brand his political agitation as a war between truth and falsehood. Imran Khan had also relentlessly maligned and attacked the armed forces and the sitting Army Chief and very cunningly prepared his cult with the slogans of “Haqeeqi Azadi” aimed at inciting them for violence we witnessed on May 9. “Listen to his speeches and you will get your answers,” the prime minister tweeted with a hashtag.

Shehbaz approves conferment of Sitara-i-Imtiaz on mountaineer Naila Kiani: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has approved the conferment of civil award Sitara-i-Imtiaz on renowned mountaineer Naila Kiani in recognition of her achievement to successfully summit the world’s highest peak Mount Everest.

The Prime Minister’s Office issued a notification, containing the prime minister’s approval for conferment of the award on the mountaineer who is second Pakistani woman to summit Mount Everest, after Samina Baig who summited the peak in 2013. The PM Office has directed the Cabinet Secretary to complete all the formalities in this regard.

Earlier, the prime minister, had announced to confer Sitara-i-Imtiaz on Naila Kiani as she brought laurels to Pakistan, through her achievement.

No one will be allowed to disrespect Shuhada

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, COAS visited Sialkot Garrison, on Wednesday. Upon arrival, COAS laid floral wreath at Martyrs’ Monument and paid rich tribute to the Shuhada who sacrificed their lives for the pride, honor and dignity of the nation. COAS said, “The martyrs have been promised the highest abode in the life hereafter and shall continue to maintain the highest levels of respect amongst the people of Pakistan.

The State of Pakistan and Armed Forces will always maintain all

Shuhada and their families in very high esteem and continue to honor them and their supreme sacrifices with utmost respect and dignity.”

COAS said, “No one will be allowed to disrespect our shuhada and their monuments. They are a source of inspiration and pride for the rank and file of the Armed Forces, Law Enforcement Agencies, Government officials and the people of Pakistan.

COAS underscored that recently planned and orchestrated tragic incidents will never be allowed again at any cost. COAS reassured the ranks and files that all

those responsible for bringing shame to the nation on Black Day of 9th May would certainly be brought to Justice. COAS appreciated under command formations for their hard work, devotion, high morale and professionalism.

During his interaction with officers and troops, COAS stressed upon maintaining focus on Army’s professionalism and preparedness to deal with complex internal and external security challenges including propaganda warfare. Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by Commander Gujranwala Corps.

Imran fears re-arrest

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said Wednesday that police have surrounded his Zaman Park residence in Lahore — where he is currently residing — and expressed fears that he could be taken into custody.

“Probably my last tweet before my next arrest. Police has [sic] surrounded my house,” the PTI chief said in a tweet. Later, addressing his party workers, the deposed prime minister — who was removed from office in April last year — that if the police come with a search warrant to carry out an operation at his Zaman Park residence, he would not put up resistance against them.

“I have just heard that 40 terrorists are hiding at my residence. Please do come here [but] in a civilised manner and don’t attempt to storm my residence,” he said while addressing his supporters. “If 40 terrorists are present at my house, then my life is also in danger. Please carry out a

search operation but tell me the names of terrorists and we will show you our entire house.”

He also warned against using the search operation against terrorists as a pretext to attack his house saying “don’t fan this fire any further”. His statement came as the interim Punjab government has given a 24-hour deadline to the PTI to hand over the “30-40 terrorists that have taken refuge” at the former prime minister’s Zaman Park residence to the police.

“PTI should handover these terrorists or the law will take its course,” said Caretaker Information Minister Aamir Mir while addressing a press conference in Lahore earlier today. He also added that the government was aware about the presence of these “terrorists” as it had credible intelligence reports. “The intelligence report that has come is very alarming,” said Mir. He added that the agencies were able to confirm the presence of the “terrorists” in Zaman Park through geo-fencing.

Khan said the Pakistan



Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government was not going to hold elections in the country even if they had to violate Constitution. The ruling alliance is afraid that Khan will come into power if the elections are held and reopen their corruption cases worth billions of rupees.

Referring to the ongoing crackdown on the PTI leaders and workers over their alleged involvement in violent protests, the deposed premier expressed concerns that “whatever is happening will trigger a huge backlash that will cause more damage”. While denying any role in the ransacking of public and military installations following his arrest on May 9, the PTI chief said they were moving the court to form a judicial commission to probe the country-wide riots.

We want to see Pakistan be a success, says Kirby

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: White House, National Security Spokesperson, John Kirby said that the US wants to see Pakistan be a success. John Kirby while replying to a question poised by The Frontier Post regarding US wanting to see a stable Pakistan, said that “we hope that the Pakistani government live up to the strongest aspiration of the people of Pakistan.”

John Kirby further said that Pakistan is a strong partner in the region and that they are suffering from the threat of terrorism every single day. “We are mindful of the challenges Pakistan is facing politically and economically and that Pakistan will always find US as a good friend” John Kirby added.

Shujaat demands to ban PTI

LAHORE (INP): President Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-i-Azam (PML-Q) Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain has demanded to impose a ban on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for its anti-army agenda.

In a statement on Wednesday, he said that whoever speaks against COAS General Asim Munir equals to speaking against Pakistan and those who are involved in this must be punished for their crime and he will be punished. Chaudhary Shujaat said that the country has not witnessed such a situation in 75 years and today’s rally is not affiliated with any political party it is for solidarity with the armed forces and Pakistan instead.

He lambasted PTI chief Imran Khan saying that he considers himself a leader but provoked his worker and supporter for vandalism. They must be booked under official secret and military acts. Earlier, the PML-Q President had announced to organize a rally in solidarity with the armed forces of Pakistan on May 17. He asked the concerned authorities to take action against those who are involved in the attack as these attacks were conducted to lower the morale of the armed forces.

Shehbaz, Raisi may hold border talks

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is likely to hold an important meeting with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in Pishin on Thursday (today). The meeting is likely to take place in Balochistan city of Pishin.

There is possibility that the prime minister will visit Balochistan on May 18 for this important meeting. Sources confided that Shehbaz-Raisi meeting may take place near the Pishin’s border corridor.

Pak, S Arabia sign ‘Road to Makkah’ deal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday signed an agreement for the execution of “Road to Makkah” project aimed at simplifying the immigration process for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims.

The agreement was signed at the Prime Minister House during the visit of Deputy Interior Minister of Saudi Arabia Dr. Nasir Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Dawood here. Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah and Saudi deputy interior minister signed the document while Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Ambassador in Islamabad Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki witnessed the ceremony.

Minister for Religious Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Senator Talha Mahmood, Federal Minister for Narcotics Control Nawabzada Shahzain Bugti, Special Assistant to PM Tariq Fatemi were also present.

Under the agreement, the Hajj and Umrah pilgrims of Pakistan would be provided immigration facilities in Pakistan who would be exempted from the process at Saudi airports.

In the first phase, the service would be available at Islamabad International Airport where around 26,000 pilgrims would benefit from the facility. The Saudi authorities assured that the facility would later be extended to Karachi and Lahore airports as well.

PM appreciates KSA for including Pakistan in project

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday appreciated the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) for including Pakistan in the “Road to Makkah” project which would facilitate Pakistanis intending to go for Hajj this year through the Islamabad International Airport.

The prime minister was talking to Saudi Deputy Minister for Interior Dr Nasir bin Abdul Aziz Al-Dawood who called on him here. The Saudi minister informed the prime minister that the “Road to Makkah” project would be extended to Lahore and Peshawar next year to facilitate more Pakistani pilgrims in discharge of the important religious obligation.

PM Shehbaz thanked the Kingdom for its support to Pakistan during the last year’s heavy floods. He also thanked the KSA for helping in the evacuation of Pakistanis stranded in Sudan as the law and order situation worsened there. Referring to the recent KSA- Iran agreement to normalize ties, he expressed the hope that it would help promote regional peace and security. The Saudi Deputy Interior Minister thanked Pakistan for the warm hospitality extended to him and his delegation. He said the brotherly ties between Pakistan and the KSA were deeply rooted in history. He showed his satisfaction over the useful meetings held with the Pakistani ministers for Interior, Religious Affairs and Narcotics Control during his visit.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia also signed the joint minutes of the meeting in which they discussed the issuance of Pakistani passports to the Burmese Muslims residing in Saudi Arabia. According to the details, the passports of the Burmese Muslims were not renewed after 2012 which created some difficulties for them in the Kingdom.

Under the arrangement, the Burmese Muslims and their children would be issued passports to improve

their legal status in Saudi Arabia. As per the discussion, a bilateral committee would be formed comprising the representatives of Saudi Arabia and the interior ministry to work out early issuance of the documents to the Burmese Muslims. Following the signing ceremony, Prime Minister Shehbaz presented a souvenir to the Saudi dignitary who also reciprocated the gesture by presenting a memento the prime minister.

Bilawal launches ‘Share Pakistan Portal’

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday launched the ‘Share Pakistan Portal’, a digital repository for an improved targeted communication between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its over 100 diplomatic missions abroad.

In his remarks on the launch event in collaboration with National Information Technology Board (NITB), the foreign minister said the online standardized information system would collect and communicate the impact of public diplomacy initiatives in pursuance of Pakistani foreign policy objectives.

Bilawal mentioned that he had initiated the ‘Foreign Minister’s Change Management Initiative’ as a commitment to improving the ministry’s ability to effectively deliver on its mandates through managements reforms. To materialize this, he said, the team of experts from MoFA and missions

abroad brainstormed on a number of reforms in the diverse areas including human resources, finance, logistics, communication, counselor, protocol and community services for digitalization and simplifying the rules, policies and procedures.

He said his ‘Change Management Initiative’ would be aimed at building a culture of work that is focused more on results and enhanced productivity, value innovation, and bringing decision making closer to the point of delivery. He said the comprehensive report on ‘Change Management Initiative’ would further address and transform the diplomatic service that will be better equipped to respond to the new realities and challenges of the modern world.

He said the ‘Change Management Initiative’ would ensure a seamless communication between the ministry and the country’s diplomatic missions abroad. Bilawal said the portal was



designed to simplify communication and sharing of information both horizontally and vertically in the public diplomacy domain between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its diplomatic posts abroad.

He said the portal would bring efficiency and transparency in various public diplomacy initiatives. The foreign minister said the paperless digital tool was the first portal launch covering the integration of digital technologies in both the public diplomacy strategic outreach efforts and institution.

Marriyum declares May 9 arson as ‘sedition & treason’

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday said military installations, and public and private properties were attacked along with desecration of memorials of martyrs and Ghazis on May 9 under a “well thought-out plan” which came under purview of “sedition and treason”.

“Imran Khan is the mastermind of instigating armed groups who attacked sensitive military and civilian installations and desecrated the memorials of Ghazis and martyrs on May 9,” the minister said while addressing a news conference. She said it was decided in the meeting of the National Security Committee yesterday that May 9 would be observed as “Black Day” every year to condemn those who had attacked the country. “What the armed groups of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) did on May 9, the arch enemy of Pakistan could not dare to do in 75 years history,” she added. “Under Imran Khan’s well-thought-out planning, the PTI armed groups and planted goons attacked the military installations and other important buildings,” she said, adding even hospitals, ambulances, patients and schools were not spared on May 9. The minister also regretted the desecration

of the memorials of martyrs and Ghazis that did hurt the sentiments of the valiant soldiers guarding the country’s borders. The historical building of Radio Pakistan was also set on fire in Peshawar by the “PTI goons”.

Marriyum said it was not a political or public protest by any means, rather it was an act of “anti-nationalism and sedition”, which a handful of armed groups perpetrated at the behest of Imran Khan. While sitting in Zaman Park which had been turned into a “shelter home” for armed groups, Imran Khan orchestrated the entire saga which was executed by “the PTI goons who even burnt Pakistan’s flag - symbol of the country’s dignity and honour”. “These people even set ablaze ambulances, hospitals, schools, mosques and animal markets, and this was by no means a political reaction,” she said, adding there would be no concession for any person involved in arson attacks.

She said it was the state’s responsibility to protect not only those who were thrown out of ambulances, but also the school going children. Those who had damaged the civilian property would be dealt with according to civilian laws, whereas trials of those who attacked military installations would be conducted as per the jurisdiction and relevant laws, the minister maintained. “The

armed forces are the protectors of our borders,” Marriyum said adding those who attacked military installations and state property should be made an example. Protecting the state and establishing the writ of the state was not the sole responsibility of the government, but all three pillars would have to play their due roles in that regard, she remarked.

She said Zaman Park had become a safe haven for the armed miscreants and the Punjab Government had provided all the evidence in that regard. The mastermind of May 9 incident was Imran Khan, she reiterated while referring to a video message of PTI leader Murad Saeed who instructed the workers to reach the places they were told by, which was also posted on the official page of PTI when Imran Khan was arrested. She asked who had shown the miscreants those places for arson attacks. The PTI workers were asked to reach the GHQ and Corps Commander House in the video message, she added.

The minister said Imran Khan himself released a video message from inside the Islamabad High Court saying that there would be more strong reaction from May 9 if anybody dared to arrest him. Marriyum said there was a clear instruction of Prime Minister Sherbazz Sharif that no innocent person should be punished and a monitoring committee

had been constituted in that regard but at the same time, miscreants would have to face the music. The police force had been working round the clock for the protection of the people but the “PTI goons” attacked them with petrol bombs and burnt their cars, she maintained.

The minister also reminded that Imran had the habit of using dirty language for police. Marriyum asked whether any installation, hospital and metro bus or station were set on fire by the PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) workers when the three times prime minister Nawaz Sharif was ousted from the power on the basis of fake cases. “We are a political party, we have always protested peacefully,” she said. Imran Khan used state money to create false cases against Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz Sharif and other political opponents, she said, while clarifying that the PTI chief registered the Al-Qadir Trust in the name of himself and his wife which was against the law.

On the occasion, a video based on Imran Khan and other PTI leaders’ threatening statements to the media was also shown to the media. She said the May 9 arson attacks were beyond politics, and thanked the people, media and civil society for differentiating between the two things. Marriyum said it was an attack on the honour and identity of the

country and a neighbouring country celebrated the incident. She said there was now time that the masses should decide whether they wanted to become part of politics which revolved around “Fitna, vandalism and arson” or part of politics which aimed at serving the people who were worried due to political instability that was aggravating the economic stability of the country.

The minister wondered why Imran Khan, who ruined the economy, harmed diplomatic relations with friendly countries, damaged social fabric and attacked on tolerance of society was “untouchable”. She asked whether he deserved phrases like “good to see you” and “wish you good luck” in the courts. “This drama must comes to an end and we have to decide ...,” she added. She said the law would take its course according to the jurisdiction wherein such incidents took place and trial would be conducted in accordance with the relevant laws. To a query, she said when Imran Khan was the PM, he claimed to stand by Pakistan’s manifesto, but offered lifetime extension to the former army chief to prevent his ouster in the wake of no-confidence motion moved by the then opposition.

She recalled all the saga of constitutional violations which were committed by Imran Khan just to save his govern-



ment, including the dissolution of National Assembly and others. The minister said Imran Khan claimed that he dissolved the provincial assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkwa on the advice of the former army chief and by harassing former Punjab chief minister Pervaz Elahi. She called Imran Khan’s demand for snap polls as a “drama”, which, she said, must come to an end. Imran Khan did not want election instead he was trying to save his skin in the Rs 60 billion corruption case. To another query, she said the government had decided that names of all those who had been arrested for arson and vandalism would be made public.

# Dialogue is the only solution to turmoil in Pakistan

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety (PA&SS) and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) - Ma'am Shazia Marri expressed grief over incidents that took place on 9th of May and it will be remembered as the blackest day in the country's history. She expressed these views during a joint press conference along with Mr. Murtaza Wahab, Advisor to CM Sindh here at Karachi.

"Entire country is upset on what happened on May 9; security installation were attacked, Pakistani flag was burnt, historic buildings were set on fire, public and personal property was destroyed and damaged, animals were burnt alive, personal property of media personnel was set on fire and the list goes on. All this was done on instructions of PTI leadership to bring disgrace to the nation" said the Federal Minister.

Lambasting at PTI, she said, there are multiple video evidences of this fascist party promoting terrorism in Pakistan and blind followers of this party who vandalised state property will be dealt with iron hand. "His party leadership repeatedly asked followers to come out of their homes and attack Corps Commander's House, Army Houses and important installations. He kept pressurising people to vandalise state property and harm state institutions. Pakistan is our red line and anyone who will try to cross it will have to face the wrath, we only exist because of our country," said the Federal Minister.

Ironically, she said, none of PTI leadership, including Imran Khan Niazi, condemned the tragic occurrences. "Entire political career of Imran Khan is based on creating conspiracies, blaming others, promoting anarchy, chaos, enmity and mischief just to satisfy his ego and lust for power," said the Federal Minister.

The minister recalled that when Shaheed Benazir Bhutto was martyred in 2007, Pakistan People Party asked workers to stay calm and not to destroy public or private property because this party believes in peace and supremacy of rule and law. "Unlike PTI that promoted terrorism because their leader was arrested for being involved in corruption worth million of dollars," said the Federal Minister. Replying to a question asked by the media Federal Minister said that, "dialogue is the only solution to political problems prevailing in Pakistan, it is high time that Imran Khan Niazi should keep his self interests at a side and think about Pakistan and the problems it is facing."

Continuing the press conference Mr. Murtaza Wahab added that what PTI workers did was nothing but terrorism and the whole nation has condemned this act. "What Imran Khan is doing is not politics but terrorism and anti-state activities. Imran is ego driven man, first he pressurised his followers to vandalise public and private property then he completely dissociated himself from all that happened. He was enjoying VIP protocol at police lines while his party workers and followers were in jail because of him. It is high time that PTI leadership and followers should open their eyes and see how they are being manipulated by one man to satisfy his ego and hunger for power" Said Murtaza Wahab.



KARACHI: Shazia Marri Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program addressing the press conference .

## Health minister calls on governor Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Jamal Nasir called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman and briefed the latter on the Punjab health sector reforms during a meeting at the Governor's House, here on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that development of education and health and provision of relief to the masses is top priority of the government.

He said the young generation is the most valuable asset and future of the nation. He emphasized that in addition to imparting medical education to the students, special attention should be paid on their character building. He said that they should become good doctors as well as good human beings.

The Governor Punjab said that various consortia have been formed in the universities on different topics including environment, moral education, women empowerment, technological and scientific research, adding that aim of these consortia is to send recommendations to the government for improvement in these sectors.

He expressed his full satisfaction on provision of basic health facilities to the people and the projects being completed swiftly in the health department. He said that other provincial departments should also solve the problems of the people of the province under an integrated strategy.

The Governor Punjab said that due to the efforts of the government, country's economy has started to show signs of stability while other sectors are also improving.

On this occasion, the Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Jamal Nasir informed the Governor Punjab about the progress on reforms and development projects introduced in the Health department. Dr. Jamal Nasir told the Governor that merit and seniority are being ensured in the Health department.

## HRCP opposes trial of May 9 protesters under army laws

LAHORE (NNI): The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) strongly opposed the decision to try May 9 miscreants under the Pakistan Army Act 1952 and Official Secrets Act 1923.

The HRCP tweeted on Wednesday that "due process" should be followed while trying them.

"HRCP strongly opposes the use of the Pakistan Army Act 1952 and Official Secrets Act 1923 to try civilians. While those responsible for arson and damaging public and private property during the recent protests should be held to account, they remain entitled to due process," the rights body tweeted. In another tweet, it also mentioned that "all those civilians tried under these acts in the past should also have their cases transferred to civil courts."

Army's media wing Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) issued a statement on Monday that the military decided to try vandals under the military's acts. The PTI workers resorted to violent protests after the arrest of party chief Imran Khan last week and attacked public property and military installations in several cities. At a special Corps Commanders Conference held at the General Headquarters with Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Genl Asim Munir in the chair, it was decided to try protesters and their abettors under relevant laws, including the Pakistan Army Act and the Official Secrets Act. The global human rights watchdog, Amnesty International, has sharply criticised Pakistan for announcing plans to use military laws to prosecute those responsible for arson during recent protests sparked by the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan. In a statement on Tuesday, the Amnesty International described the controversial move as alarming and contrary to international law, and demanded it be struck down immediately. The violence prompted the military to announce on Monday it had collected "irrefutable evidence" about culprits involved in "these heinous crimes" and vowed to prosecute them under military and anti-espionage laws. The laws provide for the administration of military justice, including the trial and punishment of army personnel. "Amnesty International has documented a catalogue of human rights violations stemming from trying civilians in military courts in Pakistan, including flagrant disregard for due process, lack of transparency, coerced confessions, and executions after grossly unfair trials," the global watchdog said.

### Sindh plans crop insurance against natural disasters

KARACHI (PPI): The Sindh government has planned the insurance of crops with the aim of shielding farmers from financial losses during natural disasters, according to a statement issued on Wednesday.

In this regard, Chief Secretary Sindh Dr. Muhammad Sohail Rajput chaired a meeting at Sindh Secretariat, which was attended by the Secretary Agriculture Aijaz Ali Mahesar, Khalid Hameed CEO National Insurance Company limited (NICL), Muhammad Altaf General Manager (NICL) and others.

Chief Secretary Sindh Dr. Muhammad Sohail Rajput said that the climate change is making farming 'more challenging every passing day'.

## Special cell established to issue, renew land leases

KARACHI (PPI): Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saif-ur-Rahman has said that a special cell has been established for issuing and renewing leases in the Land Department of KMC. Plot owners can contact the Land Department to renew plot lease at current rates before 30 June 2023. After that, revised rates will be applied for issuance and renewal of the lease. He said this while reviewing the update status of issuance of notices to plot owners for renewal of lease, Director Land Sabah-ul-Islam and Nadeem Wahab were also present in the meeting.

Earlier Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saif-ur-Rahman was briefed on the details of the notices sent by the Land Department for the issuance and renewal of leases of plots in various areas of Karachi. Notices have been sent to various localities including Civil Line, Clifton, Frere Town, Railway Quarter, Sarai Quarter, Ramsawmy Quarter, Vidhumal Odha Ram Quarter, Aram Bagh Quarter, Ranchore Line Quarter, Ghulam Hussain Qasim Quarter, Preedy Quarter, Liaquatabad and Soldier Bazar Quarter.

Administrator Karachi said that this process should be completed before the end of current financial year and efforts should be made to renew the lease to the plot owners as soon as possible in the areas where the lease has expired.

He said that the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation is facilitating the lease matters for the citizens, under this purpose a special cell has been established in the Land Department and the public is being informed about it so that the plot owners who have not obtained the lease should also contact the Land Department and obtain the lease in the areas where notices have been sent for renewal of the lease, most of them include the area of old Karachi where the lease issued for most of the plots has expired and has not yet been renewed. He said KMC has taken special measures in this regard and the officers of the Land Department are being activated in different zones of Karachi so that this process can be carried out quickly, therefore plot owners can avail this facility of renewal of lease till 30th June 2023 through special cell in the Land Department of KMC.

## Sindh govt committed to bringing the latest buses to public bus service nationwide

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: Sharjeel Inam Memon, the Minister of Information, Transport, and Mass Transit in Sindh, delivered a speech as a special guest at an event held in a local hotel in Karachi. He announced that YUTONG MASTER COMPANY has established its presence in Sindh, and the Sindh government will purchase all the buses manufactured at their plant to expand the network of the People's Bus Service in the region.

During the launch and key handover ceremony, the Information Minister was presented with the key to a diesel-electric hybrid bus by representatives from Yutong Master Bus Company. Notable attendees at the ceremony included Chinese officials from Yutong Master Company, Nadeem Malik



from Master Automobile Company, Gul Hassan from NRTC, Secretary of Transport Saleem Rajpoot, and other government officials. The event was organized under the auspices of Yutong Master Company.

Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon expressed that Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, Chairman of the PPP, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah have given special instructions to improve the public transport services in all cities and districts of Sindh. He emphasized the importance of effective measures to enhance service quality and delivery.

Sharjeel Inam Memon highlighted that Sindh was the first province in Pakistan to introduce an electric bus service, which received global acclaim. Additionally, a pink bus service exclusively for women has been launched.

He stated that the Sindh government is committed to bringing the latest buses to the public bus service nationwide to provide affordable, comfortable, and modern travel facilities to the working class. He noted that the fare for the People's Bus Service is cheaper than traveling on a motorcycle.

Addressing recent incidents of vandalism and arson against the People's Bus Service, Sharjeel Inam Memon said these acts were a deliberate conspiracy to deprive the public of their transportation facilities and misuse taxpayer money. He assured that those responsible for damaging the buses would be held accountable according to the law. He further emphasized that the buses serve the working people and not those residing in luxurious bungalows of Bani Gala.

### RWMC carries out anti-dengue activities in the Chak Jalal area

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-dengue awareness campaign and cleanliness drive launched by Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) were underway in the city.

According to a spokesman, the communication teams of RWMC carried out its awareness campaign in the area of UC 87, Chak Jalal Din to aware the masses about the dengue virus and to motivate them to keep their surroundings clean for the elimination of such a fatal virus. The teams also conducted their campaign at a private school in the area and distributed pamphlets among the students to highlight the importance of cleanliness and the prevention of dengue.

The teams apprised them about the life cycle, prevalence, treatment, and prevention of dengue and added that the purpose of this activity was to educate the students about the fundamental standards of cleanliness so that the citizens could apply these standards in their lives to make their surroundings neat and clean.

The teams called upon the residents to keep an eye on junkyards, schools and under-construction buildings which lead to the spread of dengue larvae and leave no place wet or stagnant water. The spokesman said, "We will continue such activities in the coming days as the government has issued the threat of dengue fever spread linked with public health."

PUBLIC NOTICE	PUBLIC NOTICE	PUBLIC NOTICE
Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Ahsan Zeb with regards to moveable & immoveable assets of deceased Mr. Jehan Zeb citizen number 1610111237205 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Hina Nayab (Daughter) 2.Maryam Zeb (Daughter)3.Iqra Zeb (Daughter)4.Nosheen Zeb (Daughter)5.Rahat Begum (Spouse)6.Ahmad Zeb (Son) 7.Ahsan Zeb (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA MARDAN-SFU	Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Syed Sheraz Hussain Shah with regards to moveable & immoveable assets of deceased Mr. Syed Qader Hussain Shah (Son) 8.Syed Sheraz Hussain Shah (Son)9.Syed Rizwan Shah (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA MANSEHRA-SFU	Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Taj Muhammad with regards to moveable & immoveable assets of deceased Ms. Sarwar Jan citizen number 1310108306426 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Taj Muhammad (Son) 2.Masood Khan (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. PID(I) 6985/22 INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ABBOTABAD-SFU



### KHYBER TEACHING HOSPITAL

#### MEDICAL TEACHING INSTITUTION PESHAWAR

#### FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2023-24

Sealed tenders are invited for the supply of following items for Khyber Teaching Hospital Peshawar. Tender should reach to the office of the undersigned on or before Monday 05-06-2023 at 10:00 am which will be opened on the same day at 10:30 am in presence of bidders or their representatives. The Bid security shall be submitted from the account of the firm/bidder/contractor who submits the bid in favor of Hospital Director, Khyber Teaching Hospital Medical Teaching Institution Peshawar.

S#	Name of Item	Required Bid Security	Procurement Method
1.	Procurement of Liquid Oxygen, Refilling of Oxygen, Nitrogen, CO2 Cylinders and Related Items	PKR 1,000,000/-	Single Stage Two Envelop

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS:-**

- Only typed tender on original prescribing letter pad, sealed & signed should be submitted, the quoted Price must be printed and hand written quoted prices will not be acceptable.
- The tenders must be according to hospital specification; double rates for one item will not be accepted.
- No conditional tender will be acceptable.
- Pre-bid Meeting will be held on **Thursday 25-05-2023 at 11:00 am** at the Office of the Manager Supply Chain KTH.
- A detailed list of specification of required items can be downloaded from official website <https://kth.edu.pk/download/tenders/>
- The bid security in the shape of Pay order (PO) will not be accepted.
- No document will be entertained after bid submission.
- Rule No. 37(A) of KPRA necessitates the registration of bidders with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority.
- The competent Authority has the right to reject all bids under Rule 47 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (KPRA) Procurement Rules 2014.

**Hospital Director**  
**Khyber Teaching Hospital, Peshawar Medical Teaching Institute**

**Address of Bid Submission/Opening:**  
Khyber Teaching Hospital/MTI Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,  
Telephone(s): 0092-911-9224400 Ext: 2105



# Solidarity rallies with Pak armed forces held

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a powerful display of unity and support, different rallies led by former government officials from Peshawar & Khyber districts took place till Fort Balahisar, Peshawar.

The rallies aimed to express unwavering solidarity with the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps, showcasing a remarkable turnout of former and present officials, local elders, residents and a significant number of youth.

The participants of the rallies fervently chanted slogans in favour of the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps, demonstrating their utmost admiration for the brave soldiers.

Carrying placards adorned with pro-Army and Frontier Corps messages, the attendees passionately expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the perseverance and patience exhibited by the soldiers of Frontier Corps North.

In a unified voice, the rallies participants vehemently condemned the

attacks on defense institutions' buildings that occurred on May 9. They urged the government to take decisive action against the individuals responsible for these acts of aggression, emphasizing the need for strict punishment.

During the rallies, the speakers reiterated their unwavering commitment to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Pakistan Army and other law enforcement agencies.

They acknowledged the indelible sacrifices made by the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps in the pursuit of peace in the tribal districts. The rallies participants declared the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps as a source of immense pride and recognition for the tribal people.

The rallies served as a powerful testament to the enduring bond between the people of tribal areas and the brave defenders of the nation. The unity showcased during the rallies serve as a resounding message of support, encouragement, and appreciation for

the selfless efforts of the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps.

**APP adds:** Trading community staged a rally to express solidarity with the Pakistan Army here on Wednesday. A large number of local traders participated in the rally.

The rally was led by president, Insaf Traders Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Shahid Khan while presidents of various bazaars' associations also participated.

Prominent amongst those participated in the rally were included Haji Shah Pur Salam, Haji Zahir Shah, Gulrez Khan, Arshad Angaar, Haji Afsar Khan, Zakir Khan, Daud Afridi, Liaquat Khan, Speen Khan, Shahid Afridi, Haider Khan, Saiful Malook, Malik Khan Said, Haji Jameel, Haji Khaista Rehman, Akhundzada Zahidullah Shah, Luqman Durrani, Sajjad Waheed and Tahir Khan

The rally began from Hashtnagri Chowk and marched till Balahisar Fort. The participants of the rally were carrying national flags

and banners inscribed with slogans in favour of the Pakistan Army. They also chanted slogans i.e Pakistan Zindabad (Long Live Pakistan) and Long Live Pakistan Army.

On reaching the front of Balahisar Fort, the participants of the rally showered rose petals on the officers and jawans of Pakistan Army. They also presented them bouquets of flowers on behalf of the local trading community.

Addressing the participants of the rally, president of Insaf Traders Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahid Khan said that armed forces are the pride of Pakistan and lifeline of the nation and they would not be left alone.

He said that the Pakistan Army has always rendered sacrifices for the country and nation, which are not hidden from anyone.

He said that the people and trading community of the country would never hesitate to render any kind of sacrifice for armed forces. The participants of the rally also chanted slogans in favour of KP Police.

## Governor assures resolution of problems

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali Wednesday said that provincial and federal government was taking steps for development of merged districts and handsome amount would be allocated for uplift of these areas in coming budget.

He was talking to 24-member delegation of merged areas tehsil chairmen and local government representative of South Waziristan, North Waziristan, Mohmand, Orakzai, Kurram and Bajaur merged districts. The delegation informed governor about their problems relating health, education and electricity and urged him to resolve these issues.

Speaking on the occasion, KP Governor said that he is not oblivious to the problems of merged districts and concerned authorities would be contacted to address their concerns.

He also praised services and sacrifices of tribal people and said that joint efforts are needed to maintain peace and serenity in tribal merged districts.

He also assured delegation cooperation to address their long standing sense of deprivations.

## FIA arrests Hawala accused

PESHAWAR (APP): The Commercial Banking Wing of FIA and Excise Department during a joint action arrested an accused involved in illegal payments of remittances (Hawala Hundi) and money exchange here on Wednesday.

Following instructions issued by Director FIA KP Zone, Nisar Ahmad Khan, Director Commercial Banking Circle Peshawar, Afzal Khan Niazi and a team of Excise arrested the accused named Fareed Hussain and initiated investigation against him under Foreign Exchange Regulation Act.

The FIR and Excise teams also recovered Rs 22.9 million and six cheque books of different banks from the possession of the accused. The FIA also recovered data from the mobile and lists regarding Hundi and Hawala. Further interrogation from the accused was underway.

## 10 held during operation

PESHAWAR (APP): The Assistant Commissioner Peshawar, Sayyeda Zainab Naqvi on Wednesday carried out a grand anti-encroachment operation in Tehkal Payan area during which 10 violators were arrested while two truck-loads of encroached items were confiscated.

During the operations over 30 ramps, encroached sheds were removed by the heavy machinery while an illegal fruit market was also removed.



PESHAWAR: Delegation of Chitral meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan. Caretaker Minister Abdul Haleem Qasuria also present on occasion.

## Collection of property tax on non-transferrable assets: PHC stops from adverse actions against residents

### Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) two members bench comprised of Justice Abdul Shakoor and Syed Arshad Ali stopped from taking any adverse actions against residents of cantonment board in property tax collection on non-transferrable assets while redirected federal government as well as cantonment boards to submit reply till 30th May, on Wednesday.

The counsel Atif Ali

Khan and Khalid Rehman advocates appeared before court while pleaded that after 18th amendment federal government has devolved property tax on non-transferrable assets to provinces but different cantonment administrations receiving heavy property taxes from residents in the premises.

Atif Ali Khan advocate informed PHC that cantonment board officials multiplied his office rent water charges twice to pressure him to quit from the pro-

ceedings in the petition.

He argued that under Non-transferrable property tax Act 1958 cantonment administration only collected the tax to transfer to province after deduction of charges but after 1979 Martial Law, the 1924 was implemented under Presidential Order No. 13 which was intact till 1985.

The counsel argued that in 18th constitutional amendment, the collection of property tax on Non-transferrable assets devolved to provinces

because the lower ratio of taxes while added that cantonment board officials collecting taxes as per 1924 law which is unconstitutional.

The counsel pleaded PHC to restrict cantonment board to collect property tax on non-transferrable property as per provincial ratio after then submit to province government after deduction of charges while Cantonment Board's lawyer requested for provision time to submit reply.

## PPP capable to steer country out of crisis, says Bacha

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial president, PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Minister of State for Water Resources, Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha has said that the party is fully capable of steering the country out of the prevailing crisis.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, he said that PPP never got a government, but always got responsibility. He said that it is the legacy of their party to bring the country out of difficult situations.

He said that PPP chair-

man, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has strengthened the foreign policy of Pakistan and brought the country out of diplomatic isolation.

He said that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the youth is worried, there are no jobs. He said that they are against anyone, but do not support illegal work.

He said that they are asking a simple question from PTI to show their performance of the period of last over nine years.

He said that people are

asking how many houses have been constructed during the period.

Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha asked the leadership of PTI to present themselves for accountability in the Bus Rapid Transit, Billion Tree Tsunami and Malam Jabba scams. He also accused the PTI leadership of pleasing enemies by staging violent protests and burning of public and private properties.

He said that peaceful protest is the right of every political activist, but no one

could be allowed to riot all over the country under the guise of this right.

The provincial president PPP demanded of the law-enforcement agencies to take action against all those behind arson and damages to public and private properties.

He said that the leadership of various political parties had also been arrested in Pakistan at different times, but there has never been such a violent protest like PTI, which is being shown as celebration by the enemy states.

## Importance and process of vote: Students play their role for educating community regarding

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Students should play their role in educating their community regarding importance and process of vote, it was stated by Asif Ali Yasin, Director (Elections) here while addressing to an awareness session in Shaheed Banazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar. Spokesperson to the Provincial Election Commissioner, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sohail Ahmad also attended voters awareness session which was arranged by CDPI Pakistan in collaboration with FNFP Pakistan.



The students and faculty members were briefed about the electoral process, importance of vote, composition of ECP, constitutional and legal frame work and steps being taken for inclu-

sive and credible Elections. A demo regarding conduct of poll was also presented in order to educate students about process of polling. Students took keen interest in the session and

asked many relevant questions which were addressed by the team of ECP.

Besides Prof. Dr Abdur Rauf, University of Peshawar also spoke on civic governance.

## Mediators demands right to trial, polls

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Mediators, leading politicians, journalists, lawyers and numerous civil society organisations have welcomed the National Security Committee's decision to "resolve all the political issues through dialogue as per democratic norms instead of indulging in confrontation".

While rejecting the decision to try the civilians under Army Act or Official Secret Act, they endorsed the HRCP's plea to follow the due process under Article 10A of the Constitution and in civil courts.

Condemning all forms of violence, vandalism and hate-mongering. The Mediators call for serious introspection about the rage and massive passionate indignation of the youth in the Punjab and KP. The group calls for an independent and credible inquiry into the 9 May mayhem and prosecution of the alleged culprits through a credible judicial process and also an investigation into a big security lapse in handling miscreants.

They called upon the Chief Justice of Pakistan and the Shehbaz government and the Parliament to show understanding and restraint and facilitate the Election Commission of Pakistan in announcing a schedule for the next General Elections to

all assemblies on the same date, not exceeding the current tenure of assemblies, and ensure free and fair franchise in consultation with all political stakeholders.

The mediators express their concern over new curbs on social media and censorship of electronic media. It demands the release of all those not involved in violence, the women and journalists in particular.

The joint statement is signed by over 150 leading personalities, including Senator Raza Rabbani, Senator Mushahid Hussain, Nafeesa Shah MNA, President BNP Akhtar Mengal MNA, Mehmood Khan Achakzai President

PKMAP, Mohsin Dawar MNA, Farhatullah Babar PPP, Akhtar Hussain President AWP, Farooq Tariq President HKM and others.

Economists: Dr Hafeez Pasha, Dr Akmal Hussain, Dr Pervaiz Tahir, Dr Kaiser Bengali, Former Vice Chancellor GC Hassan Shah, Dr Nayyar, Prof Sarfraz. Bar representative: Chairman Pakistan Bar Council Hassan Raza Pasha, Akhtar Hussain, member judicial commission, Abid Saqi, Sabahat Rizvi and other office-bearers of bar associations.

Senior Journalists: Zahid Hussain, Imtiaz Alam, Safma, Hussain Naqi, Sohail Warraich, Mujeebur

Rehman Shami, Talat Hussain, Azhar Abbas, Asma Shirazi, Kazim Khan President CPNE, Jabbar Khattak, Shamim Shahid President PFUJ Workers But, President PFUJ, Nasir Zaidi, Shehzada Zulfikar, Mohammed Waleed, Allama Siddique Azhar, Tanzeela Mazhar and over 50 others.

Civil Society organisations: Mohammed Tehseen, SAP, mohammed Ayub NP, Khawar Mumtaz WAF, Sheema Kirmani, Tehreek I Niswan, Irfan Mufli, Joint Action Committee, Peter Jacob, Karamat, PILAR, President National Trade Union, leading activists of human rights, etc.

## Power suspension notified

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) on Wednesday notified that due to due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Rehman Baba Grid Station on 18th, 22nd, 25th and 29th May from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.m

resultantly consumers of 11KV Kachori, Shalozai, Safdar Abad, Khanmust, New Hazar Khwani, Surizai, Pandu Baba, Umar 2, Hazar Khwani, Yakatoot, New Chairman Daftar, Jameel Colony, Ring Road, Beri Bagh, Rashid Ghari, Surizai, Akhon Abad, Ring Road 2, SIDB feeders will face inconvenience.

It said that power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Kohat Road Grid Station on 18th, 22nd, 25th and 29th May from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. due to which consumers of 11KVPAF Express, Kohat Road, Wazir Bagh, Sonehri Masjid, Bana Mari, Civil Quarter, Nothia, Murshad Abad, Abasin, Old Deh Bahadar, Deh Bhadar, Wazir Abad, Ameen ColonyJ Bara, Nodhya Payan, Murshid Ababad, Dora Road, Nodiya

Bahadar, Lundi Arbab 1,2,3, Sheikh Muhammadi, Pishtakhara, Swati Gate, Gulbarg, Scheme Chowk feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Peshawar City Grid Station on 18th, 22nd, 25th and 29th May from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantl consumers of 11KV Sikhandar Abad, Zaryab, Pandu Road, City Home, Bana Mari, Umar, Islamabad, Faqir Abad, Sheikh Abad, Molvi G, Nisht-arabad, NHA feeders will face inconvenience.



PESHAWAR: A large number of people attending rally in favour of Pakistan Army at Fort Balahisar.

## PDMA prepares heat wave action plan in KP

PESHAWAR (INP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) under the guidance of Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) on Wednesday unveiled a comprehensive heat wave action plan 2023 to mitigate the impacts of extreme heat in the province.

The plan designed considering the adverse effects of climate change and rising temperatures, assigns clear roles and responsibilities to all stakeholders to ensure citizens' health, safety, infrastructure, and forest protection.

The Heat Wave Action Plan was developed with

the consultations of relevant stakeholders and an analysis of past experiences of heat waves in the province.

The plan emphasizes the importance of awareness campaigns to educate citizens about preventive measures against heat stroke and other heat-related illnesses.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) seasonal outlook, temperatures were expected to be slightly above normal in the upcoming two months.

With the anticipated rise in temperatures, the general public is advised to take necessary precautions to

avoid heat stroke.

To protect oneself from heat stroke and other heat-related ailments during the heat wave period, PDMA advises the masses to drink plenty of water, wear loose, lightweight, and light-colored clothing to allow better air circulation and reflect sunlight, limit direct exposure to the sun during peak hours, typically between 10 am to 4 pm.

Take frequent breaks in cool, or use fans to lower the body temperature, and plan outdoor activities wisely.

The heat wave plan also includes provisions for safeguarding public livelihoods.

## Two-day art exhibition held in SBBWU

PESHAWAR (APP): The Department of Art and Design Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University (SBBWU) in collaboration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority arranged two-day painting and art exhibition in which final year students showcased their work.

The main objective of this exhibition was to promote female artists of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and encourage them to venture and show talent in field of arts and design.

More than 20 paintings

were displayed expressing themes through various sub-projects.

The exhibition was attended by a large number of visitors including professionals who showed deep interest in the hard work of the students and also acknowledged the level of professional expertise of students.

Prof. Dr. Safia Ahmed, Vice Chancellor while expressing her views appreciated work of students and faculty members.

She said that promotion of culture is of utmost importance and we as a

university make sure that with every passing day a new opportunity and a new exposure platform is being provided to the students.

She added that we desire to expand the dynamics of linkages for benefit of students and appreciated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority for joining hands in order to encourage the Student's work. Such collaborations lead to encouragement, confidence building and a way to open opportunities for the students, she added.



PESHAWAR: Traffic warden officials removing tinted glasses from a car during a campaign at Eid Gah Road.



## In brief

### People stands with Pak forces F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Sultankhel tribe of Pukhtun from Balambat and Lal Qila announced its full support to the Pakistan army and said its youth would fight side by side with the army against the enemies. A meeting in this regard was held at Balambat which was addressed by the Sultankhel tribe Balambat and Lal Qila president Haji Khushal Khan and general secretary Nasrullah Khan. The tribesmen said the Pakistan army was a symbol of unity, integrity and security of the nation. They said the Sultankhel tribe would fail the negative propaganda against the army and its officers. The speakers said the country was passing through a crucial period and its enemies wanted to divide the nation and the army. They said the whole nation loved and respected the army and would stand by it. Meanwhile the gas consumers complained that gas meter rent had been increased from Rs 41 to Rs 500 and additional charges had been included in the gas bills which would be strongly resisted. Talking to local journalists at Timergara they said the current increase had multiplied their miseries as they had already been suffering from inflation and unemployment. They said that Rs 475 had been included as fixed charges and Rs 794 as correction charges in the April gas bills which the consumers found difficult to pay. They demanded the government and concerned authorities to withdraw the increase and send real gas bills.

### Efforts on to serve communities F.P. Report

DIR: Frontier Corps North, in its continuous effort to serve the local communities, organized a Free Medical Camp in the village Makhama, District Dir. The camp aimed to provide essential healthcare services to the residents of the area, ensuring easy access to medical check-ups and medicines. A total of 638 patients, comprising 173 males, 327 females, and 138 children, received comprehensive medical check-ups during the camp. The dedicated medical team, consisting of experienced doctors and healthcare professionals, provided thorough examinations and administered appropriate treatments. In addition to medical consultations, free medicines were also distributed to the patients, facilitating their recovery. The medical camp also prioritized raising awareness among the locals about common seasonal diseases. The doctors imparted valuable knowledge and guidance on preventive measures, symptom recognition, and appropriate actions to be taken for a swift recovery. This educational aspect of the camp aimed to empower the community in managing their health and minimizing the impact of prevalent illnesses. The residents of the area expressed their heartfelt appreciation for the Frontier Corps North's initiative. They acknowledged the significant convenience provided by the medical camp, as it eliminated the need for them to travel to other areas for necessary medical check-ups.

### Two drug pushers held

ATTOCK (INP): The police arrested two drug pushers besides recovery of 1.75 kilogram hashish during separate actions in different areas of Attock on Wednesday. Police conducted operation against drug dealers in Mohallah Islampur of Hassanabad during which a drug pusher Arif Mehmood was held with 1.2 kilogram hashish.



**GILGIT:** Abdul Khalid Khurshid, Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, Vice Chancellor PIDE, Dr. Nadeem ul Haque and Vice Chancellor KIU, Prof Dr. Atta Ullah Shah, are addressing the conference jointly organized by the PIDE and KIU.

## Two-day PIDE moot kicks off at KIU

### F.P. Report

GILGIT: Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), in collaboration with the Pakistan Society of Development Economists (PSDE) and Karakoram International University (KIU), organizing a two day Conference at the Karakoram International University (KIU), Gilgit, formally kicked off on Wednesday.

Abdul Khalid Khurshid, Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, while emphasizing the importance of the rule of Law for any societal development, said that Smallholder farmers in Gilgit-Baltistan play a vital role in the region's economy. However, to help them unlock their true potential, the regional government needs to introduce targeted measures to increase their productivity in terms of agriculture and livestock.

He said that the government must focus on improving resource management to do this. Land

reforms must be implemented strategically to allow for efficient use of resources such as water, fertilizer, and soil conservation methods so that small farmers can make the most out of their land.

Dr. Nadeem ul Haque, Vice-Chancellor of Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad, said that the 02 Days Conference on the Vision for Gilgit Baltistan is a unique opportunity to focus on the development of this region. Through this conference, we aim to create an agenda to shape the future of Gilgit Baltistan and ensure its prosperity. Dr. Durre Nayab, Pro VC of PIDE, explained the vision behind collaboration efforts under the banner of the PIDE Conference "Gilgit Baltistan Beyond Mountains."

Prof Dr. Atta Ullah Shah, Vice Chancellor of Karakoram International University (KIU), said that the vision for Gilgit-

Baltistan should be to save the entire region's ecosystem. Earlier, in his online address, Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan said that the development of Gilgit Baltistan has been hindered by several obstacles, with poverty being the main issue.

In the session of the "Charter of the Economy," speakers stated that it is essential that the focus be placed on rural development in GB. Panelists further stated that we don't have constitutional rights and that Gilgit Baltistan is the only region with no separation because its loves Pakistan.

The people of Gilgit Baltistan have always been sandwiched in political wars, and its economy is Zero. "Until GB gets representation in the federal government, it will not pay taxes, and if it does not pay taxes, its economy will never grow," he added. At the end, there was a cultural and musical performance from the youth of Gilgit Baltistan.

## Forces solidarity rally held in Jamrud

### F.P. Report

JAMRUD: Under the banner of Tehreek Islahate Pakistan (TIP) a pro-forces car rally was held here in Jamrud on Wednesday. Large number of the party workers beside local residents led by ex-parliamentarian Bilawal Afridi took out a car rally from Shakas village of Jamrud to Babe Khyber where it culminated into a public gathering.

Speaking on the occasion he paid rich tribute to the martyrs of Pak Army who laid their lives for the sake of the country. Strong army is the guarantee of a strong Pakistan, he added and said the people of the country would foil every maldesigns hatched to defame forces.

He categorically condemned Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) volunteers for attacking forces installations and said such acts of terrorisms act would be tolerated. The speaker maintained that the PTI leaders utilizes unfair practices like uttering poisonous words against State institutions to get opportunity for rule but people of Pakistan would not let them succeed.

Later on, the participants while carrying the national flags, chanted slogans in favor of Pak Army and dispersed peacefully. Separately, scores of tribesmen initiated a rally in Mulagori, sub-division of Jamrud to demonstrate unity with the forces and other State institutions. The participants marched from Sher burj to the main gate of Tirah Rifle camp. They vowed that they would stand firm with their forces who rendered matchless sacrifices for their country.

## Action to be taken against illegal sale of arms

### F.P. Report

MARDAN: A meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mardan Captain (R) Abdur Rehman regarding endorsing the legal purchase and sale of arms across the district. On this occasion, ADC Finance and Planning Sami ur Rehman, AC Mardan Ayesha Tahir and AC Takht Bhai Gul Nawaz Afridi, AAC Kamran Khan, Attaullah and Rashid Khan along with police department and arms dealers participated.

Deputy Commissioner gave a detailed briefing to the participants on the orders issued by the Interior Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to make the purchase and sale of arms and ammunition in accordance with the law and said that there is an open violation of law and illegal purchase of arms throughout the district. It has been decided to take large-scale action against the dealers who sell them.

Deputy Commissioner Mardan further said that the registered arms dealers across the district should submit their stock details to the Deputy Commissioner's office from time to time so that any untoward incident can be dealt with in a timely manner. On this occasion, the Deputy Commissioner was also informed about the problems faced by the arms dealers, on which he assured to solve the problems.

## Kalasha festival Chelam Josh ends with sweet memories

### F.P. Report

CHITRAL: The Kalasha Tribes Annual Religious Festival, Chelam Josh, also known as Joshi in local language, ended in Bomburit Valley with all its colors, festivities with sweet memories of the local and good numbers of foreign tourists.

However, the festival continues in Kalash Valley, Brier. In this festival, Kalash men play drums while Kalash women dance shoulder to shoulder in a circular circle singing religious songs. Their families decorate their hats with notes of one hundred, five hundred and thousand rupees.

It is considered as a sign of respect and dignity for them. By noon, Kalash women and children from different villages gathered in groups to dance to the beat of the dholak (drums), singing songs and dancing. After noon, Kalash people hold walnut branches and leaves in their hands and wave them. They move slowly towards the main dance hall i.e. Chirsu, during which Muslims or people of other religions are not allowed to join this procession.

When these people reach Charsu, they dance there with great enthusiasm to make their god happy.

After Asr, the religious leaders of Kalash i.e. Qazis pour milk into the wheat crop, which is done for blessing, while the men go away from the Chasso and hold walnut twigs, leaves or flowers in their hands and pray loudly in their own language. They slowly come towards the dance floor while singing religious songs. But a person belonging to any other religion is not allowed to come in front of them. In Khirsu women also hold twigs and leaves in their hands and wave them and sing songs and wait for men.

When the men, led by their Qazis, reach the dance hall i.e. Chirsu, they all gathered together and performed a dance while throwing leaves and twigs in their hands on the women. A large number of local and foreign tourists had come to witness this festival. However, they had to face some difficulties due to the bad roads and lack of seating and other facilities for the tourists. A dozen tourists from Finland

visited the Kalash Valley for the first time on the invitation of the Chitral Travel Bureau. When these tourists were asked about this festival, they said that the government and non-government organizations that work for the development of tourism should pay more attention to tourism and take concrete steps to promote it.

They said that more work should be done so that the tourists do not face any difficulties in coming and going, and with more tourists coming here, the economic life of the people of this area will also improve. Chitral Travel Bureau is committed to projecting a vision for the promotion of responsible, sustainable, regenerative and transformative tourism, particularly with regard to nature-based tourism. Speaking to media in Kalash Valley, Chief Executive Officer Syed Harir Shah emphasized the importance of involving local people in the management of destinations, operations and events to reduce the negative impacts of tourism and enhance its benefits.

## Special renovation plan to be implemented

### Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFAIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warriach said that a special renovation plan is being implemented to give attractive look to district Hafizabad and 'Dewar-e-Hafizabad' in the middle of city Hafizabad is being constructed and construction work on the model of "District of Rice" is also underway in this regard.

While visiting different sites of city selected to renovate and reconstruct for beautifying the city, he said that a beautiful model of "I love Hafizabad" and 'Kalma Tayyba' would also be made at busiest 'Qatal Garraha Chowk' in the city.

He said that different flowers were planted and attractive look was given to Gujranwala road while colorful lights were also installed at 'Kachary Road' in the city. He also said that a model of 'Minar-i-Pakistan' would also be erected at bypass whereas highest and a big National Flag would also be made in front of district complex.

Basic fasciitis provided to Public Park Pindi Bhattian: All necessary

and basic fasciitis have been provided at Public Park Pindi Bhattian for providing better recreational facilities to people especially children and women under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner Pindi Bhattian Rashid Iqbal and Chief Officer MC Ikram Ullah Sindhu on the directions of the Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Umar Farooq Warriach.

Chief Officer Ikram Ullah Sindhu said that swings for children have been provided in the Park and more than three thousand floral and fruity saplings also planted in the park for keeping atmosphere pleasant and beautiful.

50000 bags of wheat recovered: AC Pindi Bhattian Rashid Iqbal recovered 50000 bags of wheat illegally stocked and sealed warehouse. According to details, AC received information that heavy quantity of wheat was stocked at warehouse for smuggling. On the information, he raided the warehouse and recovered fifty thousand sacks of wheat and sealed the warehouse. AC warned that zero

tolerance policy of the government was being implemented for containing smuggling and hoarding of wheat.

Provision of justice is our prime duty: District and Session Judge Hafizabad Malik Mushtaq Elahi Bingy said that provision of justice is our prime duty and all stockholders should ensure to provide free of cost to people to fulfill all legal requirements hundred percent.

He was addressing monthly meeting of District Criminal and Justice Coordination Committee Hafizabad. DC Umer Farooq Warriach, SP Investigation Shahid Warriach, Additional District and Session Judge Umer bin Akbar, Senior Civil Judge Madam Shabana Hameed, Senior Civil Judge Criminal division Usman ghani, Executive Engineer Wapda Ramzan Aalam, Superintendent Shelter Home Nabila Bashir, Superintendent District Jail Hafizabad Muhammad Abu Bakar Abdullah, President District Bar Malik Waqas Raza Awan and other members attended the meeting.

## Father along 2 sons shot killed over land dispute

### F.P. Report

LARKANA: As many as three killed including father along with two sons in firing over agricultural land dispute near Rato Dero, a suburb of Larkana. The deceased were identified as Abdul Sattar, and his sons namely Irfan and Sajjad.

Due to the conflict between Lashari and Kanga Police Station, the bodies of the deceased were sometimes kept in Larkana and sometimes in Ratidari. Rabil Shahnawaz Imrani 12-year-old son was also injured in the firing. Akbar Jatoi, son of the deceased

Abdul Sattar Jatoi, said that the in-laws had an old dispute over agricultural land.

Today my father Abdul Sattar Jatoi was praying in the Masjid when the accused Roshan, Mir Attaullah Jatoi, Mir Asghar Ali Jatoi and Didar Ali Jatoi shot dead my father and my two brothers Sajjad Ali and Irfan Ali. done, shot and killed while the street boy Rabil Imrani was injured. He further said that Lashari and Kanga police did not help despite knowing the border problem.

Three arrested: Police operations was conducted in Qamber Shahdadtok dis-

trict, 3 persons were arrested on the charge of drug selling, drugs were recovered, according to the details, Warah police conducted an operation at Sodhar wah branch and seized 500 grams from the accused Sanaullah Pirzada.

He was arrested along with Gutka, while Naseerabad police took action during checking and arrested the wanted accused Hassan Ali Jalbani in various incidents and Lalu Rounk police has been arrested a drug seller Nadeem mugheri with 250 gram Hashish, necessary fir were registered on concerned police stations.

## Balochistan and WFP partner to improve nutrition in Gwadar

QUETTA (PPI): The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Planning and Development (P&D) Department of the Government of Balochistan have signed a partnership agreement for the implementation of the G w a d a r - L a s b e l a Livelihoods Support Project II (GLSP-II) to improve nutrition behaviours and practices for food insecure communities in the Gwadar and Lasbela coastal districts.

These areas are highly exposed to climate shocks, resulting in lower productivity in agriculture, livestock and fisheries. Funded by the International Fund

for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the agreement was signed in Islamabad between Ms. Rathi Palakrishnan, WFP Acting Country Director in Pakistan and Mr. Rehmat Dashti, Project Director, P&D Department of the Government of Balochistan. "I am confident that the partnership between the Government of Balochistan and WFP will help us achieve our joint nutrition targets. I appreciate WFP's efforts to ensure long-term solutions to the malnutrition challenge in Pakistan," said Mr. Rehmat Dashti.

The project will contribute to the prevention of malnutrition through

behavioural change interventions on nutrition, building on a nationwide existing programme WFP supports, the Benazir Nashonuma Programme. As part of the broader Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), the Benazir Nashonuma programme targets pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under two through 484 facilitation centres in 156 districts across Pakistan, including in Gwadar and Lasbela. The GLSP-II project will also support these beneficiaries and use the ten operational facilitation centres - six in Lasbela and four in Gwadar- within government health facilities.

## Action against culprits involved in violence urged

### Saqib Mushtaq

LODHRAN: Senior politician Jahangir Tareen argued to bring culprits involved in violence across the country for political means including damaging Jinnah House (Corps Commander Lahore residence) before law of the land, on Wednesday.

This he said while addressing media personnel during his visit to Corps Commander Lahore house along with Aon Chaudhry, Ishaq Khan and Jabwana while demanded exemplary punishment for the culprits involved in violence on 9th May.

Senior politician claimed that violence was spread as per plan which had caused damages to public properties while



also damaged country face in international community. He added that his support for PTI didn't made

any cause in current situations because he has part away with Imran Khan two years earlier.

## PTI leaders flay PDM govt

### F.P. Report

BUNER: The PTI district chapter president (interim) Kamran Khan senior vice Mian Mueenudeen president Gadezai tehsel Malak Arshad Iqbal and advocate Qaisar Ali Khan in a hurriedly called press conference have accused PDM leadership for misusing KP interim govt powers and pressurizing district administration and police against PTI Tigers due to which 40 activists were charged 25 aming them under 3 MPO.

The condemned the registration of FIRs against PTI leadership and activists and warned of dire consequences incase lodging FIRs and conducting raids on their houses not stopped. They claimed there was no attacks on government and private installations in Buner district despite harassment of PTI activists would no more be tolerated and the government administration the police and PDM leadership would be held responsible for the forced repurgations.

Workshop for media persons: The SDPI tehsel Daggar and Gagra coordinator Umer Farooq was organized one day work-

shop for media persons at BPC on the topic of Mother and Child Health. The BPC permanent and associate members attended the workshop.

The SDPI coordinator Umer Farooq the BPC president Myhibul Haq and general secretary A.R.Abid expressed valuable informations on the topic. The speakers highlighted importance of healthy and mature women for delivering a healthy baby. They elaborated the mature age marriage, late time delivery, gap between babies, best food, rest, relaxing mode, favourable environment frequent visit to doctor during pregnancy, administering TT vaccine, delivery at the hand of expert staff, post delivery visit to doctors both mother and child, proper vaccination medication food and care may many times decrease risk and improve life.

The speakers urged upon media persons being committed for services to society they must focus in messages related to mother and child health so as to make sure basic facilities at hospital and home beside creating awareness among

community to prioritize mother and child health for living happy and let live happy Pakistan.

## 24 buildings challaned

MULTAN (INP): The district administration here on Wednesday challaned 24 commercial buildings during the ongoing crackdown against illegal petrol pump units, LPG refilling and commercial buildings with missing fire safety arrangements.

In line with special directives of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Omer Jehangir, the district administration and civil defense department teams launched operations at Gulgasht Colony and Shah Rukan-e-Alam Colony.

The teams sealed four illegal petrol pump units and took its material into custody while two out-laws have also been arrested. Separate cases have been registered against them. The teams have also served 30 final notices to violators during last two days.



## Fire at New Zealand hostel kills 6 people



WELLINGTON (AP): A fire ripped through a hostel in New Zealand's capital overnight, killing at least six people and forcing others to flee the four-story building in their pajamas in what a fire chief called his "worst nightmare." Six bodies were found but not all areas of the building had been searched yet because the roof on the top floor had collapsed, bringing down debris and making the area unsafe, said Bruce Stubbs, the incident controller for Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

Officials said 52 people had made it out of the building alive but they were still trying to account for others. Loafers Lodge resident Tala Sili told news outlet RNZ that he saw smoke pouring through under his door and opened it to find the hallway was pitch-black. "I was on the top floor and I couldn't go through the hallway because there was just too much smoke, so I jumped out the window," Sili said.

He said he fell onto a roof two floors below. "It was just scary, it was really scary, but I knew I had to jump out the window or just burn inside the building," Sili told RNZ. He said he was rescued from the roof by paramedics and treated for a sprained ankle. The Loafers Lodge offered basic, affordable rooms with shared lounges, kitchens and laundry facilities to people of a wide range of ages. Some were placed there by government agencies and were considered vulnerable because they had little in the way of resources or support networks. The hostel has 92 rooms and features billboards on one side. Dark smoke stains extended up the exterior walls on the top story of the building in an industrial area near Wellington Regional Hospital.

Firefighters were called to the hostel at about 12:30 a.m. Emergency officials said the building had no fire sprinklers, which Prime Minister Chris Hipkins said was not required in New Zealand's building code for older buildings that would have to be retrofitted. Police said the cause of the fire was not known yet but they didn't believe it had been deliberately lit. Police Inspector Dion Bennett said the plan was to begin a thorough scene investigation Wednesday after fire officials handed building access off to them.

## In new video, CIA urges Russians leak 'the truth'

WASHINGTON (AFP): The US Central Intelligence Agency bolstered efforts to convince Russians to leak their country's secrets, posting an emotional video on Telegram aimed at people frustrated with the situation under President Vladimir Putin. The short video depicts a Russian bureaucrat and a woman at home with a child, both apparently troubled in their lives, asking if it is what they dreamed of.

It suggests that people can take action to make things better -- providing information to the US intelligence agency -- and still be patriotic Russians. The video and an accompanying text provide instructions on how to do so, using a Tor browser to access the dark web and encryption tools

the CIA says will ensure their protection. "The CIA wants to know the truth about Russia, and we are looking for reliable people who can tell us this truth," the agency writes. "Your information may be more valuable than you think." The CIA said it was hoping to contact people from intelligence, diplomatic, science and technology, as well as other fields, and were interested in all kinds of information, including political and economic. An agency official told AFP that while they had made the pitch on other social media before, they were now focusing on encrypted Telegram because it is the main medium for Russians to share and obtain information and news, about everything from politics to the

war in Ukraine.

The CIA hopes that providing a simple but clear way to leak information via the dark web will convince cautious Russians to take the next step. "Our aim is to provide avenues that are as secure as possible for them to contact us," the official said on grounds of anonymity. The official stressed the United States was not seeking to provoke a revolt or regime change, but just hoping that some Russians might see it as a way to help their country move forward. The official said similar outreach on other social media, much of it blocked now in Russia, did have results. "Contact us," the CIA urged. "Perhaps the people around you don't want the truth. We want it."

## Russian Duma votes to scrap Cold War deal

MOSCOW (AP): The lower house of Russia's parliament voted unanimously to formally pull out of a key Cold War-era security deal, more than eight years after Moscow halted its participation. The vote in the State Duma came less than a week after President Vladimir Putin introduced a draft bill on May 10 "denouncing" the Treaty of Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which aimed to prevent Cold War rivals from massing forces at or near mutual borders. The deal was signed in November 1990, but not fully ratified until two years later.

The Federation Council, Russia's Kremlin-controlled upper chamber that generally rubber-stamps legislation

that the Duma has approved, is scheduled to consider Russia's pullout from the treaty next Wednesday. Moscow first announced its intention to completely withdraw from the agreement in early 2015.

Since last February, Moscow's military operation in Ukraine has seen hundreds of thousands of Russian troops pour into the country, which shares a border with NATO members Poland, Slovakia, Romania and Hungary. Putin's designated envoy told the State Duma that NATO countries had "made it impossible" for Russia to remain in the treaty by allowing for the alliance's expansion into Central and Eastern Europe. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov

also described the treaty as "contrary to Russia's security interests" in an interview published in Parliamentskaya Gazeta, a weekly published by the State Duma.

Ryabkov's remarks were echoed by key deputies during the parliamentary session. State Duma speaker Leonid Slutsky charged that the treaty had "long existed only on paper," while Andrey Kartapolov, the chairman of Russia's parliamentary committee, said that it had been rendered obsolete by NATO's placing of military infrastructure in Central and Eastern European member states. Ryabkov told lawmakers that completing the withdrawal process would take about six months.

## UN reports extensive flooding damage in Somalia

MOGADISHU (AP): Floods caused by the annual rains have left "a trail of destruction" across Somalia, a United Nations spokesman said, citing inundated homes and farmland as well as the shutdown of health facilities. "According to early estimates by our partners, more than 460,000 people have been impacted, including nearly 219,000 men, women and children who have been displaced due to this (flooding)," Stephane Dujarric said in a statement.

At least five people, including three children, have been killed in the flooding, Mohamed Moalim of the Somalia National Disaster Management Agency told The Associated Press. The destruction is greatest in the Hiiraan region of the central Somali state of Hirshabelle. Thousands of families have been displaced in Beledweyne, the regional city with the highest population density. The Shabelle river running through the town burst its banks amid heavy rainfall. If the rains persist in Somalia and in the Ethiopian highlands, "we estimate that up to 1.6 million people could be impacted, with more than 600,000 displaced," Dujarric said. Rising water levels in Beledweyne forced the closure of many important facilities, including government offices and the main hospital, residents said. Some said the flooding was the worst they had ever seen. "It was very difficult for me to walk this morning because of the amount of water," said Beledweyne resident Abdifitah Ahmed. "As you can see, this situation is getting worse as the amount of water increases."

Another resident, Hussein Yusuf, said that the damage to property is extensive. "This flood is larger than any flooding in recent memory that has ever occurred in this region," he said. The Horn of Africa nation, one of the world's poorest, faces multiple crises.

## US denounces arrest of former consulate employee

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The United States has "strongly" condemned the detention of a former consulate employee who has been arrested in Russia, according to a local media report. In a statement, a spokesperson for the US Department of State dismissed the allegations against Robert Shonov, a Russian national who worked for more than 25 years in the now-shuttered US consulate in Vladivostok on Russia's east coast.

"The allegations against Mr Shonov are wholly without merit," said spokesperson Matthew Miller. The Russian state media outlet TASS reported that Shonov had been arrested in Vladivostok and transferred to Moscow's Lefortovo prison, the same detention centre where two US citizens have been held on charges of espionage. Citing law enforcement sources, TASS explained that Shonov had been interrogated following his arrest. He was ultimately charged with cooperating "on a confidential basis with a foreign state, [or] international or foreign organisation". Miller blasted that charge in statement. The fact that Shonov was "being targeted under the 'confidential cooperation' statute highlights the Russian Federation's blatant use of increasingly repressive laws against its own citizens," Miller wrote.

He explained that Russia had issued an order in April 2021 restricting local residents from being employed by the US diplomatic corps. Since then, Shonov had worked for a company "contracted to provide services to US Embassy in Moscow in strict compliance with Russia's laws and regulations". Miller sought to downplay any role Shonov might have had in embassy affairs. "Mr Shonov's only role at the time of his arrest was to compile media summaries of press items from publicly available Russian media sources," he said.

## France issues arrest warrant for Lebanese central bank governor

BEIRUT (AP): A French investigative judge issued an international arrest warrant for Lebanon's embattled central bank governor after he didn't show up for questioning in France on corruption charges, a Western diplomat said. Longtime central bank Gov. Riad Salameh was supposed to appear before French prosecutors as part of an ongoing European probe. Lebanese officials have not confirmed receipt of the arrest warrant or commented on the development.

The Western diplomat who confirmed the warrant spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not cleared to speak to media outlets. Chanez Mensous, a lawyer at the French anti-corruption non-governmental organization Sherpa, which alongside other organizations filed initial legal complaints against Salameh and associates back in May 2021, also confirmed the warrant was issued. Salameh responded with a statement shortly afterward, saying he will appeal the decision calling it a "clear legal violation." He also criticized the French judicial process, saying that some confidential information about the case was leaked to the media. A European judicial team from France, Germany and Luxembourg has been conducting a corruption investigation into an array of financial crimes they allege were committed by Salameh and a long list of his associates from Lebanon's central bank, as well as Lebanese commercial banks and auditing companies. The allegations include illicit enrichment and laundering of \$330 million.

Salameh, 72, who has held his post for almost 30 years, has repeatedly denied all allegations against him. He has insisted that his wealth comes from his previous job as an investment banker at Merrill Lynch, inherit-

ed properties, and investments. The three European governments in March 2022 froze over \$130 million in assets linked to the probe. During a visit to Lebanon in March, the European delegation questioned Salameh about the Lebanese central bank's assets and investments outside the country, a Paris apartment - which the governor owns - and his brother Raja Salameh's brokerage firm Forry Associates Ltd. According to a senior Lebanese judicial official, Riad Salameh never received his summons from Paris, despite several attempts to deliver it. The official said a Lebanese judge sent the notice to Salameh several times over the past two weeks, but it was returned each time because the governor was not present at the central bank to receive the notice. The judicial official spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not cleared to speak to the press.

Salameh's whereabouts were not known and the central bank did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Salameh's failure to show up in Paris. The date for hearing was set last month and Lebanon lifted a travel ban on Salameh, who is also being investigated at home. In the probe in Lebanon, Beirut's Public Prosecutor Raja Hamoush in late February charged Salameh, his brother and a close associate with corruption, including embezzling public funds, forgery, illicit enrichment, money-laundering and violation of tax laws. Once hailed as the guardian of Lebanon's financial stability, Salameh is being increasingly blamed for the country's financial meltdown. Many say he precipitated the economic crisis, which has plunged three-quarters of Lebanon's population of 6 million into poverty. Lebanon's banks have since been battered, as millions strug-

gle from soaring inflation, high unemployment and a messy cash-based economy. According to a World Bank report released, the cash economy makes up almost 46% of the country's GDP, as officials stall on implementing critical economic reforms demanded by the international community to make its economy viable again.

Lebanese Deputy Prime Minister Saade Shami criticized Lebanon's politicians and "vested interest groups" for obstructing reforms and for their lack of urgency in resolving the crisis, saying the "traditional economic class behave as if they live on another planet." Salameh's term ends in July and while there is no apparent successor, the veteran governor has said in television interviews that he plans to step down. Separately, lawyers representing Salameh, his brother and close associate Marianne Hoayek filed requests this week in Beirut demanding the suspension of the European probe until Lebanon's own investigation of the governor is completed. Another Lebanese judicial official said the defense team argued this would ensure proper administration of justice and that a parallel European probe violates Lebanon's sovereignty. They, too, spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not permitted to speak to the press. Nadim Houry, who heads the Paris-based think tank Arab Reform Initiative, said he believes Salameh's latest actions and those of Lebanese political and financial leaders, are attempts to stall the European probe. Salameh "still enjoys protection from the political class, which is deeply connected to the judiciary in Lebanon," Houry said. "They know they cannot manipulate the judicial process in France the way they do in Lebanon."

## Gunmen attack convoy of US embassy in Nigeria

ANAMBRA (Agencies): A convoy of United States embassy staff has come under fire in southeast Nigeria, leaving two employees and two police officers dead. Gunmen also kidnapped three individuals - a driver and two other police officers - during the attack near the town of Atani in Nigeria's Anambra State. A rescue and recovery effort remains under way, according to a police spokesperson in Anambra, Ikenga Tochukwu.

"The hoodlums murdered two of the Police Mobile Force operatives and two staff of the Consulate, and set their bodies ablaze and their vehicles," Ikenga said, noting that the area was known for separatist violence. He also expressed regret that the convoy chose to "enter the state without recourse to the police in the area or any security agency". Law enforcement, he said, arrived only after the attackers escaped. US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby briefly addressed the incident at a White House press briefing, affirming "it does look like a US convoy vehicle was attacked". "What I can tell you is that no US citizens were involved, and therefore there were no US citizens hurt," Kirby said. He indicated that the US was aware of the casualties, though. The US

Department of State later issued a statement saying its diplomatic staff were "working with Nigerian security services to investigate". "The security of our personnel is always paramount, and we take extensive precautions when organising trips to the field," the State Department said. The attack took place along a major roadway at about 3:30pm local time (14:30 GMT). Police in Anambra have indicated they believe separatists are responsible for the attack as part of an escalating campaign of violence. Officials in the region often point to a separatist group called the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which has led a push to secede from Nigeria in favour of establishing its own republic. In 2020, it formed a paramilitary organisation called the Eastern Security Network, ostensibly to protect local farmers and residents from crime - but Nigerian police have accused it of carrying out violent attacks.

IPOB has denied any involvement in the violence. However, tensions have risen since the arrest of the group's founding leader Nnamdi Kanu, first in 2015 and again in 2021, after he had skipped bail and fled abroad for several years. Kanu had faced charges of treason and terrorism, which he pleaded not guilty to. In October, an

appellate court dropped the seven-count charge of terrorism against Kanu, saying the trial court lacked jurisdiction. Separatists have long rallied for a referendum to be organised over the question of independence in southeast Nigeria. But such questions come with a fraught history: In 1967, the Republic of Biafra declared independence, launching a three-year-long civil war in Nigeria that killed hundreds of thousands of people.

More recently, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari has rejected attempts to hold a referendum, calling the country's unity non-negotiable. He is set to leave office at the end of this month after serving two four-year terms. He will be succeeded by President-elect Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress. The news of convoy killings comes on the heels of an overnight attack in the north-central state of Plateau, where village raids left an estimated 30 people dead and houses destroyed. Plateau State Commissioner of Information and Communication Dan Manjang told the AFP news agency that the raids had erupted from clashes between the predominantly Muslim herders and farmers in the region who are majority Christian.

## Cambodia's main Opp party barred from election

PHNOM PENH (Agencies): Cambodia's election commission has disqualified the Candlelight Party, the country's main opposition party, from contesting July's election in a move that will allow the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) to run virtually unopposed. The commission said the party had failed to submit "proper registration documents". Other parties have signed up for the general election, but Candlelight was by far the most serious challenger to the CPP and Prime Minister Hun Sen's decades-long grip on power.

"The Hun Sen regime once again shows its utter disdain for the principles of democracy and unwillingness to compete in free and fair elections," ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights board member Kasit Piromya, a former Thai foreign minister, said in a statement. "If it wants the world to take the results of the July election seriously, the Cambodian government must halt all efforts to ham-

string its opponents and ensure a space for all parties to participate."

The move against the Candlelight Party echoes the ban on the opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) ahead of the last election in 2018, which allowed the CPP to win every seat in parliament. The Candlelight Party was previously the Sam Rainsy Party and joined forces with the Human Rights Party to form the CNRP in 2012. Following Candlelight's disqualification, CPP spokesperson Sok Eysan said the election would be free and fair and that more than 10 parties had registered. Hun Sen has previously said the CPP will dominate Cambodian politics for up to 100 years. Dozens of former CNRP members have been detained or convicted of crimes, many in absentia having fled into exile amid Hun Sen's continuing crackdown on political rivals. The election commission has demanded the Candlelight Party submit its original registration document from the

Ministry of Interior in order to register for the election.

That document was lost when the police raided the CNRP headquarters in 2017, and it has taken part in subsequent polls by submitting a photocopy of the letter. Candlelight Deputy President Son Chhay said Candlelight would appeal to the constitutional court. "We have one week to do so," he told the Reuters news agency in a text message. Human Rights Watch last month accused Cambodia's government of stepping up attacks on the opposition with rhetoric that had led to assaults on Candlelight members. It took aim at Hun Sen for what it said were warnings against criticising his government ahead of the election. In an April 24 statement, it said foreign governments should send a clear message that "dismantling opposition parties and disqualifying, assaulting, and arresting their members before election day means that there won't be any real election at all".

## NK shows Kim examining a military spy satellite

SEOUL (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un examined a finished military spy satellite, which his country is expected to launch soon, during a visit to his country's aerospace agency where he described space-based reconnaissance as crucial for countering the US and South Korea. Kim during visit approved an unspecified "future action plan" in preparations for launching the satellite, North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Wednesday. North Korea hasn't disclosed a target date for the launch, which some analysts say may be in the next few weeks.

That launch would use long-range missile technology banned by past UN Security Council resolutions, although previous missile and rockets tests have demonstrated North Korea's ability to deliver a satellite into space. There are more questions, however, about the satellite's capability. Some South Korean analysts say the satellite shown in North Korean state media photos appears too small and crudely designed to support high-resolution imagery. Photos that North Korea media released from past missile launches were low-resolution. Photos released by the Rodong Sinmun newspaper of visit showed Kim and his daughter - dressed in white lab coats - talking with scientists near an object that looked like the main component of a satellite. The newspaper did not identify the object, which was surrounded by a perimeter of red tape.

KCNA said the satellite was deemed ready to be loaded onto a rocket after scientists examined the device's assembly and put it through tests to confirm whether it would withstand the environment of space. The visit was Kim's first public appearance in about a month, following a previous visit to the aerospace center on April 18 as state media announced that the satellite had been built. Kim said acquiring a spy satellite would be crucial for his efforts to bolster the country's defense as "US imperialists and (South) Korean puppet villains escalate their confrontational moves" against the North, KCNA said. He was apparently referring to the expansion of joint military exercises between the United States and South Korea and the allies' discussions on strengthening their nuclear deterrence strategies to cope with threats from North Korea, which has test-fired around 100 missiles since the start of 2022.

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# Pakistan and global bloc politics

THE White House, National Security Council's Spokesperson, John F. Kirby has observed that the United States wants to see Pakistan as a successful and stable country, and the Pakistani government should live up to the strongest aspiration of the nation. While responding to a media query put forth by the Frontier Post Correspondent, Mr. Kirby admitted that Pakistan is facing serious challenges relating to terrorism, and political and economic issues, however, the South Asian Nation will always find the US as a good friend.

There had been multiple calls from the United States government and its executive organs including the White House, the State Department, and Pentagon regarding Pak-US ties and historic partnerships during the cold war and US-led War on Terror (WoT) in the early 21st century. American Spokesmen commonly express good aspirations for Pakistan and persistently advocate for stronger Pak-US cooperation in the coming era. In fact, diplomacy is the work of hopefulness, maintaining optimism, and creating bonds in the best interests of their nations. The reality is somewhat bitter and embarrassing for a 225 million-strong South Asian nation that joined the US bloc in the early months of its independence and experienced a recurrent breakage of ties and reunions with its powerful Western ally over the past seven and a half decades.

Currently, Pak-US relations are suffering a brief impasse and uncertainty, because the Biden administration sought Pakistan's assistance in the US's over-the-horizon Counter Terrorism campaign in Afghanistan along with military basing on Pakistan's soil that was refused by Islamabad. Meanwhile, Islamabad's long-term association with Beijing and an ever-booming Pak-China strategic friendship are being viewed as hurdles by the US administration, which intend to contain China and work actively to enhance Washington's influence in the broader Indo-Pacific region. Realistically, global diplomacy revolves around the interests of the states by means of bilateral and multilateral accords, alliances, and partnerships between nations. The Pakistani nation has suffered the utmost because of irrational policies and insane decisions of its past rulers as the US-Pakistan relations had always been of a transactional nature and successive US administrations recurrently used coercive measures to influence Pakistan's foreign and security policies. American pressure and coercion fractured the bilateral relations between the two nations and caused doubts regarding each other.

At this point in time, the entire world has been shaped into two blocs and a majority of the nations clearly defined their foreign policy priorities. Apparently, every nation has a sovereign right to chase its national manifesto, however, security issues, economic stability, as well as a geopolitical matrix significantly affect the decisions of the states. Although US diplomats are well known for their paraphrasing and delicate persuasion of other nations, Pakistan believes in solid actions instead of words that speak much louder and clearer. Keeping the previous history and current dynamics of the country, region, and the globe, Pakistan has moved toward Bejing and walked away from the US bloc in recent years. Pakistan needs to look after its own interest, as Islamabad is an important partner in President Xi's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), whereas China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a jewel in the decades-long China-Pakistan all-weather friendship. Washington's role in South and Central Asia along with the Middle East regions had been reduced in Biden's era, as the Biden administration has been struck by domestic issues and war in Ukraine. Pakistan must transform Pak-China friendship into a comprehensive strategic partnership that encompasses all sectors of the economy including agriculture, industry, IT and Space, Education, Science and Technology, Health Defense, and Security. At the same time, all segments of society and government institutions must play their constitutional role. The Army must adopt an apolitical role and enhance the defense of the state borders, the judiciary must dispel unbiased and fearless justice and the government and bureaucracy should work for the benefit and welfare of the masses. So, a 225 million-strong nation can pull itself out of the current catastrophe and grasp a peaceful and prosperous future.

# Erdogan scents victory as Turkish presidential election goes to a runoff

Yasar Yakis

THE elections that were held in Turkey on Sunday produced both conclusive and inconclusive results. The parliamentary elections concluded with the victory of the present government coalition, composed of the ruling Justice and Development Party, known as the AKP, the far-right Nationalist Movement Party and the New Welfare Party. This coalition obtained 49.9 percent of the votes, giving it 322 seats in the parliament, while the opposition coalition obtained 35 percent and 213 seats. The pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party, which promised to support the opposition coalition, obtained 10.5 percent of the votes and earned 65 seats in the parliament.

As the parliamentary majority will be held by the present government coalition, all that the opposition coalition will be able to do is prevent the adoption of any decision that requires a qualified majority. In the presidential election, Recep Tayyip Erdogan got 49.5 percent of the votes. Therefore, there will be a runoff. Erdogan has a better chance of winning the second round because he will mobilize all potentials of the state to ensure his victory.

The elections unfolded amid relative calm, without any major events. The atmosphere was tense until a few days ago. In the eastern province of Erzincan, stones were thrown at Ekrem Imamoglu, the mayor of Istanbul, as he was addressing a meeting of his party. He would have been a candidate for the post of deputy president of the republic if the opposition coalition had won the election. Some participants in the meeting were wounded by the stones aimed at Imamoglu. The police did not do anything to prevent the incident. If Erdogan emerges victorious in the second round, he will either continue the policies he has

followed so far or he might make some adjustments in light of the lessons he has drawn from past experience. Both options are likely. Kemal Kilicdaroglu will face Erdogan in the runoff and, if he were to win, more options are likely because the composition of the opposition in parliament may cause problems for the parties that make up this

will probably be regarding Turkey's Syria policy. Kilicdaroglu strongly supports the withdrawal of the Turkish military presence from Syria and sending back as many Syrian refugees as possible. Another area where Kilicdaroglu may take the initiative is Turkey's acces-

Middle Eastern countries, Kilicdaroglu may return to Ankara's traditional policy of not taking sides in inter-Arab conflicts. He also seems to be intent on putting an end to Erdogan's strong bias in favor of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Another presidential contender, Sinan Ogan,

tant stakeholder in the delicate balance between Erdogan and Kilicdaroglu. Another minor contender for the presidential election was Muharrem Ince of the Homeland Party. He was also running in order to negotiate with the potential presidents, but he decided to withdraw from the race three days before the election. His name

on the presidential race, he encouraged his members to vote for the Homeland Party. This was a futile suggestion, because the party's votes are almost insignificant. Therefore, such votes would be wasted.

The government did not miss the opportunity to harshly criticize the failure to cope with floods caused by heavy rains on the day before the elections. These occurred in municipalities held by the opposition, while the government kept silent about similar floods in municipalities held by the AKP. Just days before the elections, Kilicdaroglu made an unnecessary statement that cast a shadow on Turkish-Russian relations. Referring to Russia, he said: "If you want the continuation of our friendship after May 15, get your hands off the Turkish state. We are still in favor of cooperation and friendship." Kilicdaroglu said this one day before Ince gave up in the presidential race. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov rejected claims of Russian interference.

He said: "We officially declare, there can be no talk of any interference. If someone provided Mr. Kilicdaroglu with such information, they are liars." Erdogan followed up Peskov's statement by saying: "If you attack Putin, I will not tolerate this." Kilicdaroglu claimed that he would not have raised this subject if he did not have evidence of possible interference by Russia. Russia is a country that is important for Turkey in all circumstances. Ankara and Moscow have so many common interests in their bilateral relations. A nuclear power station is under construction by Russia in Turkey. It will be owned and operated by Moscow. It would be a pity if such an inadvertent exchange of blame were to leave indelible traces in their relations.

Arab News

**If Erdogan emerges victorious in the second round, he will either continue the policies he has followed so far or he might make some adjustments in light of the lessons he has drawn from past experience. Both options are likely. Kemal Kilicdaroglu will face Erdogan in the runoff and, if he were to win, more options are likely because the composition of the opposition in parliament may cause problems for the parties that make up this bloc. As far as Turkey's foreign policy after the elections is concerned, there are several options. If Erdogan remains as president, the country's foreign policy is likely to remain more or less unchanged. But if Kilicdaroglu manages to become president, some changes are almost certain. The most important one will probably be regarding Turkey's Syria policy. Kilicdaroglu strongly supports the withdrawal of the Turkish military presence from Syria and sending back as many Syrian refugees as possible. Another area where Kilicdaroglu may take the initiative is Turkey's accession process to the EU. This does not mean that accession may materialize any time soon, but it may make more efforts to fulfill the EU's Copenhagen political convergence criteria and Maastricht economic criteria. Kilicdaroglu may also seek ways to find an accommodation with Greece. Regarding Turkey's relations with**

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As far as Turkey's foreign policy after the elections is concerned, there are several options. If Erdogan remains as president, the country's foreign policy is likely to remain more or less unchanged. But if Kilicdaroglu manages to become president, some changes are almost certain. The most important one

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got 5.2 percent of the votes in the first round. He participated in the presidential race in order to be able to negotiate concessions with Erdogan and Kilicdaroglu. He is politically closer to the present opposition coalition, but he is strongly against its cooperation with the pro-Kurdish party. Therefore, he has become an impor-

remained on ballots and he obtained 0.3 percent of the votes. Ince was originally a member of the main opposition Republican People's Party, known as the CHP. He ran against Erdogan for the presidential post in 2018 and got 30.8 percent of the votes. But these were mainly the CHP's votes, not Ince's. This time, having given up

# EU should start planning now for Russia after Putin

Alexander Clarkson & Kirill Shamiev

TWENTY-SEVEN years before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, in what now seems a very distant past, the European Union considered sanctioning Russia. In 1995, following Russia's military intervention in Chechnya, EU leaders suspended the ratification of a planned partnership and cooperation agreement and threatened Moscow with even greater consequences if its war crimes, including the indiscriminate bombing of Chechen civilians, did not stop.

The Boris Yeltsin government dealt with the conflict in Chechnya by unleashing further brutal military force, but Europe eventually backed down and ratified the agreement anyway. In the years that followed, Russia's leadership went on to dismantle democratic institutions, invade Georgia in 2008 and ignite a war in eastern Ukraine in 2014, the prologue to the full-scale invasion of February 2022. Looking back at the missed

opportunities of the 1990s is a reminder of how immediate dilemmas can lead policymakers to overlook signs of the next crisis on the horizon. As it responds to the carnage caused by Vladimir Putin in Ukraine, the EU cannot afford not to prepare for the next Russian crisis. The war in Ukraine, much like the war in Chechnya in the 1990s, has put immense pressure on Russia's stability as a state.

It is critical that EU member states and institutions start to plan for a range of postwar and post-Putin scenarios in Russia, including a destabilisation of the Russian political system that could lead even to armed conflict within the country. To protect the collective interests of Europe, including Ukraine, from any future turmoil engulfing Russia, the EU needs a strategy that actively encourages its democratisation, no matter how small the chances of that now seem.

The Kremlin has long dismissed Brussels as a global player. After

European condemnation of the brutalities committed during the Chechen wars, Moscow tried to divide and rule, breaking down the bloc's values-based unity, engaging individual leaders, identifying the most influential member states and their national interests. In many cases, Russia received the amount of economic and political integration with western nations it wanted while sidestepping domestic democratic reform. Moscow's cynical fixation on the interests of individual EU member states both reflected and cast a long shadow over the Russian perception of the EU. Even opposition-minded members of Russian civil society viewed the EU as an imbalanced confederation with big powers dictating the bloc's economic and foreign policies. Economic growth, travel freedoms and cooperation with individual EU member states left them blind to the gradual decline of freedom in Russia.

Russian elites acquired foreign language skills and enough stolen or oil-driven wealth to holiday comfortably in western Europe without bothering to endorse democratic values at home. For Russia's middle and upper class, this bargain with Moscow and Brussels ended with the invasion of Ukraine. Having lost any influence over Putin, Russian elites chose either to lie low, escape the country, or start infighting by shifting the blame for the crisis on to one another. If Russia manages to avoid a full-scale slide into totalitarianism, what remains of its democratic opposition may finally be able to acknowledge the EU's capacity to exert transformative progressive power.

Ukrainian frustration with any deeper EU engagement with Russia would be understandable, but fostering a shift away from Russian imperialism would be in the interests of all of Russia's neighbours.

Since Moscow's current elite will accuse the EU of interfering anyway, the EU has nothing to lose by having a wider debate about democratic reform in post-Putin Russia. A postwar Russia trying to overcome Putin's toxic legacy would have much to learn much from an economically prosperous bloc that has brought together and transformed societies that had once fought each other in two world wars. But EU institutions would have to set out the detailed steps that Russia's state elite must take as strict conditions for the reopening of trade, travel and investment access to the rest of Europe. They would also provide incentives. A genuine process of reform that launched the rule of law and acknowledged Russia's post-conflict obligations to Ukraine and other affected states could be rewarded with the promise of negotiations with Brussels.

European distrust of Russia runs deep so the EU should be resolute about

verification at every stage of this process. Many Russians are familiar with the principle of "trust but verify", which underpinned talks on nuclear disarmament in the Gorbachev-Reagan era. But only an unwavering commitment to verification can rebuild trust. As trust is gradually restored, Russia could over time gain integration into the EU's single market, the basis for Europe's successful economic and social order.

It might sound premature to discuss strategies for stimulating Russian reform. But there may be only a fragile window of opportunity to support genuine transformation in Russia. It will require Russians to abandon the imperialist delusions of the Putin regime. If they can do so, there may be a path towards a common European home for all. The west must not lose sight of the potential for positive change in Russia, even as it supports Ukraine in its struggle for survival.

# Japan must not use G7 summit to gain own ends

Yang Bojiang

JAPAN will host the Group of Seven Summit in Hiroshima from Friday to Sunday and will include the decisions taken at the various ministerial meetings it has held since April in the G7 Summit declaration. The visits of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa to various countries in recent months, along with Tokyo's invitation to the heads of state or government of the Republic of Korea, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Australia, the Cook Islands, the Comoros and Brazil to visit Japan, reflect the country's intention to create the "right" atmosphere for the G7 Summit.

But the fact is that Japan's activities leading up to the summit could create instability in the Asia-Pacific region. Reportedly the G7 nations may discuss ways to impose more sanctions on Russia, provide more assistance for Ukraine and make the semiconductor and rare earth supply chains more efficient. And many of the issues to be discussed may be directly or indirectly related to

China. For example, the G7 countries may continue to hype up the "China threat" theory with an eye to promote the United States' "Indo-Pacific" strategy. They are also likely to attach greater importance to China's activities in the South and East China seas in a bid to highlight the risk of a conflict across the Taiwan Strait. Japan has made "Indo-Pacific" security and economic security separate issues for the first time at the summit, reflecting its intention of helping the US expand its "Indo-Pacific" strategy to contain China's peaceful rise.

Besides, leaders of the US, Japan and the ROK are likely to hold a trilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G7 Summit to discuss economic security issues including how to diversify the cutting-edge semiconductor supply chains. It is clear that Japan is eager to take advantage of its G7 presidency to strengthen cohesion among member states and promote the so-called rules-based international order. It also hopes to act as a bridge between the West and the Global South in a bid to encourage developing countries to join the West in targeting Russia

and China. By doing so, Japan hopes to strengthen the US-led alliances in Europe and Asia and enhance its status in the US global strategy.

In fact, Japan plans to adopt a more aggressive security strategy by talking of the "Eastern Asia dilemma" and encouraging external forces to intervene in regional issues. Since the Russia-Ukraine conflict broke out in February 2022, Japan has followed the US' lead in comparing the fundamentally different Taiwan question with the Ukraine crisis, saying "Ukraine today could be East Asia tomorrow". Japan has also conducted naval operations in the Taiwan Strait and the South and East China seas, saying it is opposed to the use of force to change the status quo across the Strait. Japan keeps criticizing China's attempts to explore and exploit natural resources in the East China Sea, has labeled China a rule breaker in the South China Sea, and launched the 2+2 dialogue mechanism to stir up trouble in the South China Sea.

Worse, it has been pro-

moting security cooperation with Taiwan, helping Taiwan to improve its position in the global supply chains, and making it difficult for Beijing to resolve the Taiwan question through peaceful means. Some media reports suggest the G7 Summit will issue a statement emphasizing the rules-based world order. But by doing so, the G7 countries will only expose their hypocrisy, because history shows both the US and Japan have been breaking international rules for years at will.

For example, China, the US and 24 other countries signed the United Nations Declaration in 1942 accepting the Atlantic Charter and agreeing not to negotiate a separate peace treaty with any of the Axis powers. But 49 countries, including the US, inked the Treaty of San Francisco in 1951 without China's participation, establishing Japan's position in the world order and declaring that the legal status of the Chinese island of Taiwan was temporarily undetermined. The fact is that the Potsdam Declaration of 1945 made it clear that "Japanese sover-

eighty shall be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku, and such minor islands as we determine", as had been declared by the Cairo Declaration of 1943. Later, in 1945, the Instrument of Surrender of Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration and the Cairo Declaration, which specifically says Taiwan and Penghu should be returned to China. In 1971, a backroom deal was signed between Washington and Tokyo in the absence of Beijing. And while the agreement required the US to give the "administration" of Okinawa to Japan, the document integrated the Diaoyu Islands - a Chinese territory which is part of Taiwan into Okinawa.

About four decades later, in 2003, the US-led coalition forces invaded Iraq without the UN Security Council's sanction. And Colin Powell, then US secretary of state, presented false evidence to the UN Security Council to claim Saddam Hussein had stockpiled weapons of mass destruction. Obviously, no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq. Instead, the US-led invasion caused the

deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians and left the country in tatters. Not surprisingly, during the war, Japan Self-Defense Forces' ships provided fuel and logistics services for the coalition forces till 2009. For the overwhelming majority of countries, international rules consist of the basic norms of international relations based on the principles of the UN Charter, which all countries must abide by. But for the G7 countries, international rules mean the G7's rules which serve the vested interests of the rich countries, rather than the common interests of the international community. The first thing the US and Japan should do as G7 members is to pay their arrears to the UN, with the US withdrawing its troops illegally occupying parts of Syria and Japan announcing it will not dump nuclear-contaminated water from the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant into the sea. The two countries should also stop triggering divisions and confrontations, or violating international rules to fulfill their own narrow goals.

China Daily

# How Israel's little war in Gaza backfired

Osama Al-Sharif

A five-day war between Israel and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza ended in a ceasefire Saturday, with both sides claiming to have won the round. In fact, with a relatively low death count on both sides, some would describe the aftermath as yet another stalemate. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu needed this latest cycle of violence to restore deterrence and defuse a crisis within his own government. His shaky coalition is mired in infighting over the unleashing of more violence against the Palestinians, as demanded by the racist and ultranationalist National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who had threatened to pull out of the coalition and bring the government down, as well as over the public backlash against the PM's proposed judicial reforms.

For weeks, tens of thousands of Israelis took to the streets of Tel Aviv and other cities to denounce the "conspiracy" against Israeli democracy. Unable to push his legislation through, Netanyahu ordered a pause while engaging in talks with the opposition. Meanwhile, Likud's support in the polls was dipping fast. Netanyahu needed to appease Ben-Gvir while deflecting attention from the crisis his reform bills had created. A small war on Gaza was the result. Palestinian Islamic Jihad had earlier avenged the death by hunger and neglect of one of its senior political leaders in an Israeli jail. It fired a few rockets against neighboring Israeli settlements, giving Ben-Gvir the excuse he needed to wage war. Last week, Israel decided to retaliate by killing two

Palestinian Islamic Jihad leaders in Gaza. Then, it waited for a response. It took the group two days to fire volleys of rockets into southern Israel. And Israel had its little war. Palestinian Islamic Jihad lost a few of its field leaders in this latest war, including the one responsible for its missile program. But that did not affect its ability to launch more than 1,300 rockets, including a few that hit southern Tel Aviv and a settlement not far from West Jerusalem. It is a small militant group that is known for its uncompromising positions when it comes to fighting the "Zionist enemy." It has close ties to Iran, which is believed to have supplied it with the technology to build and fire crude rockets.

Egyptian mediators stepped in to negotiate a ceasefire, which finally happened on day five of the confrontation. Palestinian Islamic Jihad had rejected earlier offers unless Israel committed to stop targeting its leaders. That did not happen; or at least it was never put on paper. Instead, Israel proposed a quiet-for-quiet deal as soon as the group stopped firing missiles. In the end, both sides licked their wounds and took a step back. For Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the public perception is that it never faltered and continued to fire rockets, challenging Israel's air supremacy and huge firepower. This small group was not defeated, even though it suffered serious losses to its military cadre.

For Israel, the cost of this little war was huge. Tens of thousands of Israelis had to be evacuated from towns and villages in southern Israel close to the besieged Gaza Strip. Israel's main airport

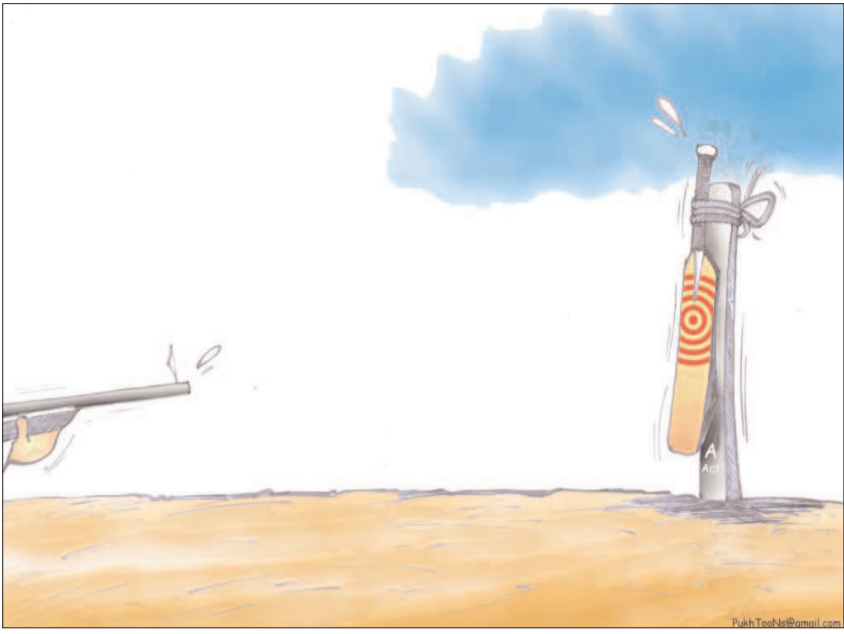
had to close and tourism was hit hard. The so-called Iron Dome fired hundreds of costly missiles, missing a significant number of Palestinian Islamic Jihad rockets. At least two million-dollar missiles from the sophisticated David's Sling antiballistic air defense system were launched to intercept rockets heading to Tel Aviv. The "mowing the grass" strategy, used by Israel for years, failed to destroy Palestinian Islamic Jihad, despite Tel Aviv's superior arms and air defense technology. This was another zero-sum encounter in Israel's never-ending conflict with the Palestinian resistance. The loss for Israel, by military, economic and moral standards, was serious.

By Sunday, it was business as usual, with Gazan laborers crossing back into Israel to work and trucks carrying fuel and supplies moving into the besieged Strip. But the fact that Hamas apparently chose not to participate directly in the war and that Israel was careful not to target its positions shows that a new formula is being clubbed together. Hamas, the militant group that controls the Strip and has a much superior armory than Palestinian Islamic Jihad, opted not to get involved even though it issued threats under the so-called joint operations room of the resistance groups. Israeli officials made it clear that Hamas was not the target of this latest operation. Hamas' political bureau held back its military wing because it is looking for a role in a much bigger game with much higher stakes.

The group had negotiated a number of deals with Israel, including allowing Gazan laborers

to work in Israel and making arrangements for a steady flow of Qatari money, while biding its time to see how long the troubled Palestinian Authority and its ailing leader Mahmoud Abbas can cling to power in the West Bank. For Netanyahu and the military establishment, keeping Hamas out of the fight meant ending the military operation as soon as possible. Israel's worst-case scenario is that it would face rockets fired from Lebanon, Syria and Gaza in a much bigger confrontation. The real story was not the exchange of rockets and laser-guided missiles, but how Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran chose to stay out.

The only losers from this latest duel were the residents of Gaza. A few more days of war would have meant that Gaza's only electric power station would go offline, while hospitals would run out of essential medicines. A few residential homes were struck by Israel, including one housing dozens of Palestinians with special needs. That side of the story is almost never reported. The latest round of violence ended two days before Palestinians marked the 75th anniversary of the Nakba. On that occasion, an Arab News/YouGov survey found that 63 percent of Palestinians feel that neither Fatah nor Hamas represents them, while 75 percent of respondents have no confidence in their own leadership. This lack of trust in traditional leaderships is making room for the rise of unorthodox forms of resistance in the West Bank. Israel has to realize that its decades-long occupation is radicalizing generations of Palestinians and that the cycle of violence and counterviolence is doomed to continue.



## Zelenskyy waiting for?

Valerii Nozhin

**THE Ukrainian armed forces still need supplies of equipment and weapons to avoid heavy losses, says President Zelenskyy. The Ukrainian troops' counteroffensive is delayed indefinitely as, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, "more time is needed." The president stressed members of new brigades were fully ready, with some units having received training abroad. But the Ukrainian armed forces still need supplies of equipment and weapons to avoid heavy losses.**

Since the end of last year, there has been talk of a large-scale Ukrainian counteroffensive. For security reasons, Kyiv stopped short of announcing specific dates, but experts in the West have previously suggested the start of the operation could take place any time from the end of April to the first two weeks of June. "I think the reason why he announced it now is that expectations for this counteroffensive have quite clearly got out of hand in many circles," says Simon Schlegel, a senior Ukraine Analyst at the International Crisis Group. "Anticipation has been very, very high. And the reason for that is probably because there is a narrative going around, especially in Russia, that Ukraine only has 'one punch one try' at this very complicated counteroffensive. And therefore, it's probably a good thing right now that from the very top, that Zelenskyy himself, tries to also tone down expectations a bit." The Ukrainian president says his armed forces need more equipment. On 9th May, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Kyiv already had everything it needed for the operation, including equipment and soldiers trained in the West, and stressed it was up to the armed forces command to draw up a plan for success.

Some experts believe the delay is because Kyiv wants to be as sure as possible of the success of any counteroffensive. "In this situation, you cannot have enough. Simply put, it's always better to have more especially ammunition," says Schlegel. And both sides have been running quite low. It's become not just a military supply issue, but an industrial issue, a production issue. And it's possible that ammunition is currently the bottleneck that Zelenskyy wants to widen before actually risking the lives of his soldiers." Max Bergmann, Director of the Europe, Russia and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic & International Studies agrees.

"We know the Ukrainians have obtained a number of tanks and they've obtained a number of other armoured personnel carriers and transport vehicles," he explains. "But I'm sure they're still waiting for more deliveries. So the question for Ukraine is, do you wait and wait for more deliveries to arrive but potentially give Russia more time to prepare for the potential counteroffensive?" However, some Western observers believe the Ukrainian president's statement is calculated to dupe Moscow into believing the counteroffensive has been delayed - when in fact it has already begun. Dr Neil Melvin, Director of International Security Studies at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) says it's important to understand what the word 'counteroffensive' actually means:

"I think often the images are kind of a shock and awe moment where all of the tanks roll forward. But actually, the counteroffensive itself is a long term process," he says. "And I would argue that, in fact, the counteroffensive by Ukraine has already started. What they're trying to

do is shape the battlefield at the moment and they're pulling the Russian forces in different directions. They're trying to find gaps by probing and they're moving their forces around." According to Bloomberg, since December (i.e. in preparation for a perceived counteroffensive) Ukraine has received the equivalent of \$30bn of Western equipment and supplies - more than the annual military budget of any NATO country (except the US). For the entire period, the amount of aid has exceeded \$67bn. Kyiv is now talking about the need for long-range weapons, aviation and air defence systems.

On 11 May, London announced it was sending Storm Shadow tactical missiles with an estimated range of 560 km to Kiev (however, the export versions are limited to 250 km). According to experts, this is not simply just another weapons delivery, but one that could play an important role in the upcoming operation. Melvin explains why these weapons are a potential game changer. "Actually what they do is strike at Russia's ability to coordinate its own defence, so what we saw earlier in the war where the United States provided Ukraine with HIMARS artillery, that was very damaging to the Russians because with this artillery the Ukrainians could destroy logistical hubs at headquarters," he explains. "The Russians have adapted. They've pushed those facilities out of range of HIMARS. With these new missiles, suddenly they're back in range."

What some believe the success or failure of a Ukrainian counteroffensive boils down to is the ability of the Ukrainian armed forces to coordinate as accurately and quickly as possible between different units and government agencies. "What Ukraine has to do is what's called combined arms warfare which means linking the air force, the ground forces, the intelligence community, the political leadership and keeping in contact with this very complicated set of actors as the armed forces move forward," Melvin continues. "So it's not just about breaking through the Russian lines, but actually sustaining that." But there are difficulties ahead. Storm Shadow missiles are airborne and can be launched from a range of European-made aircraft - Tornados, Typhoons, Mirage 2000 and Rafale.

According to available information, Ukraine does not yet have these planes. In February, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the transfer of Typhoons to Kyiv was not impossible, and it was even reported that training of Ukrainian pilots had begun. The Ukrainian air force already has experience of using Western missiles from Soviet aircraft. Many of these machines, adapted to NATO standards, were supplied to Ukraine by the former Warsaw Pact countries. However, Kyiv is demanding modern Western-made fighter jets - first and foremost, the American F-16s.

According to experts, these planes simply will not make it before the spring-summer campaign and it will take too much time to train Ukrainian pilots and adapt the country's airfield and technical infrastructure. Secondly, it's unlikely they would play a significant offensive role in the war, as Bergmann outlines: "We have to realise that Russia's advanced fighter jets and other aircraft are not operating to the same degree as expected in this war because of Ukraine's air defences. Russia also has substantial air defence capabilities, which would pose a threat to any Western fighters that Ukraine obtains. I think it's essential

that Ukraine receives fighter jets. It's an additional form of air defence which can be used to protect Ukrainian skies, both from missiles, drones and Russian fighter jets. But here, it appears they will play more of a defensive rather than offensive role."

Before the full-scale invasion, the West believed that Kyiv would hold out for days or at best weeks because of the superiority of the Russian air force. But as early as 5 March, after just 10 days of war, Moscow reported that Ukraine's air force and air defences had been suppressed and destroyed. This was not the case. Ukraine's air and air defence forces not only retained combat effectiveness but ultimately prevented Russia from gaining air superiority. However, any Ukrainian counteroffensive will also face a number of other serious obstacles. According to experts, for the first time in modern history, countries of an equal technical level have faced each other on the battlefield. Moreover, both Russia and Ukraine built their air defence system on Soviet principles. During the Cold War, the USSR created a large number of very different, ground-based air defence systems. Together they were supposed to create a theoretically impenetrable multi-levelled barrier at all altitudes and speeds. This means the Soviet pilot training school focused more on operating against a "Western" system than its own.

As a result, air defence activity at high altitudes has forced aircraft on both sides to switch to operations at ultra-low altitudes, literally just a few metres above the ground. But there, for a variety of reasons, it has proved more effective to use drones. Many Western political analysts have not ruled out the possibility that the failure of a Ukrainian counteroffensive could lead to a reduction in Western assistance - simply because it has almost exhausted its ability to supply equipment and gear without compromising its own security. This would put pressure on Kyiv to reach a ceasefire on the terms of the status quo. "I think there are other aspects beyond military success that will influence how supportive Western audiences and Western governments will be in the next phase. How well Ukraine manages to reintegrate the territories they liberate. Will this create a refugee crisis, for example, in Crimea? How they treat prisoners of war, and how well they manage the dangers of escalation. I think these factors are almost as important as a pure military success that is measured in liberated territory," Schlegel adds.

But now, alongside the readiness of Ukraine's armed forces for a counter-offensive, there are increasing calls for long-term, strategic support for the country. Even if the armed forces fail to achieve the goals of the spring and summer campaign, the West is being called on not abandon its support for Kyiv. Back in March, EU leaders began to seriously consider increasing the production of weapons and ammunition - especially for Ukraine. "While it's right to focus on the counteroffensive and making sure Ukraine has everything, I think there also needs to be a political message," says Melvin. "In most scenarios, the counteroffensive will not end the war by the summer. So the Western community needs now to factor in that this war is going to be a long war and that Ukraine is going to need resources to continue to fight to bring it to an end. But even beyond that, even if Russia is defeated in Ukraine, Russia is likely to remain a major threat to Ukraine, but also to the wider Europe."

## UK's economic slowdown, scandals and workplace bullying

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

**IN the months leading up to King Charles' coronation on May 6, while the UK was mourning the passing of its popular queen of 70 years, politics rudely and repeatedly intruded. First, it was the brief but tumultuous 49-day premiership of Liz Truss, whom Queen Elizabeth asked to form a new government just two days before the monarch passed away on Sept. 8.**

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak formed his new government on Oct. 25, after Truss was pressured to resign following a number of policy missteps. The youngest, richest and one of the most business-savvy prime ministers in modern British history raised hopes that the UK was finally on a clear path toward recovery from Brexit and COVID-19. But Sunak's steady hand has yet to restore confidence in the British economy or lift the country's spirits, as I noticed during a recent lengthy visit. The coronation's pomp and circumstance were needed shots in the arm for the country's morale, but the economic doldrums persist and political scandals at the highest levels of government dampen that spirit.

Less than seven months into PM Sunak's term, the economy has not recovered. According to government reports published last week, Britain's economy grew sluggishly in early 2023. Gross domestic product edged up a mere one tenth of 1 percent in the first three months of the year, the same tepid pace as in the last three months of 2022. A sharp GDP drop in March alarmed the markets.

Widespread labor strikes may have contributed to the poor performance, but experts also point to inflation and rising interest rates. Britain's inflation rate exceeded

10 percent in March, double the US level and much higher than the eurozone's. Last Thursday, the Bank of England raised the interest rate to 4.5 percent, its highest level since 2008. The central bank still forecasts the economy to grow 0.25 percent in 2023, which, although weak, is better than its earlier forecast of a contraction during this year. Following Brexit, the UK has been counting on leveraging its deregulated economic environment to attract new investment and trade with its partners, according to the 100-page report on the "Benefits of Brexit," which came out last year. Gulf Cooperation Council countries were clearly among those partners, but COVID-19, the Ukraine war, industrial action and the resultant economic stagnation have not made it easy.

Nor has the drip, drip of political scandals. Sunak's pledge in October that his government would have "integrity, professionalism and accountability" set a new high bar, given the circumstances and timing of his mandate. However, within six months, several senior officials were forced to resign amid controversies about their conduct. In November, Sir Gavin Williamson, a senior minister and close ally of Sunak's, was forced to resign on charges of bullying his fellow colleagues. In January, the powerful Conservative Party Chairman Nadhim Zahawi left the Cabinet when he was found to be in "serious breach" of the ministerial code related to his taxes. Then, in April, Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab quit the Cabinet following the conclusion of an inquiry into bullying allegations against him by two dozen former subordinates.

In addition to these public resignations, British tabloids have continued sniping at the prime minister and his Cabinet, with innuendo and leaks intimating further misconduct. This rate of attrition, with three high-ranking officials quitting the Cabinet in six months, worries investors, especially given the amplification of these stories and others by the British media. It may have added to the sluggishness of the economic recovery. However, there may be a positive unintended consequence of Raab's resignation. While discussions continue in Britain over whether existing laws bar the kind of conduct he is accused of, the story has unleashed a larger conversation over the degree of pressure and admonition that may or may not be tolerated in high-pressure business situations, especially those involving senior government officials.

According to the UK government's definition, bullying and harassment are behaviors that make someone feel "intimidated or offended." While harassment is unlawful under Britain's Equality Act of 2010, bullying may not be illegal except in certain circumstances. There is a fine legal line between harassment and bullying, hence the ambiguity. Examples of bullying or harassing behavior include unfair treatment, picking on or regularly undermining someone, denying someone training or promotion opportunities, or "spreading malicious rumors," according to the government. Bullying and harassment can happen face-to-face or by letter, email or by phone. While bullying itself is not against the law, it can be regarded as harassment, and thus be unlawful, when the unwanted behavior is related to gender, religion, race, age or disability,

among other conditions stipulated in the law.

To prove that workplace bullying amounts to unlawful harassment is thus not straightforward, hence it took the UK authorities several months of painstaking investigation to complete their report on Raab. While Raab's exit from the Cabinet promises to limit the damage to the government's reputation, the case has shed light on the serious problem of workplace bullying, not only in Britain but around the world. It should lead to a healthy discussion and raise awareness about this common phenomenon - where senior officials feel, as Raab has maintained, that exacting pressure and candid criticisms are needed to get tasks done properly and in a timely manner.

Labor laws around the world, including in GCC countries, are catching up by banning some harmful conduct in the workplace. Harassment, including sexual harassment, was until recently tolerated in the workplace, but no longer, thanks largely to the many victims who have risked their careers and reputations to call it out. Much progress has been made on the legislative side of things, but more work needs to be done to eradicate harassment in the workplace. However, bullying still occupies a legal gray area and some hope that the Raab case will serve to clarify. While his alleged bullying has damaged many of its victims, as well the reputation of the UK government and of course Raab's career and social standing, there may be a silver lining. The very public affair could be the spark that ignites the movement to banish bullying from the workplace. Until legislation and legal enforcement catch up, social awareness and public pressure could help reduce its prevalence.

## Bird flu could become the next human pandemic

Devi Sridhar

**LAST month a pet dog in Canada died of H5N1, also known as bird flu, after eating a wild goose. Worryingly this follows a pattern, with an increasing number of bird flu cases appearing in mammals who come into contact with an infected bird, dead or alive. When you see a wild bird such as a duck or seagull, think bird flu. Because it's actually more likely than not they're infected with the virus. And many species of wild birds are asymptomatic, meaning that they don't show any symptoms. The risk of transmission to pets is low, but they can get sick from chewing or eating an infected bird, whether it's dead or alive.**

I first wrote about bird flu in November, when domestic birds in Britain were put into an indoor lockdown. The virus had become endemic in most wild bird populations. It's incredibly infectious, where one bird could infect as many as 100 others. When infected wild birds encountered domestic birds (such as by flying over and defecating on them underneath), huge problems emerged. Avian flu has a near 100% fatality rate in most poultry, which led to shortages of not only turkey for Christmas but also eggs, as farm after farm was decimated by the disease. Since November, the signals emerging across the world continue to be worrying. In

January and February this year, more than 3,000 sea lions died of bird flu in Peru (where the death toll in wild birds reached an estimated 50,000). In Russia, 700 Caspian seals died. Then several dolphins in Britain and the US died of H5N1. Normally, even if an animal catches H5N1 from a bird, it can't pass it to other mammals. This limits its spread. But the large number of cases in these outbreaks suggest the possibility of mammal-to-mammal transmission, although this hasn't been confirmed yet by genetic sequencing. A more likely hypothesis is that these outbreaks are groups of animals feeding on infected birds. It is not yet 100% clear what's happening.

But the risk of spread among mammals is ever-present. A new research pre-print from Canada showed that H5N1 samples could spread efficiently between ferrets with fatal outcomes. In order to spread efficiently to humans, H5 would need three major categories of genetic changes, according to bird flu expert Prof Richard Webby. So far, the virus has been able to make one of these changes, but not the other two. So right now, H5N1 is a theoretical risk for the next human pandemic, rather than one requiring urgency in response today. And a prime minister or health secretary might say, "Why prepare for something that

might never happen?" To those of us scientists working in global health, there are enough concerning signals that action should already be happening. So that if a certain set of mutations do occur and we see an outbreak in humans in Peru or China or Britain, that the harm it could cause is minimal. This is a disease with an estimated 50-60% fatality rate in humans, including children.

The cornerstone of infectious disease preparedness is in: surveillance (to know what strain is spreading and where in birds); testing (to identify disease quickly in humans); vaccines (for protection against disease and death); and antivirals (to improve clinical outcomes). The US government is already moving in this direction. Rebecca Katz, professor at Georgetown University Medical Center, has noted that a H5 candidate vaccine virus recently produced by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is likely to provide good protection against the circulating H5N1 viruses. The information has been shared with vaccine manufacturers to start the process of stockpiling adequate doses.

But this is a challenge because most influenza vaccines are created by incubating doses in chicken eggs (called egg-based production). If bird flu has killed off many of the chickens, then egg

shortages are likely. There's another H5N1 vaccine which is non-egg based, but they could have a maximum of 150m doses ready within six months. The world's population is almost 8 billion.

In addition, the FDA-approved antiviral treatments for seasonal influenza could also work against bird flu. But again, getting doses to all parts of the world is a challenge given shortages. Preparation must also involve appropriate PPE for healthcare workers to protect against a respiratory disease (flu) and diagnostics to quickly identify if someone is infectious in hospitals. All of these issues are solvable with precise planning, collaboration across countries, scientific ingenuity and good leadership. With post Covid-19 fatigue, the bigger problem is bringing the public along and communicating the facts so that they are trusted and believed. With so much - often understandable - mistrust in our current political leadership, authorities like chief medical officers and independent government advisers become crucial. At the moment most governments aren't paying attention to bird flu: they're more interested in another AI (artificial intelligence) rather than this AI (avian influenza), but the avian influenza threat is real, and needs much more immediate attention and preparation.

The Guardian

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## PSX's 100-index loses 172.59 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) declined by 172.59 points on Wednesday, showing a negative change of 0.41 per cent, closing at 41,833.66 points against 42,006.32 points the previous day.

A total of 125,528,650 shares were traded during the day as compared to 196,243,549 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs3.540 billion against Rs5.768 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 316 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 116 of them recorded gains and

117 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 23 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 18,427,010 shares at Rs1.13 per share, Fauji Foods Ltd with 8,460,761 shares at Rs6.60 per share, and Hum Network with 6,055,000 shares at Rs5.79 per share.

Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum increase of Rs150.01 per share price, closing at Rs5950.00, whereas the runner-up was Rafhan Maize XD with a Rs149.99 rise in its per share price to Rs8349.99. Sapphire Fiber wit-

nessed a maximum decrease of Rs86.92 per share closing at Rs1072.08, followed by Bhanero Tex. with a Rs78.58 decline to close at Rs976.00.

**Rupee sheds 44 paises against Dollar**

Pakistani rupee witnessed 44 paises devaluation against US Dollar (USD) in the interbank trading on Wednesday and closed at Rs285.40 against the previous day's closing of Rs284.96.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs292 and Rs296,

respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs1.27 to close at Rs309.20 against the last day's closing of Rs310.47, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs2.08, whereas a decrease of Rs2.12 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs354.85 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs356.97.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal went up by 12 paises each to close at Rs77.72 and Rs76.10, respectively.

## FFCEL celebrates decade of excellence



### F.P. Report

KARACHI: FFC Energy Limited (FFCEL) "Pakistan's pioneering Wind Power Project", a subsidiary of Fauji Fertilizer Company, celebrated 10 years of its commercial operations at FFC Energy Plant Site with the leaders of wind industry, senior government officials, and notables from the community.

FFCEL is dedicated in its drive towards transition to a clean and green future by promoting innovative renewable energy solutions. The wind farm, therefore, since inception, has exported an impressive

1,175 GWh of clean energy abating 745,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. FFCEL remains country's most experienced Wind IPP carrying out complete O&M activities of its plant in compliance with OEM and DNV-GL certification guidelines. It has also made significant progress in provision of services to Pakistan wind industry in collaboration with OLIVE Technical Services.

Remaining at the forefront to serve the community of Jhampir and surrounding villages, FFCEL in past 10 years has spent over PKR 50 million on CSR projects addressing the

basic needs of the community in the field of health, education, and capacity building.

Managing Director & CEO FFCEL, Maj Gen Asif Ali, HI (M) (Retd) commemorating FFCEL's decade of excellence, delightfully expressed his thoughts on attainment of Company's significant milestone towards a sustainable, greener future for coming generations.

He also expressed his appreciation and gratitude towards employees, partners, government officials and the local community for their unwavering support over the years.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Maersk Sentosa, MSC Elaine, Al-Salam-II and DM Dragon carrying Containers, Gas oil and Chemicals, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, FOTCO Oil Terminal and EngroVopak Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, EM Astoria, Meltimi and Milaha Qatar with Containers, Mogas and LNG also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during last 24 hours.

A total of 07 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, DM Dragon and TormThyra left the Port on Wednesday morning & three more ships, Maersk Sentosa, YM Saturn and Calypso Gas are expected to sail on Wednesday.

A cargo volume of 88,075 tones, comprising 70,701 tones imports Cargo and 17,374 tones export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 3,360 Containers (2,338 TEUs Imports and 1,022 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 06 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, EM Astoria, EaslineZhangjigang and Milaha Qatar carrying Containers, Palm oil and LNG are expected to take berths at QICF, LCT and EETL respectively on Wednesday, May and another Container ship, CMA CGM Butterfly, is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Thursday.

## Gold prices remains unchanged

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24-karat gold on Wednesday remained unchanged to close at Rs233,100. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold and 10 grams of 22-karat gold also witnessed no change to close at Rs199,846 and Rs183,192.

Similarly, the price of per tola silver and that of ten-gram silver remained stable at Rs2950 and Rs2529.14 respectively.

However, the price of gold in the international market decreased by \$18 to close at \$1988 from \$2006, the association reported.

country.

He was confident that UBG will win the upcoming elections of FPCCI. He said that a coordination committee has been formed to solve the problems of the business community in Punjab, while the issues of business community in other provinces will also be addressed.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in his address, stressed that at least 10-year economic policies should be formulated for the better promotion of business and investment, because the continuity of policies is very important for the development of the economy.

He said that successful business leaders of the country should be inducted in the federal and provincial cabinets so that they can play their role in improving the economy.

He thanked the S.M. Tanveer for identifying four sites for Industrial Estate of ICCI and said that ICCI will soon finalize one of them to move forward on this important project.

## Govt to expedite ICCI Industrial Estate project

ISLAMABAD (APP): Punjab's Industry and Commerce Minister S.M. Tanveer said that on his instructions, Punjab Industrial Estate Management and Development Company has identified four places for establishment of industrial estate by ICCI.

He stressed that the Chamber should finalize one of them to expedite the completion of industrial estate project.

He expressed these views while addressing the business community at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), said a press release. S.M. Tanveer said that promoting industrialization, enhancing exports, increasing remittances and development of agriculture will have to be focused to revive the economy.

He said that Pakistan has immense potential for development and product development with the help of professionals is being focused on to improve exports.

He said that he is also working on various initiatives for the economic empowerment of women.

He said that as long as he is working as minister in Punjab, he will continue to play a role in solving the key issues of the business community.

Punjab's Excise and Communications Minister Bilal Afzal said that due to his efforts, funds have been released for the rehabilitation of Kahuta Road, while other roads covering 2600 kilometers will also be repair.

He said that the business community should send the issues related to excise and communication department through their respective chambers of commerce and every possible effort will be made to solve them.

He said that the proposals of the chambers will be included in the annual development plan of Punjab.

United Business Group Chairman Shahzad Ali Malik said that his group will bring forward young business leaders from the platform of Federation of Pakista Chamber of Commerce and Industry so that they can play their effective role in the economic development of the

## Cotton sowing in full swing to achieve set target set for year 2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): The farming community has so far cultivated cotton over 65.22 percent of the total area fixed for the season 2023-24, whereas the sowing of the vital crop will continue at full pace by the end of the current month to achieve the set target.

"So far, the cotton sowing has been completed over 1.805 million hectares (Mha) of land against the set target of 2.767 Mha during the crop season 2023-24 to produce about 12 million bales," the Cotton Commissioner in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research Dr Zahid said here on Wednesday.

Talking to APP, he said, "Crop sowing in Punjab has been completed over 61.47 percent area over 1.241 million hectares against the

set target of 2.019 million hectares to produce about 8.336 million bales during the current season."

"Meanwhile, Sindh has achieved over 71.43 percent of its assigned targets and completed crop sowing over 0.480 million hectares as compared to the set crop sowing targets of 0.672 million hectares while the cotton output targets for the province is fixed at 4.00 million bales."

"During the season, the cotton sowing observed upward momentum in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan provinces as both the provinces achieved their cultivation targets by 113 percent and 110 percent respectively."

"Growth in crop sowing in the two provinces was mainly attributed to the

incentives introduced by the current government to revive crop production in the country, he added.

"In KP, the cotton crop has been cultivated over 0.0026 million hectares against the set targets of 0.0023 million hectares."

He informed that the crop output of the province was fixed at 0.004 million bales, whereas about 0.0809 million hectares of Balochistan were put under cotton production to produce about 0.430 million bales during the period under review.

The Cotton Commission further informed that the incumbent government was taking appropriate measures to revive cotton output and introduced several measures for encouraging local growers.



MULTAN: Laborers busy in packing tomatoes in wooden boxes at vegetable market.

## MCB's State-of-the-Art ATM upgrade project launched

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: MCB Bank Limited (MCB), one of Pakistan's leading banks, has launched a technology upgrade of its existing ATM network, with over 1,000 state-of-the-art ATMs to be installed across 500 cities nationwide. The upgrade is part of MCB Bank's commitment to providing innovative and secure financial services to its customers.

The new ATMs are equipped with advanced features making transactions faster, more secure, and easier than ever before.

The Bank celebrated the commencement of the project with an inauguration ceremony held at the MCB Bank principal office. President & CEO MCB Bank, Mr. Shoaib Mumtaz formally launched the project of ATM upgradation by cutting a ribbon.

The event was attended by Chief Digital Officer, Mr. Shahzad Ishaq, Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Hammad Khalid, CEO Innovative Pakistan, Mr. Naveed Ali Baig, CEO Touch Point, Mr. Tabish Sabah, and other senior representatives from MCB

Bank, Innovative Pakistan, and Touch Point.

On the occasion, Mr. Shoaib Mumtaz emphasized MCB Bank's unwavering commitment to meeting the evolving needs of its customers.

"Our customers' satisfaction is at the core of everything we do, and this technology upgrade reflects our commitment to providing them with the best experience. We believe that this modern ATM upgrade will not only improve customer experience but also drive operational efficiencies and enhance security"

said Mr. Mumtaz.

MCB Bank Limited (MCB) is one of the largest & most innovative banks in Pakistan.

The Bank operates a strong and vast network of over 1,400 branches and over 1,450 ATMs in Pakistan and 11 overseas branches.

With a customer base of over 8 million, MCB leads the banking & financial services sector in Pakistan and customers across the globe have 24/7 access to MCB Bank via our innovative and accessible Digital Banking Services.

## Urban Unit and CCP ink MoU for enhanced cooperation

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Urban Unit and the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance the professional expertise of both institutions by undertaking exchange and joint activities in the fields of training, research, data sharing, and capacity building.

The MoU was signed by Mr. Muhammad Omar Masud, CEO of the Urban Unit, and Ms. Rahat Kaunain Hassan, Chairperson of CCP. Senior officials from Urban Unit and CCP were in attendance.

The Urban Unit provides policy advice, services, and expertise in urban planning, transport, waste management, water and sanitation, economic development, finance, capacity building, service delivery improvement, as well as consultation and support in communication, branding, marketing, and stakeholder engagement. The agreement aims to facilitate exchange programs, joint training initiatives, and consultancy services in specific areas of mutual interest.

Through this partnership, the Urban Unit will extend its support to the Commission by granting access to its data resources for research studies, competition assessment reports, and enquiries.

Expressing his views on the collaboration, Mr. Omar Masud said that the MOU will help Urban Unit to collaborate in conducting joint training, consultancies, and capacity-building programs in defined areas of interest. The collaboration aims to

support access to data established and maintained by the Urban Unit for research studies, competition reports, and inquiries. The Urban Unit will provide technical support to the Commission in the establishment and maintenance of the Data Resource Centre, databases, and related applications.

Ms. Rahat Kaunain Hassan highlighted the importance of joint training, consultancies, and capacity-building programs in defined areas of interest,

which will be conducted collaboratively between the two institutions to enhance their professional expertise. She expressed her confidence that the MoU will lead to greater collaboration and a more effective working relationship between CCP and the Urban Unit.

This collaboration sets the stage for a productive partnership, allowing both organizations to harness their collective strengths and achieve their respective objectives effectively.



## Markets mixed as sluggish debt talks worry investors

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Unease over the slow progress of US debt talks further dampened sentiment in equity markets on Wednesday, though Japanese stocks got a boost from forecast-beating economic growth data.

Regional traders were provided a tepid lead from Wall Street, where disappointing retail sales data and weak earnings from Home Depot indicated softening consumer demand.

But analysts said the readings were unlikely to give the Federal Reserve room to pause its interest rate hikes yet. All eyes are on Washington, where lawmakers remain deadlocked in negotiations to lift the country's borrowing limit to pay its debts and avert a market-rattling default.

US President Joe Biden met Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and other congressional leaders at the White House on Tuesday after saying staff-level talks had produced no shift. McCarthy told reporters there was still "a lot of work to do" before the country runs out of cash,

which the Treasury has warned will happen around June 1.

However, there was a sliver of light as he said he ultimately expected a deal.

"America is the number one economy in the world. And when we get done with these negotiations, America's economy is going to be stronger," McCarthy said.

And the White House said Biden was "optimistic that there is a path to a responsible, bipartisan budget agreement if both sides negotiate in good faith".

In a bid to get an agreement over the line, the president -- who flies to Japan on Wednesday for a G7 summit -- scrapped subsequent stops in Papua New Guinea and Australia, instead planning to return to Washington on Sunday.

Still, investors remain nervous about the possibility of a default, which many economists warn would send shivers through the world economy.

Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Singapore, Mumbai and Bangkok fell on Wednesday, though Seoul, Taipei, Manila,

Wellington and Jakarta edged up.

London and Paris dipped in the morning but Frankfurt rose.

"The standoff has forced traders to keep one foot on the gas and one foot on the brake, causing markets to spin wheels this week," said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes.

Tokyo led gainers after figures showed Japan's economy grew more than expected in January-March thanks to a surge in tourism after pandemic border restrictions were lifted.

The figures helped push the Nikkei 225 to a 20-month high and it has now piled on more than 15 percent since the turn of the year, while the Topix is at a three-decade high.

Analysts said the strong market performance has been helped by corporate reforms and the central bank's ultra-loose monetary policies.

Comments from several Fed officials did little to provide any clarity on the US central bank's plans for rates at next month's policy meeting.

Richmond Fed president Thomas Barkin said he was

open-minded but still looking for signs that more than a year of tightening was having the necessary effect on inflation, which remains well above the bank's target. "I do want to learn more about what's happening with all these lagged effects," he told Bloomberg Television.

"But I also want to reduce inflation. And if more increases are what's necessary to do that, I'm comfortable doing that."

## SBP cancel NEL's license

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on May 17, 2023 has cancelled the authorization/license of M/s. Noble Exchange International (Pvt.) Limited on account of contraventions of the relevant laws and regulations.

Therefore, the aforesaid exchange company, including its head office, branches and franchises can no longer undertake any kind of foreign exchange related business activity.



## In brief

## Sitara-i-Imtiaz for Naila Kiani

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has approved the conferment of civil award Sitara-i-Imtiaz on renowned mountaineer Naila Kiani in recognition of her achievement to successfully summit the world's highest peak Mount Everest. The Prime Minister's Office issued a notification, containing the prime minister's approval for conferment of the award on the mountaineer who is second Pakistani woman to summit Mount Everest, after Samina Baig who summited the peak in 2013. The PM Office has directed the Cabinet Secretary to complete all the formalities in this regard. Earlier, the prime minister, had announced to confer Sitara-i-Imtiaz on Naila Kiani as she brought laurels to Pakistan, through her achievement.

## Wheelchair Cricket Asia Cup

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan will host Wheelchair Cricket Asia Cup in July at the neutral venue of Nepal. President of Pakistan Wheelchair Cricket Council (PWCC) Rookhsana Rajpoot said on Wednesday. "We were all set to host the event in Pakistan but due to some issues, we have decided to shift it to Nepal," Rookhsana told APP. She said that every effort would be made to make the event a real success, commencing on July 11. "Preparations to stage the event are underway. We hope fans will enjoy the exciting contests during the event," she added. The matches will be played at the two grounds in Kathmandu. Teams from Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan will participate in the Asia Cup. According to Rookhsana, the camp to prepare wheelchair for the Asia Cup will start next week. "We will also host the Afghanistan wheelchair cricket-bound team in June for a series, to be held in Islamabad. "The Afghanistan team will play three T20s and two ODIs against Pakistan. "It will be a watershed moment as it will be for the first time in the history that an international wheelchair cricket team will visit Pakistan for a series," Rookhsana added. She said it would also be for the first time in the history of wheelchair cricket that an international one-day match would take place between the two teams.

## Pakistan, India in same group

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Pakistan have been drawn with India alongside invitee Kuwait and Nepal in group A of the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championship 2023, scheduled to take place in Bengaluru from June 21 to July 4. According to the details, a total of eight teams, divided into two groups, will participate in the South Asian tournament. Group A features host India, Pakistan, Nepal and Kuwait while Bangladesh, Bhutan, Lebanon and Maldives were drawn in Group B. Pakistan men's football team will mark their return to the SAFF Championship after missing the last two out of the 13 editions held since 1993. The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) could not send its men's team for the 2015 edition held in India due to the lack of funds. The national side then missed the 2021 edition as they were serving a suspension from FIFA, which was lifted last year in June. It is worth mentioning here that Lebanon and Kuwait were invited to participate in the 2023 edition despite not being in South Asia geographically, to give the competition a more competitive edge.

## Shamyl half-century gives Pakistan U19 T20 win



RAJSHAHI (Monitoring Desk): Shamyl Hussain's half-century and Arafat Minhas' quick-fire 41 guided Pakistan U19 to a four-wicket win over Bangladesh U19 in the solitary T20 match at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi on Wednesday.

The win means Pakistan U19 take the four-day, one-day series and T20 series trophies home.

Chasing 160 to win at eight runs an over, the tourists lost player of the one-day series Shahzaib Khan in the first over for nought. Opening batter Shamyl Hussain was joined by captain Saad Baig and the pair knitted 41 runs for the second wicket. At the departure of Saad (24, 16b, 3x4s, 1x6) in the sixth over, Mohammad Tayyab Arif (16, 19b, 1x4) stitched a 41-run partnership for the

third wicket with Shamyl.

Following Tayyab's wicket in the 12th over and Pakistan U19 still requiring 71 to win from 51 balls, left-handed Shamyl was joined by another left-hander Arafat Minhas. The pair added 56 runs for the fourth wicket off just 33 balls. Over the course of the partnership, Arafat scored 41 off 22 balls, smashing seven fours and one six.

Shamyl, on the other hand, continued to keep one end intact and brought up his maiden half-century on the last ball of the 19th over, scoring 67 off 49 balls, hitting seven fours and one six.

The tourists chased down the target on the first ball of the final over with four wickets in hand.

For Bangladesh U19, Iqbal Hossain Emon took three wickets for 23.

Earlier, after being put into bat, Bangladesh U19 managed to score 159 for five in 20 overs. Opening batter Jishan Alam top-scored for his side with a 26-ball 52, which included five fours and four sixes.

For Pakistan U19, Ahmed Hussain bagged two wickets for 25 from three overs.

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

Bangladesh U19 159-5, 20 overs (Jishan Alam 52, Ariful Islam 30; Ahmed Hussain 2-25)

Pakistan U19 160-6, 19.1 overs (Shamyl Hussain 67, Arafat Minhas 41; Iqbal Hossain Emon 3-23, Rohan Doullah Borson 2-39)

Player of the match - Shamyl Hussain (Pakistan U19).

## Murad Ali of KP reaches semis in 34th National Games Men Badminton Singles

PESHAWAR (APP): Eight times National Champion international Murad Ali of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa took berth into the semi-finals of the Men Singles Badminton event part of the ongoing 34th National Games being played at Indoor Hall of the Ayub Stadium, Quetta on Wednesday.

Murad Ali continued his winning spree, by recording a thumping victory against his strong rival Tayyub Shafiq of Higher education Commission (HEC) in the marathon three sets battle.

Setting up a semi-final clash against another promising player Shoaib Riaz, also hailing from Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but playing for Pakistan Army, Murad Ali dominated the first and third sets before losing the second set to his strong

rival Tayyub Shafiq.

Murad Ali has the honor of winning the National Badminton Championship, National Ranking Men Championship for record eight times, was also the gold medal winner of the 33rd National Games held in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2019.

Murad Ali, a South Asian Games bronze medalist and also represented Pakistan in Commonwealth Games in Australia and Asian Games in Indonesia, said: "I am trying my hard to win back the title again and hopefully it will be a good semi-final against the most talented Shoaib Riaz of Pakistan Army."

"After victory against Shoaib Riaz, a son of National Junior Champion Riaz Khan, hailing from Bannu, Insha Allah would

play the final against Hafiz Irfan once again," a jubilant Murad Ali told APP on phone soon after winning his quarter-final match.

Murad Ali was the only gold medal winner for KP in the 33rd National Games held in provincial capital Peshawar and hopefully he would win back another gold medal in the Men Badminton event of the 34th National Games being played in Quetta, Balochistan.

Earlier, in the quarter-final Murad recorded a 2-1 victory, winning the first set at 21-18 but lost the second at 19-21 and staged a comeback quickly by winning the third and decisive set quite easily at 21-14. It was a good match, Tayyub Shafiq said when asked to comment.

Murad is playing his good game, Tayyub Shafiq said.

## Wahab Riaz inspect under-construction football ground



LAHORE (APP): Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz visited Muridke to inspect under-construction football ground and other development sports schemes on Wednesday.

He was accompanied by Director Youth Affairs Syed Umair Hassan, Project Director PMU Qaiser Raza, Deputy Director Planning Rauf Bajwa, Divisional Sports Officer Lahore Tariq Khanzada and other officials during his inspection visit.

Project Director PMU Qaiser Raza briefed Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports about the status of construction work of football ground and other sports uplift projects.

Speaking on this occasion Wahab Riaz directed the

officials concerned to complete the under-construction football ground and other sports development projects as soon as possible.

He said the construction of a top standard football ground in Muridke will provide the best facilities to the players of this region besides helping in tracing fresh football talent.

"We are modernizing the sports infrastructure across the province for the promotion of healthy activities among the younger generation. The development of sports in the province is not possible without providing modern facilities to players," he added.

Earlier Wahab Riaz visited taekwondo training camp of Punjab Men/Women team in con-

nection with 34th National Games at Nishtar Park Sports Complex (NPSC) Gymnasium Hall.

He witnessed the exciting practice taekwondo matches with keen interest and appreciated the skills of young players. Senior taekwondo coach Raeesur Rehman briefed Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz about the training of taekwondo athletes.

Talking to taekwondo players, he advised them to prepare themselves fully for a medal-winning position in the National Games. He expressed his hope that the Punjab taekwondo team would exhibit excellent performance in the grand event of the National Games.

He asked the male and female camp probabilities about the facilities being provided to them during camp training. In reply, the participants of taekwondo camp expressed their satisfaction on the facilities being provided to them.

Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports urged the Punjab taekwondo team to demonstrate their best performance and win a gold medal in the 34th edition of National Games.

## Qamar Zaman calls on newly posted DG Sports KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Vice President Pakistan Squash Federation legendary Qamar Zaman on Wednesday called on newly posted Director General sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Captain (R) Khalid Mahmood in his office and the two discussed in detail ways and means for the game development in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Captain (Retd) Khalid Mahmood assured Qamar Zaman, who is also Chairman KP Squash Association, that all possible resources will be used for the development of squash. Chairman Qamar Zaman along with squash player and former champion Maqsood Ahmed met DG Sports Captain (ret'd) Khalid Mahmood and congratulated him on assuming the post and discussed squash with him.

Qamar Zaman said KP Squash Association is focusing on age-group squash events so that squash should be promoted at the grassroots level. He said the association is keen to have more tournaments at the school level and bring up the players from there, but for this, we need government support.

Captain (ret'd) Khalid Mahmood while appreciating the efforts of Qamar Zaman said that in squash we have produced great champions but now steps should be taken to have players in the international ranking.

## Shehroze becomes world's youngest climber to summit 12 peaks of above 8,000m

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Shehroze Kashif became the youngest climber of the world to summit 12 peaks of above 8000-metre height on Wednesday after he successfully ascended Nepal's Mount Dhaulagiri (8167m), the seventh highest peak of the world, Karrar Haidri, secretary Alpine Club of Pakistan said in a statement.

"Shehroze's determination, courage, and passion for mountaineering have enabled him to achieve this incredible feat, and we could not be prouder of his achievement. BARD Foundation is proud to be a part of his incredible journey," the BARD Foundation, which sponsors Shehroze's expeditions, said in a statement.

"Mount Dhaulagiri, located in the western part of Nepal, is known for its challenging and unpredictable terrain. But Shehroze's unwavering commitment to his goal, combined with his physical and mental strength, has propelled him to the summit of this incredible mountain," it added.



Born on March 11, 2002, Shehroze made history by becoming the youngest climber in the world to summit K2 on July 27, 2021. He also became the youngest Pakistani to summit Mount Everest on May 11, 2021. After the successful summit of Mount Everest, the sports board Punjab made him the youth ambassador of the province.

He summited Broad Peak at the age of 17, after which he was called 'The Broad Boy'.

Shehroze started climbing mountains at the age of 11 with Makra Peak being the first one, followed by Musa ka Musalla and Chembra Peak at 12, Mingli Sar in Shimshal at 13,

Khurdopin Pass at 15, and Khosar Gang in alpine style at 18 years of age. He currently holds two Guinness World Records for being the youngest to climb K2 and the youngest to climb Broad Peak. On May 5, 2022, he became the youngest in the world and the first Pakistani to reach the summit of Kangchenjunga - the third-highest peak in the world. On May 16, 2022, Shehroze summited the world's fourth-highest peak, Mount Lhotse (8,516m), in Nepal.

On November 1, 2022, he was recognized by Guinness World Records for the year 2023 for summiting Mount Everest and K2.

In July 2022, Shehroze and Fazal Ali went missing between Camp 4 and Camp 3, after successfully summiting Nanga Parbat. However, the duo was discovered shortly after.

Shehroze intends to summit all above 8,000m peaks before the year end. If that happens, he will be the youngest mountaineer to have summited all the 14 peaks of that high altitude.

## Italian Open: Novak Djokovic loses to Holger Rune in Rome



ROME (Agencies): Novak Djokovic suffered his earliest exit at the Italian Open since 2013 when he was beaten by rising Danish star Holger Rune in the quarter-finals.

The Serb top seed, who turns 36 next week, was beaten 6-2 4-6 6-2 by 20-year-old Rune on the Rome clay. Djokovic was bidding for his seventh title in the Italian capital as he prepares for the French Open on 28 May. Seventh seed

Rune will play Norwegian fourth seed Casper Ruud or Argentine 24th seed Francisco Cerundolo next.

Djokovic's preparations for the French Open have been disrupted by injury, having missed the recent Madrid Open with an elbow problem and returning to the court in Rome as he looked to build up form and fitness. The 22-time Grand Slam champion will have the opportunity at Roland Garros to move

clear of Rafael Nadal in terms of the most men's major titles of all time.

Following opening wins against Tomas Martin Etcheverry, Grigor Dimitrov and British number one Cameron Norrie, Djokovic was going through the gears in Rome without yet finding his finest form.

There were signs of tension during a tetchy last-16 match against Norrie, before which Djokovic needed treatment for an injury that he was reluctant to discuss afterwards.

Djokovic, who will be replaced as world number one by Spain's Carlos Alcaraz next week, also needed a medical timeout early in the second set against Rune. While that was perhaps a factor behind his flat performance, the main reason for the defeat was he could not cope with the problems posed by the Dane.

Rune showed why he is being predicted to win

some of the sport's biggest prizes, showing confidence in his shot-making to trade blows with Djokovic and also demonstrating his strong mental resilience.

After racing to the opening set in 38 minutes, Rune lost focus in the second set after a line call went against him. The ruling by umpire Mohamed Lahyani left Rune livid and he lost serve to go 4-2 down but, after teeing up three break points by finishing an extraordinary 34-shot rally with a sublime drop shot, reduced the deficit to 5-4.

Djokovic upped his level again to threaten another break at 0-30 and - after rain forced the players off court for over an hour - secured the set seconds after the restart to level the match. But Rune refocused at the start of the deciding set, moving a double break up for 3-0 and maintained concentration to serve out for a second straight win over Djokovic.

## KP wins bronze medal in Men Team Trials Cycling in 34th National Games

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa claimed the bronze medal in the Men's Team Trials Cycling event of the 34th National Games, being played at Cycling Velodrome, Lahore on Wednesday. This is their second win after securing the bronze medal in Women's Badminton.

Pakistan Army won the gold medal, Pakistan WAPDA came second with the silver medal while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan Railways respectively bagged the third position. In connection with the national games, KP won the brown medal in the 50km Time Trial event.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa team consisted of Sajid Ali, Umar Farooq, Khaizar Hayat, Yusuf, Shah Faisal and Khunoon. Sajid Ali showed his skills by playing better on the first day.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary KP Cycling Association Nasir Mohmand said, "Provincial Cycling Association has shown good sportsmanship." Despite training only for a few days, the players gave an excellent performance, he added.

Mohmand informed that cycling academies would be built in Peshawar and Hazara, where male and female athletes would be trained on modern lines. He also stressed that there was enormous cycling talent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

## Emilia Romagna Grand Prix Imola race called off because of major flooding

IMOLA (Agencies): The Emilia Romagna Grand Prix has been called off this weekend because of major flooding in the region.

Discussions on Wednesday between local authorities and organisers of the race at Imola in Italy concluded that the event could not proceed safely.

At least eight people have died and 5,000 people have had to be evacuated following widespread flooding across the Emilia Romagna region.

F1 said calling off the race was "the right and responsible thing to do".

F1 president and chief executive officer Stefano Domenicali said: "It is such a tragedy to see what has happened to Imola and Emilia Romagna, the town and region that I grew up in."

The decision comes after a red weather warning was issued for the region on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Red Bull's Alpha Tauri team, who are based in nearby Faenza, said in a statement they were "very concerned about events unfolding over the past hours in the whole Emilia Romagna area, with flooding and heavy rain causing considerable damage".

The Ferrari factory in Maranello is just over 50 miles north-west of Imola and also in the affected region. Ferrari team principle Frederic Vasseur said in a statement: "Emilia Romagna is our homeland and it's heartbreaking to see what people are going through at the moment."

The track was evacuated on Tuesday as a result of



the risk of flooding from the Santeramo river, which runs next to the Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari.

F1 personnel were forbidden from entering the circuit on Wednesday as heavy rain had continued overnight and into the morning. The Emilia Romagna GP had been scheduled to be the sixth race of the season and was the first of three events on consecutive weekends, followed by Monaco and Spain.

F1 will look at options for rescheduling the race but it is considered unlikely to make a return because of the crowded schedule.

There had been plans for a record 23-race calendar in 2023 but the cancellation of Imola means that the schedule will be reduced to 22, the same as last year.

Britain's Lewis Hamilton said he hoped everyone in the region was able to "stay safe and look out for each other".

"Thoughts are with those affected by this tragedy and the amazing emergency services working on the ground," Hamilton said on Instagram. World champion and Red Bull driver Max Verstappen said he

supported the decision to call off the race, adding: "Our thoughts are with all those affected by the severe rainfall and flooding in the greater Emilia Romagna region. We wish you all strength to ensure your safety throughout this period."

FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem said: "My thoughts and those of the entire FIA family are with those affected by the terrible situation in the Emilia Romagna region. The safety of everyone involved and recovery efforts are the top priority at this time." Mercedes' George Russell said: "Sorry for the fans that this weekend's race has been cancelled but the safety of everyone involved always has to come first."

"Worst night in the history of Romagna" Officials say some areas of Emilia Romagna have received half of their average annual rainfall in just 36 hours. This has caused rivers to burst their banks, submerging thousands of acres of farmland under water and flooding towns, with 5,000 people having to be evacuated and some rescued from roofs by helicopter.



## In brief

### IRSA releases 149,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 149,700 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 128,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1428.20 feet and 30.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 35,500 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1116.80 feet, 66.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 41,200 cusecs and 48,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 51,300, 56,300, 42,400 and 13,400 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 29,100 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 13,400 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Two stolen vehicles, 8 motorcycles recovered

RAWALPINDI (INP): Police have arrested a suspect involved in open indiscriminate firing on a police party in Taxila a few days back and recovered a stolen vehicle, Suzuki van and 08 motorcycles from his possession here on Wednesday. Itfikhwar along with his co-accused had opened fire on the police party. During the firing, Adnan, co-accused was arrested in an injured condition. SP Potohar Muhammad Waqas Khan appreciated the performance of police teams and said that the arrested accused will be challaned with concrete evidence. The accused will be punished according to law. Rawalpindi Police is making all-out effort to prevent crime and police will continue crackdown on active and organized gangs, he added.

### 10 gamblers nabbed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested ten gamblers on cock fights and recovered stake money of Rs 10,000, nine mobile phones, three motorcycles, a rickshaw and other items from their possession, informed a police spokesman on Wednesday. According to the details, Taxila Police held ten gamblers namely Sher Wali, Muhammad Ali, Shaukat, Kamran, Sharif, Hashim, Kawish, Azhar, Junaid and Usman. Police had registered a case against them and further investigation was in progress. Superintendent Police (SP) Potohar Muhammad Waqas Khan hailed the performance of the police team. He said that gambling was the root of other evils and action against such elements would be continued.

### CTP issued 21 challan tickets

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) issued challan tickets to 21 vehicles using tinted glasses here on Wednesday. Two vehicles were impounded due to lack of documentation. According to the CTP spokesman, in charge of Traffic Adiala Circle, conducted operations at different places of the circle and 21 vehicles were issued challan tickets for having black paper while two vehicles were impounded due to lack of documentation. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimoor Khan warned that stern action would be taken against violators and they would be punished according to the law. The decision was taken by keeping in view the law & order situation. CTO further said, "A special campaign have also been launched to conduct a crackdown."



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Rana Tanveer Hussain, Minister Federal Education and Professional Training, and Chairman of the Board of Governors of the National Education Foundation (NEF), chaired a meeting of the Board. Esteemed board members, including senior officers from the Ministry of Education and Finance and renowned educationists attended the meeting.

## Minister sets target to enroll 52,000 OOS children by June 30

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Rana Tanveer Hussain has set an ambitious target to enroll all approximately 52,000 Out Of School Children (OOSC) in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) by June 30, 2023.

To ensure the retention for the children, the minister directed Ministry's officials to allocate Rs. 200 million for two years to the National Education Foundation (NEF) for the purpose of catering to the educational needs of OOSC in ICT. Federal Minister, who is also Chairman of the Board of Governors of the NEF, disclosed this while chairing a meeting of the Board here Wednesday. The esteemed Board members, including senior offi-

cers from the Ministry of Education and Finance and renowned educationists attended the meeting.

During the meeting, the minister commended the NEF for its unwavering efforts in catering to the needs of OOSC in ICT. He also expressed satisfaction with the ongoing programs implemented for the disengaged group of children in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and ICT and congratulate on successfully win the UNESCO project for training non-formal teachers. Rana Tanveer Hussain highlighted the grave concern of the OOSC of age 5-16 years in Pakistan, emphasizing that the country ranks at the bottom in this regard.

Recognizing the severity of the challenge, the Ministry of Federal

Education has launched the Zero OOSC Initiative in ICT. Under this initiative, allied departments of the Ministry, in collaboration with NGOs and the private sector, are actively working towards identifying and enrolling OOSC. He acknowledged the efforts of NEF in this regard.

Distinguished members of the Board, including Prof. Dr. Nasir Mehmood, Vice Chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University, Ms. Baela Raza Jamil, CEO of ITA, Ms. Fajar Rabia Pahsa, CEO of PAGE, Ms. Khadija Khan, CEO of PAEC, Ms. Munaza Gillani, CEO of Sight Savers and others expressed their appreciation for the Ministry's initiative and efforts in tackling the issue of the OOSC.

## ANF seizes 120.5 kg drugs in three operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in their ongoing operations against drug smugglers conducted raids in different areas and recovered 120.5 kg of drugs besides netting two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that in an operation conducted near Mattani on Peshawar Indus Highway, 87.6 kg charras was recovered from secret cavities of a truck.

In a joint operation, ANF and Sindh Ranger conducted a raid near Sukkur-Jacobabad and recovered 30 kg charras from the possession of an accused resident of Pishin.

The spokesman said that in the third operation, ANF and Punjab Rangers managed to recover 2.9 kg of heroin from the possession of a drug smuggler resident of Sheikhupura.

Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process, he added.

## CDA all set to develop new parks

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is all set to develop several new modern parks in the federal capital to provide better recreational facilities to the residents. "The civic authority has already developed around 37 public parks in the federal capital during the last ten years and is working on a policy to increase their number in the coming years," official sources in the CDA told APP on Wednesday.

"We need three to four months to develop a new park after completion of the codal formalities."

At present, they said the federal capital had six amusement parks, which were considered sufficient to cater to the recreational needs of Islamabad residents. "But the policy has been made that whenever a new sector will be developed, an amusement park will be constructed along," they added. The sources said that the CDA was developing several new sectors, including I-11, I-12, I-14, I-15, I-16, D-12, and Park Enclave, adding that Model Villages and parks were also being developed in the said areas.

## Talha meets Saudi deputy interior minister to strengthen bilateral relations

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Senator Muhammad Talha Mehmood, attended a prestigious dinner hosted by Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki in honor of the distinguished guest, Saudi Deputy Interior Minister Dr. Nasir bin Abdul Aziz Al Dawood, and his accompanying delegation on Tuesday night. The event served as an important platform for fostering stronger ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Upon Dr. Al Dawood's arrival in Pakistan, Senator Talha Mehmood warmly welcomed him and engaged in discussions that centered around significant matters of mutual interest.

The esteemed officials primarily focused their attention on the 'Road to Makkah' project, which aims to enhance the accessibility and convenience of pilgrims traveling to the holy city.

During the meeting, the two dignitaries also deliberated on the Hajj arrangements, a subject of immense importance for both countries due to their shared commitment to facilitating a smooth and well-organized pilgrimage experience for Muslims worldwide. Senator Talha expressed his gratitude to Dr. Al Dawood for his visit, underscoring the value of such interactions in

fortifying the longstanding bond between the two countries.

He further emphasized the deep-rooted religious, cultural, and historical ties that unite the two nations.

Dr. Al Dawood reciprocated the warm sentiments and conveyed his appreciation for Pakistan's hospitality.

He acknowledged the efforts made by the Pakistani government in ensuring the welfare of pilgrims and commended their dedication to upholding the sanctity of religious practices.

The discussions held between the Minister for Religious Affairs and the Saudi Deputy Interior Minister demonstrated the commitment of both nations to fostering collaboration and cooperation in matters related to religious affairs.

The bilateral exchange of ideas and expertise is expected to pave the way for enhanced coordination and improved facilities for future Hajj seasons.

As the dinner drew to a close, Senator Talha Mehmood and Dr. Al Dawood expressed optimism regarding the future of bilateral relations. They vowed to continue working together to strengthen ties in various fields, reinforcing the foundation of friendship and mutual understanding that existed between the two countries.

## Rehabilitation work on Quetta-Bostan track in full swing

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has started the rehabilitation work of a 33.50-kilometre track "through sleeper renewal" between Quetta-Bostan and Quetta-Chaman section and the department was putting maximum efforts to complete it as soon as possible.

"The track will not only facilitate the passengers and small businessmen, but also connect three major cities of the Balochistan province," an official source in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said the railway network in Balochistan province mainly consisted of Quetta Division having Dera Allah Yar Sibi-Quetta, Quetta-Chaman, Sibi-Khost, Spezend-Dalbandin-Taftan and Bostan-Zhob which were closed for the last 15 years.

The source said there were two passenger trains namely Jaffer Express (40Up, 39 Down) and Chaman Passenger (349Up, 350 Down) operating in Balochistan while no stations had been closed during the last 15 years in the Quetta division.

He said the overall length of the railway track in Balochistan was 1470.36 kilometer including the closed Bostan-Zhob section. "Most of the track was

more than one-hundred-year-old and on certain stretches, engineering speed restrictions have been imposed due to deferred maintenance and owing to resource constraints," he said adding that the routine maintenance of track was being carried out with available resources. To improve railway services in Balochistan, he said the department was taking several steps like approval of PC-I for the track's rehabilitation and the rehabilitation of another 100-km track between Ahmedwal Dalbadin on the Quetta-Taftan section.

He said that 100-km rehabilitation of the track between Nokundi Kohi-Taftan on Quetta-Taftan section while 160.024 kilometers of rehabilitation of the track between Bostan-Chaman on Quetta-Chaman section would be carried out.

The source said the tourist train's two trips had been started between Quetta-Bostan while the Bolan Mail passenger train would also be operational shortly to facilitate the passengers. He said the establishment of Chaman Terminal in collaboration with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and track renewal Sibi-Khost section

was also in progress.

To a question, he said Pakistan Railways had suffered losses worth over Rs 150 billion during the last three-and-a-half years' rule of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government.

To control the deficit and earn more revenue, he said the department had introduced "RABTA" - a platform for the improvement of its financial conditions. Rabta was essentially an attempt to enhance customer facilitation via artificial intelligence.

Around 60 million passengers have used Pakistan Railways annually, for which 40 per cent of the tickets were sold using an outdated process without any audit, he said.

To resolve this problem, Rabta allows customers to plan trips with the help of different options. Single interface customers can check train statuses, choose and purchase seats, book hotels, and order car rentals, meals, and refreshments. He said Rabta also allowed passengers to lodge statuses during their journeys. They can book tickets through multiple platforms including mobile applications, websites, ticket agents, reservation officers, vending machines, and handheld devices, he added.

## ‘World Telecommunication Day’ celebrated

ISLAMABAD (APP): Like other parts of the world, 'The World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD)' day was observed here on Tuesday,

to raise awareness of the importance of telecommunications and the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in promoting social and economic development worldwide.

May 17 is the anniversary of the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention and the creation of the

International Telecommunication Union (ITU) that's why the day is celebrated worldwide.

According to the United Nations (UNs), "World Telecommunication Day has been celebrated annually on May 17, since 1969. It marked the founding of ITU and the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention in 1865."

However, it was November 2005 when the World Summit on the Information Society called upon the UN General

Assembly to declare the date as World Information Society Day.

This year the theme for World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2023 is "Empowering the least developed countries through information and communication technologies."

Federal Minister for Information Technology (IT) and Telecommunication Sted Amin ul Hage in a message said, "I wish that public and private sectors should make pledges for universal connectivity and digital transformation."



ISLAMABAD: Hundreds of students daily cross the busy IJP Road due to unavailability of crossing space or pedestrian bridge, needs the attention of concerned authorities.

Seyyed meets Khairkhah

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Information and Culture Minister, Mullah Khairullah Khairkhah, in a meeting with Deputy ambassador of Iran, Seyyed Hassan Mortazavi and his accompanying delegation, said that opportunities granted for all-round cultural cooperation between Afghanistan and Iran. Seyyed mentioned Afghanistan and Iran as friendly countries, adding that the people of both countries have a common culture.

Afghan national arrested

KABUL (Khaama Press): A group of migrants and an Afghan national on the FBI's terror watchlist were caught trying to enter the US illegally last week. According to US Customs and Border Protection authorities, Fox News reported that the suspect—who has not been publicly identified—was apprehended Wednesday while attempting to cross the southern border at Otay Mesa in San Diego, California.

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

CPEC to connect Afghanistan with region, EU: MoFA

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will connect Afghanistan to the region and European countries.

The deputy spokesman for MoFA, Hafiz Zia Ahmad Takal, said there is a need for the implementation of major economic projects in Afghanistan.

"The Islamic Emirate will be able to connect with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The Islamic Emirate will be able to attract investment via this project

to Afghanistan and here. There will be good progress in the iron sector, the energy-producing sector, and other industries," he said.

This comes as the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) believes that the inclusion of Afghanistan in CPEC will boost the economy and trade rates in Afghanistan.

"The project is an economic and regional project and this will help us stop being dependent on others. It will begin, we admire the statement released in this regard," said Khanjan Alok-

ozai, a member of the ACCI. Meanwhile, some traders believe that CPEC will cause an increase in exports from Afghanistan.

"The corridors which have recently been established between China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan open new doors, in fact, it can help Afghanistan economically," said Qutbuddin Yaqoobi, an economist.

China has reportedly invested more than \$40 billion in the CPEC project and is seeking to extend its commerce via CPEC with regional and other countries.

China to strengthen ties with IEA

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Urban Development and Lands Minister of the Islamic Emirate Shaikh Hamdullah Nomani met with the ambassador of China Wang Yu, here in Kabul, the ministry said Wednesday.

In the meeting, Minister Shaikh Hamdullah Nomani, while, appreciating the cooperation and friendly relation of China with Afghanistan asked ambassador Wang Yu for the restoration of his country's work on the largest Chinese-supported Nela Bagh housing project in Afghanistan, said a statement.

"The IEA is fully committed to fulfilling all responsibilities and commitments which had been contracted," the statement quoted Minister Nomani as saying. He added, some of the challenges related to the project have been addressed and the work should be resumed as soon as possible.

Since the IEA resumed power in the country, the ground has been paved for investment more than ever before and the Chinese investors if want to invest in Afghanistan, they will be provided with any necessary facilities, the statement said.

"China always wants a peaceful, stable, developed and self-sufficient Afghanistan," the statement quoted Chinese Ambassador Wang Yu said.

The political, economic and trade relations should be boosted between the two neighboring and friend countries, the statement added.

Quality of local products to surged

KABUL (TOLOnews): The acting Minister of Industry and Commerce (MoIC), Nooruddin Azizi, said that the quality of domestic products should increase.

Speaking at the "Industry Week" exhibition, he said that the MoIC has established a department of information.

"We have established a general database for the companies. The companies will be registered in the database without being charged. If we see anyone's product is not in good quality, then they should not be upset from us," he said.

The second deputy of the Prime Minister, Mullah Abdul Salam Hanafi, said that the Islamic Emirate prevented the cultivation of drugs and producing of narcotics.

Hanafi called on the international community to invest in industrial, trade and development projects as substitutes for the cultivation of opium.

"The Islamic Emirate has banned cultivation, producing, use and smuggling of narcotics here (Afghanistan). If you want Afghanistan, neighboring countries and regional and beyond-region countries to be safe from the damages of narcotics, you should support the Afghan nation," Hanafi said.

Commerce Minister off to Russia-Islamic World Forum

KABUL (Agencies): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's acting minister of commerce and industry, Nooruddin Azizi, left Kabul for Russia on Wednesday where he will attend the Russia-Islamic World Forum scheduled to start on Thursday.

According to the ministry, Azizi, will also meet with Russian officials along with officials from other countries and companies in a bid to boost trade and investment with Afghanistan.

The two-day Russia-Islamic World Forum will begin in Kazan, southwest Russia, on Thursday.

The decision to hold the 2023 edition of the Russia-Islamic World forum in Kazan is symbolic: the capital of Tatarstan, located some 800km east of Moscow, is seen by the Russian state as a successful example of multiculturalism and peaceful religious coexistence.



Russia is home to some 15 million Muslim citizens "in the sense that they belong to ethnic groups with cultural foundations linked to Islam. Not all are believers or practicing Muslims," according to a report from the French Institute for International Relations, AFP reported.

As a whole, Muslims make up 10% of the Russian population, with most living in the Caucasus – the area of land that separates the Caspian and Black Seas – and the Volga-Ural region.

Muslims have lived in Tatarstan, in the Volga district, for centuries and the Tatar population (descend-

ed from largely Muslim Turkic ethnic groups) is Russia's largest ethnic minority group.

The forum in Kazan aims to strengthen economic, cultural and intellectual ties between Russia and the 57 member countries of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Efforts ongoing for Afghans to run aviation services: Officials

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Transport said on Wednesday that efforts are ongoing for Afghans to manage airport services around the country.

The ministry's spokesman said that work on the purchase and installation of standard machines in the country's airports is ongoing, and with the installation of the machines, services will be provided by Afghans themselves in a few months.

"In a few months, with the establishment of

Afghan aviation services will be provided by the Afghans themselves. Previously, services were provided by Americans. We need equipment. According to the contract, the equipment will be brought in and installed. The problems in this sector will be solved and it is expected that more foreign airlines will carry out flights to Afghanistan," Imamuddin Ahmadi said.

According to Ahmadi, the establishment of the first air cargo company in the country, they want domestic products to be transferred to global markets by domestic airlines.

"From now on, our fresh and dried fruit will reach countries on time," Ahmadi said. Some investors also said that more efforts should be made in the development of air freight because the fresh fruit of Afghanistan must be transferred to the global markets on time in order to prevent

it from being perished.

"Since fuel materials are decreasing day by day and prices are increasing, my suggestion to the Islamic Emirate is that we should build infrastructure right now. Let's build our agricultural products processing hubs in all airports. Let's build cold storages and prepare the logistics system," Sherbaz Kamin-zada, the head of the Chamber of Industries and Mines, said.

Rawash festival begins in Maidan Wardak

MAIDAN WARDAK (TOLOnews): The scientific, cultural, and sports festival "Rowash" has been launched in Behsud 1 district of Maidan Wardak.

At this festival, various traditional games are played, and handicrafts and other home products, as well as books, are exhibited "Among our Kochi brothers and Hazaras, the existing contradictions become solved," said Hekmat Wayar, a participant.

"I am happy to participate in such a festival where there were different fields of sports," said Islamuddin Shahrohi, a participant.

Local officials in the province said the purpose of launching the program is to strengthen social relations between ethnic groups and to keep alive traditional games and handicrafts.

"Scientists, teachers, and writers in every school should launch such festivals," said Habibullah Mujahid, head of the Information and Culture department in Maidan Wardak.

"We want the government to support such programs," said Ali Agha, a participant.

Meanwhile, Maidan Wardak's governor said that they are trying to



increase the launch of such festivals with the aim of strengthening the culture of reading books, developing handicrafts, and solving problems between ethnic groups.

"We ask the Ministry of Information and Culture to hold more of such festivals and picnics in Maidan Wardak," said Bakhtiar Maaz, governor of Maidan Wardak.

Rawash Festival is launched every year in Behsud 1 district of Maidan Wardak. Along with locals, a number of residents of other provinces, including athletes if traditional games, also participate.

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Turkmen doctors provide medical aid for Afghans



KABUL (Khaama Press): Turkmenistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced that it has sent three female physicians to provide medical aid to Afghan women in western Herat province.

As part of Turkmenistan humanitarian aid, Turkmen female doctors have already started providing life-saving healthcare services to Afghan women at Turghandi maternity hospital in Herat province.

Prior to sending doctors, the Turghandi maternity hospital was renovated on May 3, and medical supplies, as well as medicine, were donated by the government of Turkmenistan.

It is said that Turkmen female doctors will serve in Afghanistan until the end of this month.

Meanwhile, Turkmenistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has emphasized to continue delivering its much-needed humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan during these difficult times. Turghandi maternity hospital was built and inaugurated with the financial support of the Turkmenistan government on Jun 5, 2016.

The acting Health Minister of Afghanistan Qalander Ebad a few days ago announced that at least 50 percent of the Afghan population in remote rural areas have no access the

healthcare services.

The lack of proper healthcare facilities and services is considered a major challenge, particularly for women and children under the Taliban-run administration in Afghanistan.

While banning Afghan women from working for government institutions and NGOs, the Taliban keep calling on the international community to help the health sector in Afghanistan.

Currently, Afghanistan has the highest number of maternal fatalities in the world, which may deteriorate with the increasing lack of resources and facilities.

‘Two-thirds of country’s population is food insecure’

KABUL (TOLOnews): Human Rights Watch in a recent report on Afghanistan said that two-thirds of the country's population is food insecure.

This report says that Afghanistan remains one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters, and after the ban on women working for NGOs, the crisis has become more severe. It said 875,000 children face acute malnutrition.

"Afghanistan has largely disappeared from the media, but it remains one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters. Two-thirds of the country's population is food insecure, including 875,000

children facing acute malnutrition. Women and girls remain most at risk," said Human Rights Watch.

"The additional information I have is that the humanitarian situation remains critical in Afghanistan and our operations also remain underfunded," said Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Economy considers the economic sanctions and frozen assets of Afghanistan to be the reason for the increase in food insecurity in the country.

"Humanitarian aid is

highly political and is linked to the recognition or non-recognition of the Islamic Emirate and for this reason the aid has not reached needy people," said Merwis Ashofta, political analyst.

"The real reason for food insecurity is economic sanctions and frozen assets of Afghanistan and we are trying to render the sanctions ineffective and create more jobs and launch big projects," said Abdul Latif Nazari, the Deputy Minister of Economy.

According to the Human Rights report, drastic loss of aid will leave many Afghans poorer and hungrier.

Women without male breadwinners work as street vendors in Herat



HERAT (TOLOnews): Dozens of older women sell clothes and other items on the street as they are faced with economic challenges from losing family members in conflicts in the past 20 years. Many of them are

selling secondhand clothes on the streets.

Taj, 60, is a breadwinner of a family of 10 members. Taj said that her husband and son in law lost their lives in the recent war. Taj said that she makes 100 Afs

on a daily basis, which is too little to provide for her family's needs.

"We have nothing to eat. We come and sit here. No one makes purchases and we are exhausted," she said.

The women said that they are obliged to work to make ends meet for their families.

"The fabric which cost 50 Afs, they (customers) ask to pay 10 Afs. There is no business. I earned 200 Afs within the past two weeks," said Ziba, a vendor. "We wake up at 06:00 am and then come here, so I can make about 100 or 150 Afs by 3:00pm," said Ruqia, a vendor.

The business of these vendors dropped as Afghanistan faces severe economic conditions that has made more than 28 million of the population need humanitarian assistance.

"We have eight people (in the family). Many of them are underage. I come and work here until sunset," said Aziza, a vendor.

Thousands of families lost their members in the war of the past two decades.

TALOQAN (Pajhwok): The cultivation of ornamental flowers by the residents of northern Takhar province has been on the rise, with growers making good incomes.

Prices of decorative flowers have also witnessed a surge in the province lately, people in the business say.

Mohammad Sabir, a Taloqan resident who was in the market to purchase flowers, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "Last year, one bouquet cost 100afs.

"But this year, the rate has increased, despite the fact that Takhar is a flower-producing province. It also exports flowers to other provinces."

Sabir urged the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock to pay due attention to the control of flower prices.

Abdullah, another inhabitant of Takhar, said: "Growing flowers has turned into a business for the locals, especially youth of this province. Different types of flowers are found here in Takhar, but high rates are a concern for the people."

On the other hand, suppliers call subzero temperatures this last winter the reason behind the hike in flower prices.

Din Mohammad, who has been

selling flowers in a corner of the provincial capital, said: "The harsh winter affected most of our flowers. We have no option but to continue this business."

He said they would be pleased with reasonable prices because the number of customers had increased.

"As the prices have gone up, people are not as interested in buying flowers as they were in the past. But this business is still in good condition," he remarked.

Abdullah, another Taloqan-based florist, also confirmed the winter cold affected his flowers and hence the

price-hike.

Enayatullah Rustaqi, agriculture extension head, saw supplies from other provinces including Kabul, winter effects on plants and inexperience of growers were behind rising flower prices in Takhar.

He said efforts were being made in coordination with flower sellers to control the price-hike in the province and alleviate people's concerns.

With the opening of dozens of florist shops in Takhar in recent years, flower cultivation has become a roaring business, with a bunch costing 40 afs to 4,000 afs.





RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, COAS interacting with jawan during his visit to Sialkot Garrison.

## Civilians must not be tried under army act: Rabbani

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Raza Rabbani has opposed the trial of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) protesters under the Army Act for attacking defence installations and damaging public properties following the party chief Imran Khan's arrest in a graft case on May 9. "...no leniency should be shown towards those who attacked, burnt and looted public and defence installations under a political agenda," the PPP senator said in a statement on Wednesday.

His statement comes a day after the high-powered National Security Committee (NSC) endorsed the Corps Commander Conference's decision to hold the trial of arsonists under the Army Act, Official Secrets Act, and other concerned laws under the Constitution. Senator Rabbani said a criminal justice system was present with special anti-terrorist laws and courts. "Being civilians the planners, abettors and attackers should be tried under this system."

He said civilians must not be tried under the Pakistan Army Act, 1952, as such trials would raise the question of transparency and draw the debate in a direction that will generate sympathy. The PPP leader further said it was against the fundamental rights in the Constitution and added that this had been his constant position on this issue.

Such trials of arson and burning under the Army Act, 1952, will be challenged before the superior courts and are likely to be found not in accordance with law, he added. Referring to the establishment of military courts to try terrorists, the senator said a one-time amendment was made by Parliament in 2015, which was also not a correct decision, but that too has lapsed. He urged the coalition government to rethink the question of the trial of civilians under the Army Act, but not let up on awarding the strictest sentences under the criminal justice system.

## Sh Rasheed summoned

RAWALPINDI (INP): The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has summoned Awami Muslim League chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed in National Crime Agency £190m Scandal or commonly known as Al-Qadir Trust case on May 24.

The anti-graft watchdog has directed Sheikh Rasheed to appear before the bureau on May 24 along with the documents related to the case. Hours after receiving the NAB notice, Rasheed, in his video message on Twitter, said that he was ready for the arrest and has prepared his bag.

"I will stand firm like a rock. Jail is like house of my in-laws. My luggage is ready. Many thanks to NAB for implicating me in £190 million [scam]." "I am grateful to NAB that it has also made me a party with Imran Khan in the case of £190 million," he said.

## KP CM assures to resolve issues of Chitral people

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A representative delegation of Chitral people Wednesday called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Chief Minister, Muhammad Azam Khan and informed him about problems of people due to increased rates of wheat.

The delegation was comprised former member provincial assembly, Moulana Abdul Rehman, Qari Jamal Abdul Nasir and Qazi Kfayat Ullah. Caretaker Minister for Agriculture, Muhammad Halim Qasurua was also present on the occasion. The delegation said that government wheat was available at a rate of Rs. 5500 per 100 kg some days back but the rate of wheat has been increased to Rs.11500 that is beyond the purchasing power of poor people living in Chitral.

The delegation urged

government to reduce prices of wheat and play its part to provide subsidized wheat to Chitral people like Gilgit and Baltistan. They said that wheat should be provided to Chitral instead of flour and quota of flour mills should be decreased. Speaking on the occasion, Caretaker CM said that KP purchase major portion of its wheat from Punjab and prices of purchased wheat including transportation charges is Rs 12500 while the same wheat is procured to people with a subsidy of Rs 100 per kilogram.

He assured cooperation to the delegation and said that steps would be taken to provide wheat to Chitral on decreased rates and a case would be prepared for presenting to concerned authorities. He also directed food department to increase quota of wheat for people of Chitral.

Meanwhile, the

Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mohammad Azam Khan has decided to allocate one day a week to the merged districts for solving the public problems.

According to Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan, now the people of the merged districts will be able to meet the Chief Minister at CM House Peshawar on every Friday. Accordingly, the second session of this series will be held on May 18. For this purpose, the time from 3.00 pm to 5.00 pm has been fixed. The people of the merged districts can visit the Chief Minister House at the appointed time to inform the Chief Minister about their problems. The Chief Minister will issue necessary orders to the concerned authorities to solve the public problems of the merged districts during the meeting.

## Imran deprived nation of IMF package: Musadik

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik Wednesday said Imran Khan as prime minister had deprived the nation of \$250 million or one-fourth of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) package by diverting £190 million to Malik Riaz's accounts instead of the national exchequer.

Addressing a press conference, he said under the United Kingdom's laws, the £190 million returned by the National Crime Agency (NCA) should have gone to the national exchequer, but the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman (the then PM) diverted that amount to the accounts of a business tycoon. Contrary to Imran Khan's claims of establishing a "Riyasat-e-Madina" - a welfare state based on Islamic principles, Dr Musadik said the PTI chief rather took care of his own vested interests and indulged in obtaining financial and other kinds of benefits illegally.

He said today both Imran Khan and his wife were posing themselves as "innocent victims" but it were they who had "orchestrated a scheme of corruption to defraud the national exchequer of millions of dollars, equivalent to 25 percent of the package we are now seeking from the IMF". Imran Khan claimed that the money was deposited into the Supreme Court's account, but, in fact, the funds had gone to Malik Riaz's coffers, he added.

He said the related actions involving property were questionable. "Whether it would be acceptable that as a public servant, if I were to allocate a large area of land in my name and claim it belongs to a trust owned by me and my wife?" It was ironic that despite clear proofs of his involvement in the \$250 million corruption scandal, Imran Khan not only got bail in the instant case but was also granted protective bails for potential future crimes, he added.

The way the state's writ was compromised with not adhering to the law and the Constitution, he said, would have consequences not only for the state but also for those who were "endorsing and legitimizing the illegal acts". "The fire will engulf your house too," he added. Drawing parallels to the "doctrine of necessity" in the Molvi Mushtaq, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif cases, Dr Musadik questioned whether similar doctrines were at

play in the cases involving Imran Khan, who was granted unconditional bails and side by side, "the Constitution was also rewritten for him".

There was no precedent of such verdicts in the world, which would potentially result in further chaos, involving massive damage to public and private property, he warned. Referring to the historical contexts of Justice Munir, Bhutto, and Nawaz cases, Dr Musadik stressed that those decisions should no more be followed as the country could not afford any adverse consequences. There should be fair trials of the PTI chief and "his accomplices" for their large-scale corruption and for the May 9 incidents, he added.

If those involved in the rioting and arsons were let go unpunished then it would set a precedent for violent groups to continue wreaking havoc all across the country, the minister remarked. He cautioned the "supporters of Imran Khan in the judiciary that they are being closely watched and they will be equally held responsible for the destruction". Regarding oil prices, he explained that the public had to bear the burden because of surge in the dollar exchange rate vis-a-vis prices of the commodity in the international market. However, the government tried its best to give maximum relief to the public on that count.

Responding to a query, Dr Musadik clarified that no new gas connection schemes had been launched due to depleting gas reservoirs. He mentioned ongoing efforts to sign international agreements to secure gas supplies. He contradicted the PTI's claims, saying that no agreement was signed by its government with Russia for importing oil at cheaper rates. However, an accord was inked within the few months of the present Pakistan Democratic Movement government, and discounted oil shipments from Russia would soon reach the country. Dr Musadik recalled that the government had already approved a \$10-14 billion oil refinery project. Pakistan was going to launch a comprehensive energy security plan in collaboration with a friendly country soon, which would help overcome the energy crisis, he added. Regarding the petrol relief package, he assured that it would be launched after consulting with the stakeholders.

## Superior judiciary adopts 'good to see you' as latest trend

ISLAMABAD (INP): Supreme Court of Pakistan (SC) Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial's 'good to see you' remarks for PTI Chairman Imran Khan have now reached the Islamabad High Court where Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb greeted Islamabad's top cop Akbar Ali Nasir the same way.

Justice Aurangzeb said, "IG sahib good to see you." On hearing this, the entire courtroom burst into laughter. PML-N leader Maryam Nawaz had asked the CJP how many individuals, who had allegedly stolen billions of rupees, had received greetings of "good to see you" from him.

CJP Bandial has been

under severe criticism due to his greeting remarks for former Prime Minister Imran Khan during Imran's appearance before the court. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, PDM President and Federal Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb criticised CJP remarks towards accused Imran Khan in strongest possible way.

## 2 more PTI MPs part ways with party

KARACHI (INP): Two Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MPs from Sindh have parted ways with the party in protest against May 9 violence, wherein military installations were attacked following the arrest of party chairman Imran Khan.

According to details, two PTI MPs – Sanjay Gangwani and Kareem Bux Gabol – have quit the party following the 'attack on military's General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi and Corps Commander House Lahore'. In a statement, Sanjay Gangwani said that he was also quitting politics while condemning the 'vandalism of military installations' on May 9.

The development came a day after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MNA from Karachi Mahmood Moulvi announced parting ways with party. The PTI MNA announced that he is resigning from the PTI in light of the attacks on military installations during violent protests on May 9 in the country after the arrest of Imran Khan. "I have never gone against, nor will I ever go against the army," he said. Moulvi further revealed that he might join a charitable organisation or form a new political party.

## FIA launches crackdown against culprits

LAHORE (INP): In a significant crackdown, the Cybercrime Wing of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in Lahore has decided to profile and publicly disclose the identities of all the culprits responsible for the acts of vandalism and arson at Jinnah House (Corps Commander House).

According to FIA officials, the process of profiling the accused has already begun, with a particular focus on their social media accounts. By analyzing digital footprints and gathering substantial evidence, including information related to their political affiliations, the authorities aim to build strong cases against each individual involved in the arson and vandalism, it added.

Preliminary investigations have revealed that many of the accused had been actively promoting the agenda of a specific political party for approximately six months prior to the attack. Moreover, the profiles of all the accused will be made public.

Meanwhile, important details of the attack by miscreants on Jinnah House (also the residence of Corps Commander Lahore) following the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on May 9 last have come to light on Wednesday. According to the timeline of the attacks disclosed by the miscreants, the violent protesters started gathering at Zaman Park, Lahore between 2:35 and 2:40 pm.

Yasmin Rashid and other PTI leaders reached Liberty Chowk, Lahore between 2:55 and 3:20 pm. The protesters turned towards the Cantonment area at 4:05 pm. A group of miscreants was already there at Sherpao Bridge before 4:05 pm.

The first attack was carried out by 25 to 30 people on Jinnah House at 5:15 pm, but it was pushed back. At 5:27 pm, the miscreants re-entered Jinnah House as their number had increased gradually. They ransacked Jinnah House and caused serious damage to it between 5:30 and 6:00 pm. At 6:07 pm, Jinnah House was completely burnt down. At 6:10 pm, further reinforcements of miscreants from the Fortress Stadium reached Jinnah House, and they also played their part in the damage.

At 6:13 pm, another band of the miscreants reached Jinnah House from Dharampura. Between 6:30 and 7:55 pm, around 2,000 people collectively destroyed Jinnah House. The process of destruction continued till 8 pm. Along with this, the miscreants also attacked the office of Military Engineering Services and destroyed it. Apart from this, at more than 200 places in the rest of the country, miscreants destroyed military and civil properties, and the whole of Pakistan witnessed it. These revelations make it clear that the attack on Jinnah House was organised with full planning and coordination, and it was backed by some leaders of the political party.

## IHC bars Imran's arrest in cases till 31st

### Bushra Bibi 'summoned'

LAHORE (INP): National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has summoned Bushra Bibi – wife of former premier and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan – in the Al-Qadir Trust case, tomorrow (Thursday), sources said on Wednesday. A three-member team of the anti-graft body reached Zaman Park to hand over the summons to Bushra Bibi for tomorrow's appearance.

It may be noted that on May 15, Lahore High Court (LHC) granted bail to Bushra Bibi until May 23 in the Al-Qadir Trust case. On Tuesday, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had also summoned Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan and former SAPM on accountability Shahzad Akbar on May 18 and May 22, respectively.

Former prime minister Imran Khan and Shahzad Akbar have been directed to appear before NAB to join the probe along with the related documents. Former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan was arrested by National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in the Al-Qadir Trust case on May 9. The PTI chief was taken into custody by Rangers personnel, who were acting on the National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) warrant, from the premises of Islamabad High Court where the former premier had gone to seek bail in multiple cases registered against him. Later, Islamabad High Court (IHC) barred authorities from arresting PTI Chairman Imran Khan in all cases, even those are undisclosed, registered across the country until Monday (May 15).

High Court where the former premier had gone to seek bail in multiple cases registered against him.

Later on, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) termed the arrest of the former premier and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman 'legal.' Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) Justice Aamer Farooq heard the petition challenging PTI chief's arrest. The court also issued contempt court notices to Interior Secretary and IG Islamabad.

**Imran moves LHC against ECP proceedings to remove him as PTI chief:** The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday fixed for hearing Imran Khan's plea against the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) proceedings to strip him from his position as party chairperson following his disqualification in the Toshakhana reference.

The ECP initiated proceedings to strip PTI chief

Imran Khan of his party's chairmanship following his disqualification in the Toshakhana reference. A five-member bench of the Lahore High Court (IHC) headed by Justice Shahd Bilal Hassan will hear the petitions of Imran Khan on May 19.

The petition pleaded with the court to declare ECP's proceedings seeking removal of Imran Khan as party head "null and void". Earlier, the Lahore High Court (LHC) stopped the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) from removing Imran Khan as chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) following his disqualification in the Toshakhana reference. It is pertinent to note here that in the written judgment, the ECP said: "As per the statement of Khan he had purchased the gifts from Toshakhana paying 21.564 million rupees while the Cabinet Division said that the gifts had a value of 107.943 million.

## Mazari, Maleeka rearrested hours after release

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders Shireen Mazari and Malika Bokhari were on Wednesday arrested again, hours after they were released from custody on Islamabad High Court's (IHC) orders.

Officials, on the condition of anonymity, told media Mazari had been arrested by women personnel of the Punjab Police under Section 4 of the Maintenance of Public Order. Her daughter, Imaan Mazari, confirmed the arrest of her mother a third time on her Twitter handle and said: "They have taken her again". Before Mazari's arrest, her daughter also posted a video showing police officials arriving outside the PTI leader's residence in the federal capital.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) barred the authorities from arresting Mazari and PTI Senator Falak Naz Chitrali. The court had also stopped authorities from further investigating the two politicians when they appeared before the judge hearing a plea seeking relief from further arrest. "No further investigation is needed from Falak Naz and Shireen Mazari," the judge remarked.

Meanwhile, another PTI leader Maleeka Bokhari was also arrested again after she was released from jail. The IHC had earlier on Wednesday ordered the

release of Bokhari. However, the Punjab Police rearrested Malika hours after her release. According to police sources, Bokhari was arrested from outside Adiala Jail and the police shifted took her to an unknown location.

Likewise, PTI leader Mohammad Khan was also arrested again outside the district jail in Jhelum. Punjab police officials took Ali Muhammad Khan into custody and shifted him to an unknown location after he was released on the orders of the IHC.

The arrests are part of the ongoing crackdown on the PTI leaders and workers over their alleged involvement in ransacking and torching military and public properties after party chief Imran Khan's arrest in the Al-Qadir Trust case on May 9. The deadly protests took the lives of at least 10 people and injured several others, with the authorities not only arresting the party leaders but thousands of PTI workers as well. The military and the government have decided that the vandals involved in the attacks on defence installations would be tried under the Pakistan Army Act and Official Secrets Act.

Earlier, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday declared the detention of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Muhammad Khan and Maleeka Bokhari unlawful and issued orders

for their immediate release.

Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb heard the petition against the detention of PTI leaders under the MPO (Maintenance of Public Order). It may be noted that after the arrest of PTI chairman Imran Khan, police detained several leaders, including Asad Umar and Shah Mehmood Qureshi, in view of the fear of disruption of peace.

The law-enforcement agencies launched a massive crackdown on PTI leaders, workers and supporters across the country as a large number of party's protesters including dozens of leaders were arrested and cases were filed against them for resorting to violent protests, torching public as well as private properties and vehicles especially Lahore Corp Commander's house. Ali Muhammad Khan and Maleeka Bokhari were arrested in Islamabad on May 11. As the protests turned violent across the country after the arrest of PTI Chairman Imran Khan in the Al-Qadir Trust case, the Shehbaz-led government tightened the noose around the PTI leaders and activists, arresting key leaders including women. Since Imran Khan's arrest on Tuesday, angry mobs attacked several public and private properties including army-owned buildings, torched vehicles and injured several law enforcers.

## Arrests under 3MPO: PHC adjourns hearing for today

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Musarat Hilali and Justice Waqar Ahmad adjourned hearing till today (Thursday) in case regarding arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers under section-3 of Maintenance of Public Order (MPO), on Wednesday.

The counsel argued that 16 petitioners were arrested on allegation of damaging public properties/national assets during protest against arrest of PTI chairman Imran Khan under 3MPO and registered different cases with accusations. Advocate General KP Amir Javed argued that Article 245 of constitution implemented on extraordinary situation in the

province and added that cases were registered after the collections of evidences in this regard. However, PHC has clipped the writ with similar petitions in this regard before the court and adjourned further hearing till today (Thursday).

Meanwhile, PHC has issued notices to Attorney General and Advocate General of KP to submit reply in writ petition against 3MPO in the province.

The counsel Ali Azeem Advocate appeared before court in writ filed by Naeem Ahmad Khattak Advocate and argued that imposition 3MPO in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is unconstitutional because under this law anyone can be arrest without any reason as well as can issued arrest's warrant, imposition of punishment

lies under the domain of administration.

The counsel argued that power of judiciary is certain in this regard and added that every citizen files writ under Article-199 of constitution. The accuse deprives from regular trail under MPO while Deputy Commissioner can increase timeframe of imprisonment.

In the meantime, Chief Justice Musarat Hilali remarked that if everyone follows law then their no difficulty for anyone and added that warrant under 3MPO after video of violence during protest. However, the counsel requested to abrogate MPO laws which is unconstitutional while PHC issued notices to Attorney General and Advocate General KP to submit reply in this regard.