

**Cop martyred**  
MASTUNG (INP): A police officer has been martyred in an attack on a polio team by armed men on Friday in the rural area of Kali Kariz, a suburb of Mastung district of Balochistan. The armed men, who opened fire on a group of female workers, killed the police officer assigned to protect the anti-polio team. The polio team had embarked on their routine vaccination campaign.

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ISLAMABAD: A delegation of investors from UAE led by Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook al Makhtoum called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## PPP CEC condemn May 9 violence

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: The Central Executive Committee (CEC) of Pakistan People's Party has condemned the orchestrated events of May 9, calling it a black day, while demanding that all persons committing such crimes be brought to justice to face the law, according to the constitution.

The PPP CEC also rejected the ongoing digital census in the country and expressed concerns over the economic situation facing Pakistan and advised the leadership to raise its voice for the economic welfare of the people.

The meeting of the CEC was held on Friday at Bilawal House Karachi, which was jointly chaired by Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and former President Asif Ali Zardari. After the meeting, the Senior Vice President of PPP-P and Federal Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman said that the meeting expressed full confidence over the leadership of party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari. She said that the CEC meeting rejected the ongoing digital census in the country and demanded that the census should be uniform and qualitative throughout the country, adding that the Census was continued in some areas and stopped in other parts.

Ms Rehman said that the CEC appreciated the party chairman's efforts for the country as the foreign minister, adding that because of his efforts, the Pakistan came out of diplomatic isolation, most recently with the effective and full participation of the Foreign Minister in the Shanghai Conference. "The meeting declared that

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's constant support for Kashmiris is an exemplary initiative, while the PPP Chairman's expression of solidarity with Kashmiris even on the occasion of India's holding of the G20 meeting is also a commendable initiative," she added.

Federal Minister for Climate Change said that what happened on May 9, this country had never seen such scenes before. She said that PPP did not take such measures even in the most difficult situations. "After the judicial killing of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto or on the martyrdom of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, it was not done in this way," she added.

Sherry Rehman criticized that PTI's attitude has always been that "If we are around then Pakistan survives" while PPP's thinking is "Pakistan is our identity and comes first" She said that PTI has crossed many red lines. Their mobbed violence is not tolerable for any state. What you saw on May 9 was not an expression of democratic rights, but an attempt at armed and violent challenges to the writ of the state. In response to a question asked by the reporter, she said that the PTI leaders themselves had given orders to spread chaos, but now they are changing their tune. "The PTI people are master of U-turns," she concluded. Minister of State Faisal Karim Kundi, Sindh Minister of Information & Transport Sharjeel Inam Memon, Ali Madad Jatak, Spokesperson Bilawal House Surrender Valasai, Mir Sohrah Mari and others were also present on this occasion.

## Accused protestors to have right of appeal to courts: Asif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said that the accused Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) protestors, to be trialled in the military courts, would have the right to appeal to the High Courts and the Supreme Court.

The defence minister in an interview with an Arab news channel "Al Jazeera" expressed his point of view on the prevailing situation in the aftermath of the May 9 violent protests by the PTI workers after the arrest of their Chairman Imran Khan. Khawaja Asif said the PTI miscreants attacked public and government properties including military installations under a well-thought-out plan. "Such actions are tantamount to waging a war against Pakistan. Those who attacked military installations, military bases and residences of military personnel, their trials will be held under military courts according to the procedure given in the constitution," he added.

He said there was definitely a political crisis in Pakistan but it would be overcome very soon. During the violent incidents in Rawalpindi, Mianwali, and Lahore on May 9, armed groups of PTI attacked military installations, he added. The minister pointed out that there were arrests also made in the past in Pakistan, as he himself was also arrested, adding, "My leader (Nawaz Sharif) and many people of my political party were arrested but we never did politics of violence. We have never attacked military and civilian installations on arrests."

The defence minister said the attackers on military and civilian installations were enemies of the country. "We have political differences, but that does not mean that government and public properties should be attacked," he added. He said that the coalition government was not making new courts and laws, but rather there were already laws existing to hold trials in such cases of violence against state installations.

The government, he said was trying to control the situation, as peace was restored in the cities and the situation would be normal in the next few days. He said that the general elections would be held in due course in October.

The prime minister also extended an invitation to President Raisi to visit Pakistan which he accepted. Briefing the cabinet members regarding the Road to Makkah project signed between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, the prime minister said it would help facilitate the Hajj pilgrims. Under the project, he said, around 26,143 Hajj pilgrims would undergo the immigration process at the Islamabad International Airport and would be exempted from the lengthy process at Saudi airports. The implementation of the project was initiated on Thursday and hopefully it would be extended to Lahore and Karachi airports by next year, he added. The cabinet also approved the establishment of an Insurance Tribunal in Rawalpindi. It would incur no additional expenses as the existing Accountability Court No. 4 would be converted into the Insurance Tribunal. It endorsed the decisions of the National Security Committee made in its meeting on May 16 and those of the Cabinet Committee on Legislative Cases made on May 11.

emphasised the joint efforts to counter cross-border terrorism, he added. He said the import of low-cost electricity from Iran would help uplift the remote areas of Balochistan. He said Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi took a personal interest to ensure the completion of the much-delayed 100MW Gabb-Polan power transmission line within record time. The project would ensure the power supply to southern Balochistan, particularly Gwadar, he remarked.

Similarly, he said, the Mand-Pishin border marketplace would create employment opportunities for the people on both sides of the border and usher in a new era of development. Prime Minister Shehbaz told the cabinet that the Iranian president had expressed special interest in enhancing bilateral trade, besides discussing cooperation in the fields of agriculture, science and technology, and solar energy. A high-level delegation led by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto would visit Iran for further deliberations on the said projects.

## PM orders cut in eatables prices, transport fares

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the authorities concerned to ensure that the impact of a reduction in petroleum prices was shifted to the masses in the form of decreased transport fares and prices of eatables.

The prime minister, chairing the meeting of the Federal Cabinet, asked the Interior Ministry and the district administrations across the country to ensure the reduction in commodities' prices. Calling for strict action against the profiteers, he said the transport fares and eatables' prices should be reduced in proportion to the 11 percent decrease in the petroleum prices announced by the government.

Apprising the Federal Cabinet about his visit to Iran on Thursday, the prime minister said Pakistan desired to enhance cooperation with the neighbouring country in multiple sectors. He told the meeting that the two sides had agreed to improve the security along the 900-kilometer Pak-Iran border. Both sides had

capital as the authorities seek to detain "terrorists" present inside his house. The Punjab government Wednesday claimed that "30-40 terrorists were hiding inside Khan's residence" and gave 24 hours to PTI to hand over these miscreants or face action — but even after the passage of 48 hours, no action has been taken. The government's negotiation team — after securing search warrants from an anti-terrorism court — was at Zaman Park for more than an hour and discussed the SOPs with the PTI chief and his legal team, but they could not make headway.

Khan, according to people privy to the meetings, has put forth some of his conditions for the search, and the delegation will present them before the interim government. The authorities also presented the "evidence" before the PTI chief about the terrorists' — who attacked and smashed and set ablaze military installations — presence inside his residence, but he did not budge.

The authorities have begun a crackdown on PTI workers and leaders after they torched public property and defence installations following the arrest of Khan on May 9, which the army dubbed as "Balck Day".

officer — searching the house," Khan said he feared that if the police personnel, with a heavy contingent, come to raid his house, then they might "plant people or material" at his house "like they did earlier". Following Khan's arrest on May 9 in the Al-Qadir Trust case, his party workers upped the stakes and attacked military installations, including the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi. But Khan has repeatedly denied responsibility and said his party had no role in the violence. "We have repeatedly condemned May 9 attacks," Khan said, clarifying that he has not only condemned the attack on the Lahore Corps Commander House, but every violent incident.

The former prime minister proposed that if the authorities provide evidence that his party workers were involved in the arson attacks, PTI would help arrest them. "Under the guise of their crackdown, they are trying to wipe out the party," he said, adding: "But I will play till the last ball."

Earlier, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has refused to allow a police party to conduct a search operation of party chairman Imran Khan's Zaman Park residence in the provincial

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said Friday that, unlike the authorities' earlier claim, they were not looking for terrorists but only people who were "wanted" at his Zaman Park residence in Lahore. "Now, they are claiming that they are hunting down wanted people and not terrorists," Khan told journalists at his residence after meeting a government delegation that came to his house for mulling over the SOPs for a search operation. "If they want to search for wanted men, then they already have them. They have arrested 7,500 of our 'wanted' workers," Khan said, claiming that anyone associated with his party was a "wanted person" right now.

"I told them: come inside and look for yourself, there's no wanted person here." In his presser, Khan asked the authorities if they wanted to look for terrorists, then why were they insistent on searching his house. "Why would you want to search my house? But, if you want to, I will only allow it if they agree to follow Lahore High Court's earlier order of three people — one government personnel, one person from our side, and a lady

# The Frontier Post

## PM assures govt's every possible support to UAE investors

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday assured that the government would extend every possible support to the investors from the United Arab Emirates. The prime minister, in a meeting with a delegation from the UAE, welcomed their keen interest to invest in the ports and shipping industry of Pakistan. Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook al Makhtoum, a member of the UAE's ruling family, headed the delegation.

Referring to the fraternal ties between the two countries, the prime minister said Pakistan attached great importance to further expanding brotherly ties with the UAE in diverse fields, particularly in trade and investment. Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook al Makhtoum said he was visiting Pakistan in less than two months again with the objective to give further momentum to the UAE's investment in Pakistan.

## Ideology of Pakistan more sacred, powerful than wicked intent of Imran: Shehbaz

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday said the ideology of Pakistan was more sacred and powerful than the wicked and selfish intent of Imran Niazi.

In a tweet on social media platform Twitter, he said he was thinking about the negative effects and consequences of the shameful, tragic and unfortunate incidents of May 9. "The more I think about this dark day, the more my grief and anger grow as we ourselves have become the enemy of the ideology of Pakistan."

After dividing the public, Imran Niazi was busy in ridiculing the state institutions, the prime minister said adding when all his efforts to get the government failed then Imran Niazi attacked the state of Pakistan with his hateful narrative and gangs of rioters. "Maybe he (Imran) did not realize that the ideology of Pakistan is more sacred and powerful than his wicked and selfish intent. With the will of Allah he will face defeat," he added.

The Private Office of Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook Al Makhtoum has a portfolio of privately held group of companies with a focus on infrastructure, energy and agriculture. Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for

Maritime Affairs Syed Faisal Ali Sabzwari, SAPM Dr Jehanzeb Khan, SAPM Syed Tariq Fatemi and senior officials attended the meeting. UAE Ambassador to Pakistan Hammad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al Zaabi was also present in the meeting.

## Siraj escapes suicide attack on convoy, 6 hurt

**F.P. Report**

ZHOB: Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) emir Sirajul Haq on Friday narrowly escaped a "suicide attack" that targeted his convoy in Balochistan's Zhub while six others were injured, according to police.

City police station Station House Officer (SHO) Sher Ali Mandokhail told media that all of the injured were being treated at Civil Hospital, Zhub and one of them was in critical condition. He said Haq's vehicle was partly damaged in the incident while the JI emir remained unhurt. The official added that a body found at the site of the blast was of the "suicide attacker".

In a tweet, the JI also said that Haq — who was visiting the area to address a political gathering — was safe and that the attacker had been killed. "JI emir Siraj reached Quetta on Friday and had to go further to Zhub where he has a political gathering today. When he was entering Zhub and people were welcoming him, a person came and blew himself up," party spokesperson Qaisar Sharif said in a video message.

"Everybody was safe in the suicide attack and there was no loss of lives. According to initial infor-

mation, only some cars have been damaged and a few people have sustained injuries." "The JI leadership is safe," he added. According to SHO Mandokhail, Haq insisted on going to the venue of his political gathering after the blast. "He was given a clearance after additional police and law enforcement personnel were deployed." The official said Zhub Assistant Commissioner Hafiz Tariq had been assigned the JI's security. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif "strongly" condemned the suicide attack, saying he had directed the Balochistan government to investigate the attack from all angles and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Meanwhile, Balochistan Chief Minister Abdul Qudus Bizenjo expressed grief over the suicide blast. "We are grateful to Allah who protected the emir of JI and his colleagues," he said. "It is deeply regretted that five people were injured in the incident." He said terrorists wanted to achieve their evil goals by spreading fear and insecurity in the province, adding that militants and their patrons will not be allowed to succeed.

National Assembly (NA) Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf and Deputy Speaker Zahid

Akram Durrani also condemned the incident, expressing deep grief and sorrow over the loss of lives. They prayed for the victims and extended their condolences to the bereaved, according to a statement on the NA's Twitter.

In his condemnation, PPP co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari called for the arrest of the planners of the attack. He extended his wishes to Haq and prayed for the fast recovery of the injured, a statement on the PPP's Twitter said. PTI Chairman Imran Khan also condemned the attack and prayed for the wounded.

Awami National Party (ANP) chief, Asfandyar Wali Khan strongly condemning the suicide attack on Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Sirajul Haq in Zhub has termed it a conspiracy of the saboteur of peace. In a condemnation statement on Friday, he was of the view that attacks on political leaders and activists were aimed to disrupt the peace of the country. Asfandyar Wali demanded of the government to bring the conspirators to book. Calling for providing best treatment facilities to the injured, he expressed best wishes for Sirajul Haq, others and prayed for their early recovery.

## Authorities searching for 'wanted' people: Imran

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said Friday that, unlike the authorities' earlier claim, they were not looking for terrorists but only people who were "wanted" at his Zaman Park residence in Lahore.

"Now, they are claiming that they are hunting down wanted people and not terrorists," Khan told journalists at his residence after meeting a government delegation that came to his house for mulling over the SOPs for a search operation. "If they want to search for wanted men, then they already have them. They have arrested 7,500 of our 'wanted' workers," Khan said, claiming that anyone associated with his party was a "wanted person" right now.

"I told them: come inside and look for yourself, there's no wanted person here." In his presser, Khan asked the authorities if they wanted to look for terrorists, then why were they insistent on searching his house. "Why would you want to search my house? But, if you want to, I will only allow it if they agree to follow Lahore High Court's earlier order of three people — one govern-

ment personnel, one person from our side, and a lady

capital as the authorities seek to detain "terrorists" present inside his house.

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Khan, according to people privy to the meetings, has put forth some of his conditions for the search, and the delegation will present them before the interim government. The authorities also presented the "evidence" before the PTI chief about the terrorists' — who attacked and smashed and set ablaze military installations — presence inside his residence, but he did not budge.

The authorities have begun a crackdown on PTI workers and leaders after they torched public property and defence installations following the arrest of Khan on May 9, which the army dubbed as "Balck Day".

## SC issues notices in ECP's review petition

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court on Friday issued notices to all the parties in the review petition of the Election Commission Pakistan (ECP) in connection with the decision of the Punjab election case and asked for written submissions.

The SC, in its written order of the first hearing of the case, noted that the Attorney General for Pakistan represented the Federation in the case while Ali Zafar, the lawyer of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, received the court's notice in the court room. The next hearing on the review application will be held on May 23.

## LHC overturns resignations of 70 PTI MNAs

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday overturned the resignations of 70 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf MNAs.

The PTI MNAs, including Fawad Chaudhry, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Pervaiz Khattak and others challenged the acceptance of their resignations as MNAs by NA speaker. Justice Shahid Karim while announcing the verdict on the pleas of the PTI lawmakers, nullified the notifications of the Election Commission of Pakistan and the National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf regarding the acceptance of the resignations.

While directing Fawad Chaudhry, Hammad Azhar, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Shafiqat Mahmood, Riaz Fatiyani and others to appear before the NA speaker to take back their resignations as MNA, the LHC has asked Speaker Ashraf to make a decision after listening to the PTI members. In the petitions, the lawmakers maintained that the speaker did not listen to their viewpoints before accepting their resignations.

Earlier, the Lahore High Court (LHC) suspended the Election Commission of Pakistan's notification that de-notified 43 MNAs of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

## Imran Ismail arrested

KARACHI (PPI): Police on Friday arrested former Sindh governor and PTI leader Imran Ismail in Karachi.

Sources said the PTI stalwart was taken into custody in Defence 8 area of the city and had been shifted to an undisclosed place. The Imran Khan-led party has condemned the arrest, calling it an act of fascism. "Former Governor Sindh @ImranIsmailPTI has been arrested."

## Alvi phones heirs of martyrs

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Friday telephoned the heirs of the martyrs of terrorist attack on May 12 in Muslim Bagh area of Balochistan. The President during the telephonic conversation with the families of Havaladar Abdul Rahim, Muhammad Irfan and Nadeem Iqbal, paid glowing tribute to the martyrs and saluted their services to the nation.



## Minister directs E&T authorities to improve service delivery

RAWALPINDI (APP): Caretaker Minister for Communication and Works, Excise and Taxation and Narcotics Control Punjab, Bilal Afzal here on Friday visited Rawalpindi Excise and Taxation (E&T) Office and directed the authorities concerned to take all possible steps to facilitate the citizens and improve service delivery.

During the visit, the minister visited the offices of Director Excise Rawalpindi and reviewed the working of Motor and Property Tax branches.

Director Excise Rawalpindi, Imran Aslam gave a briefing on the occasion. Elimination of 'tout mafia' from Excise offices was the top priority of the government, Bilal Afzal said. The government departments should improve service delivery so that the 'tout mafia' could be discouraged, he said.

The presence of touts in any department means that the office work is not going well, Bilal Afzal added.

The agents and tout mafia would be monitored across Punjab, the Minister said adding that all the officers of the government departments had been directed to facilitate the citizens and improve service delivery as per Chief Minister's vision.

He further instructed the officers of the Excise department to make all-out efforts to achieve the arrears recovery targets. Special rewards would be given to those who would collect more than the set target, the minister added.

## LWMC CEO visits compost plant

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Waste Management Company Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Babar Sahib Din paid a visit to a compost plant, working under the company, here on Friday.

He said that all efforts were being made to establish an integrated solid waste management system in the provincial capital. In this regard, all resources are being utilised to promote 3Rs [Reduce, Reuse, Recycle] strategy, the CEO said. General Manager Planning Dr Kamran and Manager Compost Plant Muhammad Yasir gave briefing about working of the compost to the visiting official. At the Mehmod Booti plant, composting process is being done to produce indigenous fertiliser called 'Belia'.

The LWMC CEO was informed that 200 tons of waste was being composted daily to make natural fertiliser. During the visit, the LWMC CEO issued instructions that the quality of compost should be improved according to the market requirements. He also ordered for completing the compost registration process at the earliest. He said that green waste was being sent from markets to the compost plant. About protection of people working at the plant, Babar Sahib Din said that safety kits should also be arranged immediately to maintain the health of workers. Those working at the compost plant should be provided with gloves, shoes, helmets and essential items for protection from gases.

# NA speaker visits Jinnah House, condemns May-9 violence

LAHORE (APP): National Assembly Speaker and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Raja Pervaiz Ashraf visited the Jinnah House [Lahore corps commander's house] on Friday and condemned the attack, carried out at the historical building, on May 9.

During the visit, he expressed solidarity with the Pakistan Army, saying that the military leadership showed great patience and tolerance on that fateful day. Otherwise, he added, the situation might have gone out of control.

"This is our country; the Pakistan Army is our protector, and the state is the

guardian of the next generations," he said and wished that his word must spread across the country.

About the Jinnah House incident, he said that "even our enemy could not dare do this, which the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf workers did on May 9." He said that this type of incidents should not happen in any circumstances, no matter how intense disliking one had of anyone else. He said all patriotic Pakistanis love their country, their soldiers and their army. He said that only Indians were enjoying what happened on May 9, and every Pakistani was upset over it.

## Departments asked to hold mock exercises

### F. P Report

PESHAWAR: Secretary Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Department, Abdul Basit, has instructed relevant departments to conduct mock exercises in collaboration with local communities. He said this while presiding over a meeting on Summer Emergencies Coordination-2023.

During the meeting, Secretary Relief instructed the attached departments, including ERS Rescue-1122, PDMA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Civil

Defence Directorate KP to organize regular mock exercises in collaboration with local communities.

Director Civil Defence, DG Academy Rescue 1122, Program Manager GCC PDMA, and other representatives were present at the meeting. To enhance community preparedness, all provincial and district authorities will launch an awareness campaign aimed at sensitizing the public about the importance of developing action plans for both heatwaves and the monsoon season in 2023. The concerned district

administrations are currently finalizing the schedule for conducting mock exercises and awareness sessions for the upcoming monsoon in 2023.

These proactive measures taken by the Relief Department and district administration will ensure better preparedness and response capabilities to mitigate the impact of potential heatwaves and monsoon-related emergencies. By involving local communities in process, the aim is to foster a comprehensive and collaborative approach to disaster management.

## Health minister stresses action plan against dangerous diseases

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Health Minister Dr Javed Akram has stressed a well-coordinated action plan to protect citizens from dangerous diseases.

As the chief guest, he was addressing the 2nd Joint External Evaluation Pakistan 2023 seminar, organised jointly by the World Health Organisation, Ministry of National Health and Department of Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department at a local hotel on Friday.

He said the whole world was using modern research and technology to prevent dangerous diseases. He said the disease had no border or red line and prevention was always better than cure. The provincial health minister said that providing better health facilities to people was the first priority of the Punjab government.

According to the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, primary angio-

plasty facilities were being provided to patients in all cardiology hospitals round the clock. He said that plans to provide better healthcare facilities to the people should not be for a short period of time but on regular basis, adding that plans should always be made on a scientific basis.

He said the Children's Hospital Lahore was the largest hospital in the world in terms of treating children. He said implementation was fundamental to improving health systems in the country.

Provincial Caretaker Minister Dr Jamal Nasir congratulated the World Health Organisation, the Ministry of National Health and the Department of Primary and Secondary Healthcare for organising the seminar. Special Secretary Department of Specialised Healthcare and Medical Education Syed Wajid Ali Shah participated as the guest of honour.

## ‘Sanity must prevail despite political turmoil’

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: 'In the time of unprecedented crisis when even the most revered military institutions of the country have not been spared from both rhetorical and violent attacks, it's high time for the government, the mainstream political forces, the judiciary, the civil-military bureaucracy and all the state stakeholders and public institutions to stick together, set their political grievances and vested interests aside, and act in unison for the sake of the country.'

This was said by Syed Jawaid Iqbal, Chairman of the Society for Global Moderation (SGM), in a special statement released today.

In his statement, Jawaid Iqbal strongly condemned the recent mob attacks on the government buildings and burning of the Lahore Corps Commander's residence, along with military memorials, and the public and private properties.

"Sanity must prevail despite ongoing political turmoil and economic meltdown as no country is challenged or made to suffer such a horrible fate by its own people,"

he added. He also said Pakistan has never seen such a low level of politics when the leading political forces, both in the opposition and within the regime, look hell-bent on questioning patriotic credentials and proving each other as traitors and terrorists. "Pakistan will be the ultimate loser if such vendetta-based politics is allowed to bedevil and threaten the national integrity, coupled with the sanctity of the armed forces, which is a symbol of national integration, security, stability and the strongest bastion of defence," he stated.

According to him, Pakistan's image as a moderate and peace-loving Muslim nation must be established and reinforced whatever the cost. "At a time when Pakistan needs us most, it is, therefore, important for all of us to shun our political differences, stand as a unified nation, and not allow our enemies to take advantage of our weakness," he added.

Founded by Syed Jawaid Iqbal in 2003, the Society for Global Moderation (SGM) is a private-sector think tank dedicated to strengthening tolerance, inter-faith harmony and democracy.



PESHAWAR: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali meets with Alhaj Shahjee Gul Afridi, Sardar Hussain Babak, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha and Mr. Himayat Ullah Khan at Governor House.

## Traffic police introduces initiatives to facilitate public, oversees Pakistanis

### F.P Report

PESHAWAR: On the instructions of Inspector General Akhtar Hayat Khan, City Traffic Police Peshawar has taken an initiative and started working on facility through which overseas Pakistanis can apply online for driving license from anywhere.

Under the supervision of Chief Traffic Officer Qamar Hayat Khan and directions of KP Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Khan, several initiatives have been introduced and now applicants can apply for online appointment for driving license through our official website www.ptpkp.gov.pk and can get suitable for their ease.

City traffic police said that the traffic police has also started working on a process for delivering licences via GPO to applicants at his doorstep at the

cost of only Rs 30.

CTO in his talks with media men also suggested that traffic laws should be made part of curriculum so that every students know the rules and regulations from the very beginning.

Similarly, the Hayatabad learner permit counter was established in 2021 and its function was only to issue learner permits and now the facility has been extended to renewal of license, he added. He also informed the traffic police has also introduced and started working on official mobile App "Rabitta" for saving their time and to facilitate them.

On the directives of IG KP and under the supervision of CTO, a case of traffic wardens rules that was in pending since 2016 has been approved.

In order to create awareness among general public regarding traffic rules, he informed that a comprehen-

sive public awareness has been launched in which traffic education materials are running on BRT electronic boards at all stations and electronic boards being installed at Cantt area.

The city traffic police have also taken another step to make temporary registration of rickshaws and motorbikes in collaboration with KP Excise department and a warning system has also been launched to the violators through kid volunteers. As various improvements have been made with help of station headquarters in parking, roundabouts, U turns, bazaar exits and entry gates to avoid traffic congestion, he added.

He also informed that services of volunteers have been adopted from various schools, colleges and universities in order to educate people regarding traffic rules and regulations.

## Drug peddler held, narcotic seized

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) Sindh in a joint intelligence-based operation, arrested an alleged drug peddler and recovered a huge quantity of drugs from their possession near Dawood Chorang area, here on Friday.

According to a news release on Friday, the arrested namely Abdul Rehman confessed his involvement in supplying drugs in different areas of the megalopolis during preliminary investigations.

Upon his indication, the forces conducted a raid in Sherpao Colony and recovered 228kg hashish, 1kg heroin, a 30-bore pistol with ammunition. The approximate value of the seized drugs was Rs. 15 million. Raids were being conducted to nab his other accomplices.

The arrested along with recovered drugs and weapons had been handed over to ANF for further legal proceedings.

## SEF, RDF collaborate to promote environmental education assisted schools

KARACHI (APP): The

Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) and the Research Development Foundation (RDF) have signed a Letter of Understanding (LoU) to promote environmental education foundation assisted schools at a local hotel here Friday. The LoU was signed between Mukhtiar Ali, Deputy Director Programs at SEF and Ashfaq Ahmad Somroo, Executive Director of RDF, according to a communique on Friday. The main objective of this collaboration is to promote environmental education and establish an avenue of learning in SEF-assisted schools of Tando Allahyar, Sanghar, and Sujawal districts.

The SEF, established under the Sindh Education Foundation Act of 1992, is a statutory organization with a mandate to support education in the province through predominantly pub-

lic-private partnerships.

The RDF, a PCP certified non-profit and non-governmental organization for action research and community development, is registered under the Societies Act XXI of 1860. It focuses on quality education, children's wellbeing, sustainable livelihoods, and climate change in Sindh, Pakistan. The LoU, effective for a period of three years, aims to promote environmental education through a robust learning framework and the Green School Concept.

The project will focus on the education and empowerment of teachers and students. It will involve various activities, including the establishment of Youth Clubs, encouraging discourse on environmental issues, dissemination of information material in the local language for Green Projects, and capacity building of teachers.

It will also pilot Green spaces with effective underground irrigation in schools, install LED lights and solar systems, provide adequate sanitation facilities, and promote waste management through the provision of waste bins. During the LoU signing ceremony, Abdul Kabir Kazi, Managing Director of SEF, highlighted the Foundation's commitment to environmental protection at the grassroots level through the schools.

He expressed hope that the project would create a long-term impact on climate change in SEF schools and communities.

This collaboration between SEF and RDF represents a significant step towards fostering environmental consciousness among students and educators, ultimately contributing to a greener and more sustainable future for Sindh.

## IBCC implements comprehensive reforms for administrative, examination, and automation processes

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: While talking to the Media in a press conference held at IBCC Regional Office Karachi, Secretary IBCC, Dr Ghulam Ali Mallah said that, Inter-Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC) has recently implemented a series of extensive reforms aimed at enhancing administrative efficiency, improving examination procedures, and automating various processes. These reforms are set to transform the education system and simplify processes for all the stakeholders including the staff and the students.

While talking about the administrative reforms Dr Mallah said that, the IBCC has obtained ISO 9001:2015 Certification, signifying their commitment to maintaining high-quality standards in their operations. Additionally, the implementation of the IBCC Act and IBCC Service Rules ensures a structured framework for decision-making and smooth functioning.

He further said that, the IBCC has upgraded their office buildings to provide better infrastructure for their operations, ensuring a conducive environment for their workforce. In addition to this, IBCC has introduced the biometric attendance helps to monitor staff attendance effectively. Furthermore, live surveillance systems have been installed in regional offices to enhance security and monitor activities.

Dr Mallah also briefed about the examination reforms and said that, in a significant move, the IBCC has opened doors for SSC and HSSC private students to register for the science group. This development provides greater opportunities for aspiring students, allowing them to pursue science-related subjects. Moreover, the introduction of two annual exams in a calendar year grants students more flexibility in terms of scheduling their examinations.

To facilitate students across various age groups, the IBCC has also implemented relaxation in the age limit for exam eligibility. This change ensures that students have fair opportunities to pursue their desired educational paths, regardless of their age.

Recognizing the importance of global education,

the IBCC has recognized eight new foreign qualifications, opening pathways for international students to seek equivalency in Pakistan. Additionally, eleven new indigenous qualifications have been recognized, providing recognition and validity to a wider range of local educational programs.

In a shift from absolute marking, the IBCC has introduced a grading scheme for examinations. This change aims to provide a more comprehensive and holistic evaluation of students' performance, focusing on their overall understanding and skill development rather than just numerical scores.

While emphasizing on the importance of IT, Dr Mallah said that, the IBCC has taken significant steps to modernize their processes. The inclusion of all qualifications in the equivalence portal ensures that students can easily access information regarding the equivalence of their qualifications. The establishment of a centralized equivalence database with tracking features allows for efficient record management.

He added, IBCC has introduced QR code-based equiv-

alence certificates to simplify the verification process, making it more secure and convenient. Also, the digital archiving of old records ensures the preservation and easy retrieval of historical data. Additionally, online fee reconciliation, employee performance monitoring, queue management system (QMS), online leave management system, and an enhanced online portal for attestation have been implemented to streamline various administrative tasks.

He said that, in a recent development, the IBCC's introduction of verifiable attestation using QR codes ensures the authenticity and credibility of attested documents, strengthening the trust of stakeholders in the system. Dr Mallah is optimistic about the comprehensive reforms implemented by the IBCC and he believes that these reforms are set to have a far-reaching impact on the education sector in Pakistan. The streamlined administrative processes, examination reforms, and automation initiatives will contribute to a more efficient and transparent education system, benefiting students, educational institutions, and other stakeholders alike.



KARACHI: Secretary Information Sindh Mr. Nadeem ur Rehman Memon on Friday presiding over a meeting with the Directors and officers of Information Department.





**PESHAWAR:** KP Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan talking to a delegation of Tehsil Chairmen of merged districts. Caretaker Ministers Hamid Shah and Manzoor Afridi also present.

## Senior paediatricians urged to play role in polio eradication

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in collaboration with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) conducted an orientation workshop for leading paediatricians of the province to equip them with programmatic knowledge and communication skills for their improved role in shaping public opinion around essential immunization including polio vaccine.

Additional Director General (ADG) Health Services Hazara Region Dr. Faisal Khanzada was the chief guest on this occasion. The workshop was attended by members of the provincial chapter of Pakistan Paediatric Association (PPA) and its cabinet area Coordinator WHO, Dr. Tayyaba, Social & Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) Officer UNICEF Sohail Khan, Media Officer UNICEF Shadab Younas, senior journalist and trainer Aurangzeb Khan.

Additional Director General (ADG) Health Service welcomed all the participants and said that Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) is a declared national health emergency in the country which needs across the board support from all segments of society. Highlighting the critical role of paediatricians in supporting the government to protect our children from this crippling disease and achieve the goal of polio free Pakistan, he said that as health professionals especially doctors are a very significant and respected segment of society, and people from all walks of life listen to them very seri-

ously and act upon their advises, they can play a pivotal role in shaping the public opinion in favour of polio eradication program and specifically in removing public misconceptions and resistance to polio vaccination.

He paid rich tributes to the health workers who braved all odds while visiting door-to-door to administer polio vaccines to the children. He said that surveillance is the foundation for eradication of diseases like polio and emphasized that upon public education, and improved sanitation services to protect the future of our children.

He hoped that this workshop will help the participants to interact with media in a more balanced and effective way, enabling them to educate the public for eradication of polio once and for all. Explaining the program background and the need for engagement with media, Media Officer UNICEF, MS. Shadab Younas shed light on the significance of partnerships & alliance building, background of partnership with PPA, media landscape of KP, media coverage of polio as well as the role the program is expecting the PPA to play in shaping public opinion in favour of polio program and in removing the existing myths and misconceptions among the people about polio vaccination.

SBCC Officer UNICEF Sohail Khan oriented the participants on EPI/ PEI synergy, community engagement, public communication and role of partners like PPA in PEI. Area Coordinator Abbottabad WHO, Dr. Tayyaba shed light on the historical background of polio, types of vac-

cines, the rationale behind repeated doses for eradication of the virus, the global, national and regional polio updates, key challenges in polio eradication initiative specifically in southern KP and the support the polio program is expecting from the senior paediatricians in shaping the public opinion to tackle these challenges effectively.

Highlighting the significance of their role in the context of southern KP, she explained that southern parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are high risk areas as indigenous virus has been detected in the environment there that needs a lot of focus and support from the partners such as PPA to raise risk perception in the community and convince caregivers to ensure two drops of polio vaccine to the children in every campaign. Senior journalist and trainer, Aurangzeb Khan, while taking session on media handling techniques, discussed various tools and tips for effective communication with media. He guided the participants on media tools like press conferences, media releases, interviews, talk shows and sounds of tape (SOTs).

He shed light on the need for preparedness and maintaining confidence before speaking with media and emphasized on how to respond to ambush questions from the journalists. Through practical exercises, he explained to the participants on how to respond to the questions of media persons during the press conferences, interviews and talk shows. At the conclusion of the workshop, ADG Health Services Dr. Faisal Khanzada handed over shields and certificates to the participants.

## Power suspension notified

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Friday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Jamrud Grid Station on 21st and 28th May from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11KV BSI Steel and Mohmand Steel feeders will face inconvenience.

It said that power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Sheikh Muhammadi-Rehman Baba Transmission Line on 20th May from 8:00 AM to 2:00PM, resultantly consumers of 132 KV Rehman Baba and Peshawar City grid connected with 11 KV feeders will face inconvenience.

The Power Supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Peshawar University Grid Station on 20th, 23rd, 27th and 30th May from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV University Campus, Cnal Town, Malakandher, Engineering, Regi, Taj Abad, Taj Abad 2, Agriculture, Mera Achini, HMC, Ring Road, Danish Abad, Ghrir Abad, Rahatabad 1, CMB and Abdara feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Mardan Grid Station on 20th, 24th and 29th May from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. due to which consumers of 11 KV Shamsi Road and Canal Road feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Mansehra Grid Station on 22th, 24th, 25th and 30th May from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Gazikot, Ahsan Shaheed, City 1,2, Qalandar Abad, Attar Sheehsa, Shaheed, Lassar Nawab, City 3, Murad Pur, Khaki, Shankiyari, Balakot, BOI, Ghari Habib Ullah, Banda Pir Khan, APS, Jinnah Abad feeders will face inconvenience.

## Two killed

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: At least two people were killed while another critically injured as a result of firing in Lakki Marwat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Friday.

Police said the incident occurred in Shah Hassain Khel area of the district where assailants opened firing at the rivals. Two people were killed on the scene while another sustained bullet injuries. Those killed were identified as Matullah and Farmanullah while the injured as Karamatullah. The dead and injured have been shifted to Government City Hospital.

# We need to learn from Chinese leadership: Minister

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Law, Parliamentary Affairs, Human Rights, Archives & Libraries, Justice (Retd.) Irshad Qaiser has said that Pakistan-China relations are exemplary and we should learn from the China's Leadership and Peoples dedication and devotion for their loving home land and their vital role in China's stand on international stage with pride. She said the recent past China's global positive role for peace and economic development is a guideline for us.

This was stated by her while speaking at cake cutting and Friendship Awards distribution ceremony organized by Pakistan China Friendship Association (PCFA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-Pakistan and China Study Centre (CSC) University of Peshawar jointly.

Irshad Qaiser said, "This is high time to learn from China's experience in our fields of life and this learning will be greatly helpful for our social economic development and to counter the challenges we are facing. She mentioned that today, while celebrating the 72 anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, we should think about what we have learned from China, as we know that Pakistan and China are very close neighbors connecting mountains, rivers, and islands. A large number of Pakistani students are learning at various reputed Chinese Universities. They are bringing new knowledge in their respective fields and contributing to the social and eco-

nomie prosperity of the countries."

The minister said that we should understand the importance rather significance of these relations in the best interest of the homeland. Once again, I appreciate China Study Center, UoP, and Pakistan China Friendship Association, KP for working with dedication and devotion and for the promotion of higher education between the two countries, she added.

The event was graced by apart from Chief Guest, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Idress Vice Chancellor University of Peshawar, Mr. Ahmad Hassan Chairman Governor Inspection Team, Prof. Dr. Shah Jehan Vice Chancellor Iqra University, Mr. Furrak Saqlan Chairman KP Text Book Board, Dr. Zahid Anwar, Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani Secretary-General PCFA and Prof. Dr. Kausar Takreem Coordinator CSC apart from large number of Friends of China various walks of life and UoP. Madam Bao Zhong Counselor from the Embassy of People's Republic of China joined the event as Key Note Speaker on video link from Embassy.

Coordinator CSC, Prof. Dr. Kausar Takreem said that China and Pakistan have a friendly relationship. Both countries supported each other through thick and thin. She mentioned that CSC is thankful to both Federal and Provincial Governments, HEC, Vice Chancellor, UoP, and Chinese Embassy Islamabad for its wholehearted support to the CSC. Secretary General PCFA KP, Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani in his speech said that Sino-Pakistan Relations have strengthened over time.



**PESHAWAR:** Activists of Ahle Sunnat Waljamaat holding banner during a rally to show solidarity with Pakistan Army.

## Husn-e-Qirat and Naat Khawani competitions held

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Islamic Society of Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar organized Husn-e-Qirat and Naat Khawani competitions at Dr. Hafizullah Auditorium.

Dr. Mehreen Rehman Assistant Professor IPS and Miss Samia Syed Leader Islamic Society hosted the event. Internationally renowned Qari Abdul Rauf Madani was the chief guest of this spirited event, while the director of the Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (IPS) Dr. Sami Siraj, faculty, and large numbers of students were also present at the occasion. Students of various institutes of the university including INS, IPM&R, IPS, IMH&BS, and IPH&SS participated in Husn-e-Qirat and Naat Khawani competitions while Qari Fawad Hussain and Qari Inayatullah were the judges of the competition.

According to the results, INS student Muhammad Khalid won the first position, IPM&R student Jawaria Zahid secured the second position and IPS student Muhammad Ibrahim grabbed the third position in the Husn-e-Qirat competition, whereas Muhammad Faran, a student of INS, clinched the first position, Nasir Ali of IPS stood at second position and Palwasha, a student of IPM&R, got the third position.

At the end of the ceremony, all the position holders were awarded with certificates while the chief guest was presented with an honorary shield by the director IPS on behalf of faculty and students. Qari Abdul Rauf Madani, while addressing the ceremony as a chief guest, said that such positive and healthy activities in educational institutions are the need of the hour.

He said that the Holy Qur'an is the last inspired holy book of Allah, which is obligatory for all Muslims to understand, read, follow, and convey to others. He said that the recitation of one letter of the Qur'an is rewarded with ten good deeds, so we must give some time in our twenty-four hours of life to the recitation and translation of the Holy Qur'an.

He said that naat is an excellent way of expressing love and devotion to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the interest of our students in naat khwani is a practical expression of love and devotion to the Holy Prophet (PBUH). He expressed the hope that such positive activities will not only be continued in Khyber Medical University but students from other public and private institutions affiliated to KMU will also be given an opportunity to participate in them.

## Milk sellers involved in adulteration arrested

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Assistant Commissioner Peshawar, Sayyeda Zainab Naqvi on Friday carried out an operation against milk sellers involved in adulteration in Shaheen Town of University Road and arrested seven milk sellers.

According to the district administration spokesman, complaints were received regarding the sale of adulterated milk in Jahangir Abad and Shaheen Town of University Town. The assistant commissioner while taking prompt action on the complaints paid a surprise visit to the areas and arrested seven milk sellers for selling water-mixed milk.

The AC accompanied by Veterinary Supervisor of Livestock, Dr. Naem ul Hassan inspected the quality of the milk and found that water and ice were being mixed with it. Some of the milk sellers were also found selling milk at exorbitant prices.

## PM expected to visit Radio Pakistan building

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is expected to visit the burnt building of the Radio Pakistan, Peshawar today.

The building of the national broadcaster came

under attack on May 9, 2023 where Chaghi mountains model was destroyed in its premises and later put on fire the entire building on May 10, 2023. The prime minister would be briefed on the losses to the building, record, transmission and rehabilitation efforts.

The Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would also visit Governor House Peshawar where he would be given briefing on the law and order situation and would also meet political leadership of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



**PESHAWAR:** Participants sitting on the stage during Research Study organized by National Influencers.

# Radio Pakistan's attack: Rare Hand written dramas scripts with catalogs, songs disks burnt to ashes

PESHAWAR (APP): By attacking Radio Pakistan's building on May 10, the miscreants have deprived millions of listeners of the rare famous Pashto and Urdu songs of the renowned musicians and singers besides destroying handwritten dramas scripts authored by famous writers.

Besides destruction of official records and equipment, the original hand written famous dramas scripts authored by renowned writers and famous Pashto and Urdu songs disks songs sung by Ghazal mestro Ahmad Khan, Khyal Muhammad, Mashooq Sultan and Rafique Shinwari were also burnt to ashes during violent mob attack on the national broadcaster on May 10.

Habibun Nabi, Program Manager, Radio Pakistan Peshawar told APP on Tuesday that the original rare hand-written Pashto and Urdu dramas' scripts authored by famous writers Hamaza Khan Shinwari, Dr. Muhammad Azam Azam, Younas Qayasi, Arbab Abdul Wakeel, Hamayun Huma, Sahir Afridi, Begum AR Daud, Zaitoon Bannu and Syed Rasool Rasa were destroyed by the rioters. He said scripts of hundreds

of rare dramas along with catalogs and books on different topics were also put on fire by violent mobs after they burnt the Radio Pakistan's central library located on its third floor with piles of ashes scattered all around the building.

Besides around 1500-2000 historic books, the masterpiece literary books of the renowned Sufi Poet Rehman Baba and freedom fighter Khushal Khan Khattak were also torched. Habibun Nabi said the rare picture of renowned broadcasters Abdul Jan Magmoom and Aftab Ahmed, who announced Pakistan's independence day at midnight of August 13-14, 1947 in Pashto and Urdu besides Qari Muhammad, who recited Holy Quran respectively, was no more. Similarly, the performance pictures of Ghazal mestros and dramas writers including Hamaza Khan Shinwari, Ajmal Khattak, Khatar Gaznvai, Samandar Khan Samandar, Qalandar Mohmand, Mumtaz Ali Shah, Shahzad Khan Johar and Abdullah Jan Magmoom alias Marchakay were set ablaze.

Radio Pakistan had started its transmission from a room at civil secretariat Peshawar in 1935 after the first radio

transmitter gifted by Radio inventor Markoni to Sir Shabzada Abdul Qayyum Khan during the latter London was installed here. Later, Radio Pakistan was shifted to the old Radio Pakistan's building (now Supreme Court registry) on Khyber Road in 1942.

The national broadcaster was later shifted to the existing building after it was inaugurated by the former President General Ziaul Haq in 1985. Tufail Muhammad, program manager of Radio Pakistan said that historic performance pictures of great Pashto singers, Ahmad Khan, pride of performance Mashooq Sultan, musician/singer Rafique Shinwari, pride of performance Khayal Muhammad and Fazl Rabi were also purnt to ashes by the mob whom have no regard for culture and humanity.

Besides dramas and literary works, he said rare feature documentaries on national and international issues besides human interest stories, religious books and national songs that were converted from conventional taps to computers for digitalizations were also severely damaged. "Radio Pakistan is the custodian of our cultural heritage. Attack on this

historic building was tantamount to an assault on our national heritage, culture, dramas and music," said Ghazal maestro and pride of performing, Khyal Muhammad while talking to APP.

Associated with Radio Pakistan for several decades, Khyal Muhammad said that resuming of transmissions of Radio Pakistan Peshawar within hours after the attack showed the hard work, dedication and professional commitment of its officers and employees besides passed a strong message that the national broadcaster's voice could not be silenced through such terror incidents. Tufail Ahmad, program manager PBC told APP that after the attack, the Radio Pakistan Peshawar's transmissions were resumed from four transmission lines including 1260 KHz, 24 hours from FM 101, Soratul Quran and News- Current Affairs within few hours on emergency basis and was smoothly continued providing quality entertainment, information and education services.

Amin Mashall, a newscaster in a private TV channel who is also associated with Radio Pakistan Peshawar since 2012 said that the attack on

Radio Pakistan Peshawar and APP Office was an attempt to silence the media and deprive people from information. He said ransacking and burning of the vehicle of Radio Pakistan and APP's employees was an attempt to terrorize journalists and stop them from their professional duties.

He said that Radio Pakistan's building was set on fire during PTI's workers protest demonstrations and it was unfortunate that not a single leader of PTI had visited the national broadcaster to express sympathies with its employees. He said Radio Pakistan was the voice of the nation and demanded for its immediate reconstruction in its original shape. Tufail Khan said that disks containing pre-partition Pashto and Urdu songs of 1901-1947 were saved, however disks of digitalized songs were destroyed due to burning of computers. Similarly, the voice record disks of the religious scholars including renowned Maulana Saeeduddin Sherko were also destroyed.

Meanwhile, the Radio Pakistan's administration has opened the burnt Radio Pakistan Peshawar for general public, students and youth to show the scale of devastation and would

continue to open for the public till upcoming Friday. Except for a few rooms of its basement and studios, the entire building was ransacked and burnt down with piles of black ashes in almost all rooms of the four storey building.

The students and civil society are coming to the burnt Radio Pakistan's building and condemning the attack on it. "The devastation to this historic building was beyond of my imagination, highly condemnable and culprits involved in it should be given exemplary punishment," said Ehtisham Qaiser of Wapda Town Peshawar. He said that bruning of Chaghi mountains model constructed in memory of May 28, 1998 explosions in its premises of PBC by the rioters was highly deplorable, saying it exposed the evil mind set of the anti state elements. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Chief Minister and Prime Minister's adviser Engr Amir Muqam and others leadership have recently visited Radio Pakistan's building and expressed solidarity with its employees. They assured full cooperation and support to Radio Pakistan administration.





## In brief

### 4 dacoits killed in encounter

GHOTKI (INP): Police have claimed to kill four dacoits in an alleged encounter in the Mirpur Mathelo area of Ghotki district on Friday. According to the media reports, police on having solid information pursued the dacoits who were involved in killing of a policeman. The dacoit opened fire on police party and in response police also fired on the bandit. During exchange of firing in the Tangoi area, three dacoits were killed on the spot, whereas other along with an injured dacoit faded away in the Katcha area. The police claimed that the injured dacoit also died of severe injuries whose dead body was taken away by his accomplices. The police have completed the identification process and identified two dacoits as Khan Muhammad and Badlukosh belonged to Sadiqabad and the other was from Ghotki respectively. All the dacoits were wanted to Sindh and Punjab police for several cases of heinous crimes. The police have shifted the dead bodies to hospital for further medico-legal procedure.

### Man shot dead over old enmity

HYDERABAD (INP): unknown assailants attacked over a man and shot him down by bullets in Hyderabad district of Sindh, police confirmed on Friday. According to the police, the incident occurred in Model town area of Qasimabad, a man was killed by the firing of unknown suspects. The deceased victim was identified as Nasrullah Khaaskheli, a resident of Shehdadkot. Upon being informed the police arrived at the crime scene and shifted the dead body to hospital for medico-legal procedure after taking it into custody. Police also collected all possible evidences from the scene. The SHO of the area told that Police suspects the incident is induced by an old enmity. And it looks target killing case.

### Police solve blind murder case

SHUJABAD (INP): Police resolved the mystery of a blind murder case and traced out the suspects involved in the murder of a 5 years child in Shujabad, police confirmed on Friday. According to the media reports, woman along with his brother killed a 5 years old boy whose uncle had rejected the marriage proposal of the woman. The woman killed the child to take revenge of her marriage proposal rejection. The suspects were identified as Tehzeeb and her brother Danish. The suspects killed the child and kept his dead body in a room. After several hours of the disappearance, the victim's family reported the matter to the police on Apr 19th. Upon being informed about the police arrival the suspects threw the dead body of the youngster in adjacent plot. The police after recovering the dead body sent it to hospital for post-mortem examination. The autopsy report revealed that child died due to suffocation and the police started investigating the matter in a specific direction and was able to trace the suspects.

### Four dead in cylinder blast

NAROWAL (PPI): At least four people died in a cylinder blast in a restaurant in Narowal City on Friday afternoon. Rescue teams have recovered the dead bodies from the restaurant that got fire after the blast. The officials said that the rescue operation is continued as several people may still be inside the restaurant.



TANK: Officials inquiring health after an injured on police van attack at hospital. — F.P. photo

## Violence on May 9 planned: Senator Samina

### F.P. Report

QUETTA: The awful events of May 9 and the subsequent situation have made it clear that this whole game was hatched against Pakistan, Pakistan forces and top institutions under a well-thought-out plan and a big conspiracy against the country. These views were expressed by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri in one of her statements. She said that Imran Khan and his followers had started planning for this day long ago. From the day Imran Khan stepped down from power on the basis of his poor performance, this liar has started a series of accusations against high institutions and personalities and the minds of PTI workers against high national institutions, especially the Pakistan Army. Preparations were being made which we have seen in the last few days in the form of violence and arson and attacks on sensitive installations.

No matter how many such incidents are condemned, she said that Imran Khan seduced the party workers through his speeches to make his politics shine and poisoned the raw minds against higher institutions, which is a dangerous act and these negative tactics are not acceptable to anyone. These

things can't even be called a part of politics.

She said that Imran Khan and his followers used the youth and patriotic citizens to spread disorder and chaos in the country. Imran Khan was never a politician. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that Fitna Khan created all this drama to save his politics and corruption, in which the country had to suffer a serious loss. PTI workers should now understand that Imran Khan is only working on the agenda of personal interests and enemies. One such work should be mentioned in which the good of the country has been done.

What was once a favorite for this person has now become the worst for this lying and deceitful person? This self-made person has given importance only to himself. She further said that after the May 9 tragic incidents and the arrest of PTI workers in riots, this person and his followers once again left the emotional workers of PTI alone. This is the politics of this person to incite the poor and common workers against the institutions and get their own interests. The people of Pakistan have recognized this liar and now they will not listen to anything he says.

Senator Samina Zehri said that PTI workers should also think that the

person who leaves their side in difficult times is their leader, how can it be? Such a person is not at all worthy of being called a leader who refuses to accept the workers as his own workers in difficult times. Where is the justice of putting it on stake? The party was named Tehreek-e-Insaf, but nothing called Insaf is visible. Perhaps this is the reason why, after these violent and anti-army incidents, sensible people have understood Imran's anti-national statements and left the party out of shame. Decaying is taking place which is the negation of Imran Khan's narrative.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri appealed to the entire Pakistani nation to do a complete social boycott and identify those elements who are involved in these anti-national activities so that they can be truly punished. She said that those planning to damage sensitive installations and national heritage, those who incited PTI workers on all these riots and set ablaze do not deserve any concession. These people have made a joke of Pakistan all over the world. Such people should be severely punished by military courts and the perpetrators of such heinous conspiracy and those who are part of it should be made a lesson so that no one can think of doing such an act in future.

## Four killed in violent incidents

FAISALABAD (INP): At least four people including a woman and a robber were killed in separate incidents of violence in different localities of Faisalabad on Friday.

Police said that the first incident took place in Chak 162 RB, Chak Jhumra police station jurisdiction where accused Abbas strangled to death his wife Nazia Bibi for honour and fled the scene.

A one-year old child Qais s/o Muneer died after he fell into Rajbah near Chak 405 GB in Tandlianwala area. In police encounter near Kaliyana Chowk, a robber wanted in various incidents of robbers identified as Saddam s/o Saadi was killed. Unidentified culprits strangled to death 60-year-old Muhammad Khaleej s/o Muhammad Aslam near Moti Keekar stop Chak 474 GB. The bodies of all incidents were shifted to local hospitals and police after registering separate cases started investigations.

## Civil society arranges solidarity rally

### F.P. Report

LARKANA: A rally was held by the civil society in Larkana in connection to solidarity with Pakistani forces which passed through various roads of the city and reached the press club, on Friday.

Civil society activists Ghulam Mohy-U-Din Mangi, Akhtar, Iqbal Ahmad Bhutto and others said that the martyrs of the Pakistan Army have sacrificed their lives for the country's survival and national security, for which we pay tribute, while a political organization against the same forces.

Vandalizing the residence of the commander of Jinnah House Lahore and the memorials of other Pakistani forces as part of a conspiracy is evidence of anti-nationalism, which we strongly condemn. No one could raise a finger against the forces.

## Trader's passport issues to be resolved

### F.P. Report

MARDAN: Deputy Director Passport Mardan Office Farhan Khan along with Assistant Director and staff members visited Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and met Zahir Shah President Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI), on Friday.

In the meeting, a detailed discussion on issues related to passport to the businessmen and industrialists was held. Mardan Chamber President Zahir Shah said that traders are the backbone of the country's economy. He said that there are a number of problems related to the passport to the businessmen which need to be solved in an effective manner because businessmen and industrialists play an important role in stabilizing the country's economy for which they pay various types of taxes. To provide facilities to the traders and industrialists, a separate facility disk is the need of hour to provide quick services without wasting time.

# Solidarity rally in favour of Pak Army held in Dir

### F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Anjuman Tajir Timergara and the Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCI) Lower Dir staged a solidarity rally in favour of the Pakistan army at Timergara here the other day. Local traders and civil society members participated in the event.

They were carrying banners and placards inscribed with slogans in favour of the Pakistan army and its officers. After passing through the bazaars, the participants reached the Shaheed Chowk and chanted slogans in favour of the Pakistan Army.

The CCI district president Mian Noor Alam, president Anjuman Tajir Timergara Haji Anwarud Din, general secretary Haji Liaq Zada, Javed Iqbal, Wajid Shoaib, Imran Khan and others addressed the rally. They condemned the May 9 violent protests and vandalism and attacks on military installations, national assets and FC School and College Balambat. They termed the May 9 protests as shameful and said that the country had been brought into disrepute by those actions.

They said that the enemies of Pakistan were trying unsuccessfully to give the impression that the people were against the Pakistan Army by attacking the military installations,

but this was not the reality. They said the whole nation stood by its army and would no longer tolerate such acts in future. The speakers said that the population of Lower Dir was 1.6 million and only 3000 to 4000 people had protested against the army. They said that the majority of the masses were fully supporting the national army and respected its martyrs and their monuments.

**Honour killing:** A youth and a young lady were killed in an honour related case near the Nadra office at Mian Banda in the jurisdiction of Timergara police station here the other day, police and residents said. They said the deceased girl belonged to Chinarkot Maidan while the youth to Kas Mayar in Jandol. The police meanwhile claimed to have arrested the attacker identified as Naseer, brother of the deceased girl and a resident of Lal Qila Maidan and recovered the weapon used during the crime from his possession. The deceased couple is stated to be relatives and they had married on their free will without the parents' consent.

**Stray dogs:** The Lower Dir chapter of Jamaat-i-Islami on Thursday demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and authorities of the health department to ensure supply of anti-rabies vaccines. Talking to local journalists the

JI district general secretary engineer Yaqub ur Rehman said that over 20 people including children and women had been affected by stray dogs in different areas of the district like Maidan, Haya Serai, Lajbok and Samarbagh while the government hospitals were short of anti-rabies vaccines and immunoglobulin. He said the affected person had to purchase the vaccine at Rs 8000 privately. He said the health department should take its notice and ensure the supply of anti-rabies vaccines.

**Provision of anti-rabies vaccines demanded:** The Lower Dir chapter of Jamaat-i-Islami demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and authorities of the health department to ensure supply of anti-rabies vaccines.

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# Rallies in favour of Pak Army in Buner

### F.P. Report

BUNER: The locals have initiated rallies in favour of Pak Army when an individual Rafudun of Cheena with kids in Swari Bazaar staged demo in support of Pak Army and then one Hashdamand mobilized locals for staging such like demo in Swari Bazaar on Friday. The demonstrators were carried white flags and play cards inscribed on slogans in favour of Pak Army.

The participants were also raised full throat slogans in support of Pak

Army. The facilitators of the rallies were of the view that there was unity among locals and all of them were supporting Pak Army. They blasted those were attacked Army and state installations on May 9 this year. They branded them anti state and also named them political terrorists who ransacked national assets just for political gain and appeasing masters.

They were crystal clear and defended Pak Army and state institutions and state assets. They pointed

out there was no gape between state institutions and patriotic citizens of Pakistan.

They made it clear patriotic citizens would never indulge in such a sabotage bids rather would defend national security agencies and installations because the Pak Army was true defender of Pakistan and Pakistan was true home land of patriotic citizens for which they would always be there and shoulder by shoulder the Pak Army against any aggression inside and out side.



QUETTA: Activists of Sunni Ulema Council holding a banner during a rally to condemn May 9 incidents.

# Reading Club to be setup in Mardan public library

### F.P. Report

MARDAN: Deputy Commissioner has said that book reading club will be started soon in Mardan Public Library and all issues related to library will also be solved on priority basis.

On the special instructions of Commissioner Mardan Division Mardan Yusuf Rahim, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Rahman visited Public Library along with Assistant Commissioner Madam Ayesha Tahir, on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner Mardan made a detailed inspection of Public Library Mardan, reviewed the facilities in the library and met the students and management and inquired about the problems faced by them regarding books availability and friendly environment. Deputy Commissioner Mardan also reviewed various parts regarding the establishment of Book Reading Club.

Deputy Commissioner issued special instruction to assistant commissioner Mardan to ensure the immediate establishment of Book Reading Club and available all the facilities regarding books and other facilitation. The Deputy Commissioner, while expressing his thoughts, said that libraries are displays of knowledge and education, the importance and usefulness of libraries have been recognized by civilized nations in every era. Deputy Commissioner said that in light of the instructions of Commissioner Mardan Division Yusuf Rahim, the district administration is trying hard to start a book reading club in the public library of Mardan as soon as possible, while solving all the problems of the existing library on a priority basis.

**Al-Khadmit to home 200 orphans:** Al Khidmat Foundation laid the foundation stone of Aghoos Home

for 200 orphans in Mardan. President of Al Khidmat Foundation Pakistan Prof. Dr. Hafeez ur Rehman along with star player of national cricket team and brand ambassador of Al Khidmat Foundation Fakhr Zaman and Mayer Mardan Humayt Ullah Mayar laid the foundation stone of Aghosh Home for sponsoring 200 orphans in Mayar Road Mardan. The construction will cost 16 crore rupees and the project will be completed in two years.

In this regard, the foundation stone laying ceremony of Aghosh Home was held in Ajhan Colony, Mayar Road, Mardan, which was presided over by former member of the National Assembly, Maulana Dr. Ata ur Rehman. The Chairman of Aghosh Homes, Air Marshal Retired Farooq Habib, Caretaker Provincial Minister for Food, Shiraz Akram Bacha were present in the ceremony.



QUETTA: Balochistan Minister Mubeen Khan Khilji addressing a press conference.





# Eyes on Assad as Arab summit kicks off in Saudi Arabia



JEDDAH (AFP): Arab leaders are to welcome Syrian President Bashar al-Assad back into the fold Friday at a summit in Saudi Arabia that is also expected to confront conflicts in Sudan and Yemen.

Assad arrived in the Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah for the Arab League gathering, his first since the bloc suspended Syria in 2011 over the brutal crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators that led to civil war. "We express our happiness and pleasure to be on the kingdom's soil. This summit is very important," Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad said after reaching Jeddah earlier this week, adding that the Syrian delegation was "here to make this summit a success". The summit in Saudi Arabia comes at a time when the world's biggest oil exporter is flexing its diplomatic muscle across the Middle East and beyond. It follows a frenetic stretch of high-stakes diplomacy triggered by the kingdom's surprise Chinese-brokered rapprochement deal with Iran announced in March. Since then, Saudi Arabia has restored bilateral ties with Syria and ramped up a push for peace in Yemen, where it leads a military coalition against the Iran-backed Huthi rebels.

Riyadh also played a leading role in evacuating civilians from Sudan when fighting erupted there last month, and it is currently hosting representatives of Sudan's warring parties in a bid to hammer out a ceasefire. "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has become, in the eyes of all observers, the peacemaker and the icon of harmony, calling for an end to differences and the elimination of conflicts," Kuwaiti writer Jawad Ahmed Bukhamseen gushed in an op-ed this week in the private Saudi newspaper Okaz. But not every country in the region has been eager to mend ties with Assad.

Qatar said this month it would not normalise relations with Assad's government but also noted this would not be "an obstacle" to Arab League reintegration. The emir of Qatar, a fierce critic of the Syrian leader, announced he would lead the Gulf state's delegation to Jeddah. While the Qatari government has called for accountability for "war crimes" in Syria, the emir made no comment on Qatar's expectations for the summit. Beyond challenges facing the Middle East, the Arab League summit should also take on issues like the war in Ukraine and "the global economic crisis", Khaled Manzlawiy, the bloc's assistant secretary general for political affairs, wrote in the Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper. "Indeed, the entire world is undergoing a perilous stage in history as the maps of international relations are redrawn," he wrote, adding that Arab unity can give the region "a voice that is heard not only in the region but also across the globe".

That jibes with Saudi Arabia's recent moves to diversify its global ties, deepening relations with China and coordinating with Russia on oil policy even as it maintains a close bond with the United States, its long time security partner. Global pre-occupation with the war in Ukraine could amount to "a kiss of life for the League to play its role as a coordinating station for efforts to resolve conflicts in the region," Egyptian analyst Rabha Seif Allam told AFP. From Riyadh's perspective, a successful summit would involve concrete commitments from Syria on issues including war refugees and captagon trade, said Torbjorn Soltvedt of the risk intelligence firm Verisk Maplecroft. Yet Arab League summits "have more often than not been characterised by internal disagreement and indecisiveness," he added. "The bar for success will therefore be low."

## ‘Overvalue of Ukraine arms aid by \$3 billion’

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The US Department of Defence overestimated the value of weapons and other military equipment provided to Ukraine by approximately \$3bn, officials said, an error in accounting that may lead the way for more arms being sent to Kyiv. In many of the military aid packages sent to Ukraine, the defence department opted to draw from existing US stockpiles of older, existing items because it should ship them faster, officials said.

The accounting error was the result of assigning a higher than warranted value on older weaponry that was taken from those existing stocks. "During our regular oversight process of presidential drawdown packages, the Department discovered inconsistencies in equipment valuation for Ukraine. In some cases, 'replacement cost' rather than 'net book value' was used, therefore overestimating the value of the equipment drawn down from US stocks," Pentagon

spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said. A defence official told the Associated Press that the Pentagon is still trying to determine exactly how much the total value of the surplus will be. The Reuters news agency cited a US defence official who said it was possible the amount of overvalued weaponry could grow beyond \$3bn as the Pentagon examines the situation more thoroughly. The result may mean that the defence department will have more available funds to send to Ukraine as a much-anticipated offensive against Russian forces nears. Addressing the cost anomalies, a senior defence official explained to Reuters that in the case of 155 mm ammunition for Howitzer artillery, of which more than 1.5 million shells have been sent to Ukraine, each cost about \$800 at current prices. But the actual cost of each shell, which have been delivered to US military stockpiles each year over several decades, should be averaged out for

a much lower price, the official said.

To date the US has provided Ukraine nearly \$37bn in military aid since Russia invaded in February 2022. The bulk of that has been in weapons systems, millions of munitions and ammunition rounds, and an array of trucks, sensors, radars and other equipment pulled from Pentagon stockpiles and sent quickly to Ukraine. "The Department of Defense's change in evaluating the costs of arms sent to Ukraine is a major mistake," said US Senator Roger Wicker, the top Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee. "Our priority should be a Ukrainian victory over Putin. Unilaterally altering military aid calculations is an attempt at deception and undermines this goal," he said. Singh, the Pentagon spokeswoman, said the accounting error had not constrained US support to Ukraine or hampered the ability to send aid to the battlefield.

## Ecuador legislators launch lawsuit as elections eyed for August

QUITO (Agencies): Members of Ecuador's political opposition have launched a lawsuit challenging a move by the country's president to dissolve the National Assembly instead of facing an impeachment proceeding. The lawsuit, filed, comes as the country's electoral court said Ecuador could hold elections as soon as August.

A day earlier, Lasso had invoked a quirk in Ecuador's constitution known as the "two-way death", which both dissolved the National Assembly and triggered new presidential and legislative elections. "We require, we demand an immediate pronouncement from the Constitutional Court," Virgilio Saquicela, the assembly's former

head, said of the lawsuit in an interview with the Associated Press. It is one of several legal challenges to Lasso's move. The lawsuit argues that Lasso's action violated the constitution because the country was not experiencing any social upheaval. Instead, Lasso's detractors have argued, the president chose to disband the chamber merely to avoid his own potential ouster.

The president's decision came a day after the opposition-controlled National Assembly began its second impeachment proceedings against Lasso, following a failed attempt last year. The impeachment hearing centred on allegations that Lasso intentionally turned a blind eye to an embezzlement scheme related to the

state-owned oil transportation company Flopec. Opposition lawmakers have said the issue is among a pattern of misdeeds. Lasso, however, has denied any accusations of corruption. He will remain in office and govern by decree until his successor and a new legislature are elected, according to the constitution. That can last for up to six months. The National Electoral Council is now required to set a date for presidential and legislative elections within seven days of Lasso's decision. Council President Diana Atamaint told the Teleamazonas television network that a tentative date for the vote is August 20. If needed, a run-off would take place on October 15.

## Australian doctor freed 7 years after abduction in West Africa

SYDNEY (Agencies): An 88-year-old Australian doctor held captive in West Africa for more than seven years has been released and safely returned to his family, the Australian government has announced. Kenneth Elliott, from the west coast city of Perth, is safe and well and has been reunited with his wife Jocelyn and their children, Australia Foreign Minister Penny Wong said in a statement on Friday.

"We extend our thanks to the Australian officials who have worked over many years to secure Dr Elliott's release and to provide support to his family," Wong said. Elliott and his wife were kidnapped by rebel fighters in northern Burkina Faso in January 2016 near the border with Mali and Niger, where they had operated a 120-bed medical clinic for more than 40 years. Jocelyn Elliott was freed after three weeks. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb said it had kidnapped the couple and released the woman unconditionally because of public pressure and guidance from leaders not to involve women in war. Wong said the Elliott family had asked for privacy, "and we ask that the media respect their wishes at this time". The doctor's family issued a statement through the foreign ministry thanking all those who had "continued to pray for us". "We express our relief that Dr. Elliott is free and thank the Australian government and all who have been involved over time to secure his release," the family said.

"At 88 years of age, and after many years away from home, Dr Elliott now needs time and privacy to rest and rebuild strength. We thank you for your understanding and sympathy."

## Johnson called Macron a '4 letter word starting with C'

LONDON (AFP): Former UK prime minister Boris Johnson called French President Emmanuel Macron a "four-letter obscenity and 'Putin's lick-spittle'" as tempers frayed over the war in Ukraine, according to a former Johnson aide. Guto Harri became director of communications in Johnson's 10 Downing Street just over a fortnight before Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

Harri recounted his boss's incensed reaction when Macron queried whether the UK was doing enough to help Ukrainian refugees early in the crisis - a criticism that was made also by many in Britain. "He just launched into a violent attack on Emmanuel Macron," former BBC political correspondent Harri said on a new podcast series, recalling his time in government up to Johnson's ouster last September. "Basically, saying 'He's a four-letter word that begins with C, he's a weirdo, he's Putin's lickspittle'," the ex-aide added.

"We need an orgy of frog (French) bashing. I'm going to have to punch his lights out," he quoted Johnson as saying. UK officials were critical of Macron's attempts to broker peace in Ukraine, including after a strained meeting with Putin at the Kremlin just before the war. Johnson found that meeting "nauseating", according to Harri. Johnson was all smiles with Macron whenever they met, although tensions related to Brexit were never far from the surface in their dealings. After the war broke out, Johnson became a full-throated supporter of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and Britain a leading supplier of arms to his government. Harri recounted a telephone call those two leaders had on the night that Russia invaded.

"It was massively sobering. We really could not believe that this was seriously underway," he said, adding: "The two of them had this extraordinary bond. 'And, dare I mention it, this kind of really dark gallows humour that was obviously a coping mechanism.'"

## Israel fires on Palestinians protesting ‘flag march’ in Gaza

GAZA CITY (Agencies): Israeli forces have used live fire and tear gas against Palestinians who joined a demonstration on the besieged Gaza Strip's eastern border with Israel, injuring several Palestinians, as far-right Israelis held a so-called 'flag march' in occupied East Jerusalem's Old City. Hundreds of Palestinians joined the protest, which was called for by Palestinian factions in response to the Israeli march. The Gaza demonstration condemned the 'flag march' in Jerusalem, and called for an end to Israeli attacks in the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

Israeli authorities said their forces had fired after Palestinians threw explosive devices at the barrier between Israel and Gaza. Osama Abu Qamar, a 50-year-old resident of Gaza's Jabaliya camp, told Al Jazeera that he had come to participate in the march to protest against the "provocative" march in Jerusalem, where far-right Israelis forced the closure of several Palestinian thoroughfares in the city as they chanted abusive slogans and waved Israeli flags. The event, which is held annually to mark the occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem, has led to violence in recent years, and with a truce between Israel and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad only coming into effect this week after four days of fighting that killed 33 Palestinians and one Israeli, there was fear of it sparking further violence. "We will not surrender and we will continue to demand our rights and defend our occupied lands and our sanctities in Jerusalem," Abu Qamar told Al Jazeera. Huda al-Salibi attended the march with her family.

"A few days ago, the Gaza Strip was under an Israeli attack that lasted for days in an attempt by the Israeli government to implement racist policies by [far-right National Security Minister Itamar] Ben-Gvir and other extremist ministers," al-Salibi told Al Jazeera. "Today, the violations in Jerusalem continue with the launch of the provocative march." Israel deployed heavy security to prevent violence after past flag marches were marked by Israeli attacks on Palestinians and "death to Arabs" chants. In 2021, the march was rerouted after violence erupted in the wake of the storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, Islam's third holiest site, by Israeli forces and the evictions of Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, also in East Jerusalem. Hamas, which governs Gaza, called on international and Arab governments to stop the provocative flag parade in Jerusalem, warning that it would lead to further escalation in the coastal enclave, which has been under an Israeli air, sea and land blockade since 2007.

Abd Allatif al-Qanou', a spokesman for Hamas, told Al Jazeera: "We will not allow Israeli occupation to pass a plan to extend its sovereignty or impose its control over Al-Aqsa Mosque through facilitating the march of the settler flags or the repeated incursions into it." "We call for all Palestinians to go to Al-Aqsa to participate in the defence of the compound in order to protect it and to confront the occupation," he said. Al-Qanou' accused the Israeli government of using what has become known as Jerusalem Unification Day to encourage, facilitate and protect the frequent storming on Al-Aqsa

Mosque by Israeli settlers. The latest occurred in the run-up to the flag march and was led by Israeli ministers and Knesset members. "This disgraceful behaviour represents a flagrant violation of our greatest religious symbols, our Islamic sanctities and our sacred capital," he said. The leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) said in a statement that the Palestinian people and their resistance "will not be silent in the face of the so-called march of flags and the [Israeli] occupation's repeated incursions of Al-Aqsa".

"We call for urgent action to condemn these occupation policies and attacks against the Palestinian people, their rights and sanctities," said the PFLP, which has presence in both the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Reham Owda, a Gaza-based political analyst, told Al Jazeera that Palestinians consider the flag march a provocative attempt by settlers and the far-right government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to change the status quo in occupied East Jerusalem by "Judaising" it and exerting its control on the Old City. Palestinians fear Israel has gradually been expanding its control over the Al-Aqsa compound, where Jews are not supposed to be allowed to pray. The international community backs the so-called two-state solution to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but successive Israeli governments have approved settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, which is supposed to become the Palestinian state's capital. Palestinians say the expanding settlements diminish the prospects for a viable, sovereign State of Palestine.

## UN for breakthrough on Russian food shipment

GENEVA (AP): A top UN official said that he hopes for a breakthrough soon after months of efforts to ensure that Russian food and fertilizer can be shipped to developing countries struggling with high prices. A day after Moscow agreed to renew a wartime accord allowing Ukraine to export critical food supplies, UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths told The Associated Press that Secretary-General Antonio Guterres recently met with insurance titan Lloyds to help iron out coverage for shipments of Russian agricultural products.

Moscow has repeatedly complained that Western sanctions, which don't target its food or fertilizer, have hindered insurance, financing and logistics for its exports. However, analysts and trade data say Russia is shipping huge amounts of wheat through other ports. UN deputy spokesman Farhan Haq declined to confirm whether Guterres had met with Lloyds. The insurer did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment. "We are engaged with the private sector at all levels, including that of the secretary-general, to ensure" the agreement to facilitate Russia's food and fertilizer exports is "fully implemented," Haq said.

The UN and Turkey brokered two separate agreements last summer with the warring sides: one that has

allowed more than 30 million metric tons of Ukrainian grain to get to world markets through a demilitarized sea corridor and another to ease Russia's exports. Griffiths said Russia - despite its vocal reservations - agreed to renew the Black Sea Grain Initiative because Moscow recognized it's important to help underpin global food security and keep prices of grain, fertilizer and other farm products down. Countries in Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia rely on affordable wheat, barley, vegetable oil and other food that comes from the Black Sea region, dubbed the "breadbasket of the world."

Griffiths, the top UN envoy on the grain deal, pointed to "a whole range of elements" that led to Russia's decision. Those include the views of developing countries that overwhelmingly support the deal, including China and India, as well as the role of Turkey, which helped broker the agreements, he said. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is in a tough reelection contest and has cast himself as a neutral intermediary, announced Russia's extension of the deal a day earlier. Griffiths said meetings continued and he would take part in another virtual one in the next day or two "to nail down the other commitments that we didn't get in Istanbul" during grain talks last week. "Yesterday we saw great

progress," he said. "And I hope for tomorrow or the next day, we'll see it come to a conclusion."

Griffiths said the talks include work toward consensus on the export of Russian ammonia - a key ingredient in fertilizer - through the Black Sea, part of the deal that has not been executed. Talks also will examine registration and inspections of vessels bringing Ukrainian grain out from its three open ports to parts of the world struggling with hunger, Griffiths said. Both have slowed considerably in recent months, and less grain has gotten out. He pointed to "a huge amount of detail work behind the scenes" to ensure both agreements are carried out, including by Guterres and Rebeca Grynspan, head of the UN Conference on Trade and Development. She has visited Moscow repeatedly as the lead on the Russian side of the deals. "There's daily efforts by her and her team and indeed by the secretary-general, who recently, I think, met the head of Lloyds, for example, looking at insurance issues," Griffiths said. Moving forward, he hopes to see "major advances" in the next couple of months on aiding Russia's shipments "as well as on the specific issues now facing the Black Sea, which I hope - I would like to think - will enable us to have a more dependable future."

## Tunisia a ‘ticking time bomb’ as Saied cracks down on opposition

LONDON (Agencies): Tunisia's intensifying crackdown on opposition leaders and critics imperils society and risks the return of autocracy, years after demonstrations in the North African country were credited with setting off a revolutionary chain reaction across the region, a group of experts, activists and relatives of those detained have warned.

Rached Ghannouchi, the Ennahdha president who was arrested in April, was jailed in absentia after being found guilty on charges of incitement. His party, a self-styled "Muslim democrat" movement, had emerged in 2011 as the largest group in the first parliamentary elections following the removal of protest-hit Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, winning 37 percent of the vote.

But since seizing power in 2021, President Kais Saied, who ran as an independent social conservative, has pressured Ennahdha politicians and his critics. Since February, more than 20 dissidents, activists, journalists and opposition figures have reportedly been arrested. Those detained have been accused of various charges, some relating to security, but campaigners

and experts have said the charges are often trumped up and that Saied is simply pursuing his critics with abandon. Anas Altikriti, head of the Cordoba Foundation think tank which focuses on relations between the Muslim world and Western nations, said at forum in London that while the so-called Arab Spring was one of the "most transformative moments of this century", events now in Tunisia are "killing off" its last remnants.

Ghannouchi's daughter, Soumaya, attended the discussion and said Saied has "devoured" Tunisia's democracy bit by bit. "Tunisia today is a cocktail of festering crises, political, social, financial, economic, its deadly cocktail which risks exploding at any moment," she said. "[Saied] feeds the nation a rhetoric of hatred [and] invests in crisis in order to distract the nation," she added. "That's the difference between having a normal dictator and a populist dictator."

"The only hope for Tunisians today is to cross over to the other side of the Mediterranean, throw themselves in death boats and seek escape at any [cost],"

Ennahdha has condemned the "unjust decision" against Ghannouchi and other politicians, such as lawmaker Saïd Ferjani, who was arrested in February, saying the moves are made to mask economic and financial crises leading Tunisia towards bankruptcy. Seïfeddine Ferjani, son of the jailed politician, said, "There are deeply worrying signs of the way Tunisia operates now, such as using anti-terror squads to arrest liberal dissidents, socialist dissidents. "I think that Tunisia is a ticking time bomb [and] the danger is underrepresented."

Conservative legislator Crispin Blunt hosted the discussions, which also featured Rodney Dixon KC, a British lawyer leading a case aimed at sanctioning Saied. Several leading political figures accused Saied of a coup, for moving to rule by decree before rewriting the constitution. In a video message published on his Facebook page last month, Ghannouchi said, "We are facing another episode of political targeting by judicial means." "We do not have a problem with the judiciary, but we do have a problem with dictatorship."

## 49 migrants found after kidnapping from bus

MEXICO CITY (Agencies): Mexico's army says it has located 49 people - including 11 children - abducted by a drug cartel in the country's north. The people, who were travelling across the country to the United States border as migrants, said they had been abducted when their bus stopped at a petrol station about three hours from the northern city of Monterrey.

They had been found in several groups in the central state of San Luis Potosi and the neighbouring state of Nuevo Leon to the north, Defence Minister Luis Crescencio Sandoval announced. At least 33 had been found on the day of the initial abduction, with more people recovered. The bus was estimated to carry about 50 people, and two drivers from the trip remain missing. "We're going to keep looking, and the drivers are a priority," Sandoval said at a government news conference, adding it was possible that more migrants may be found, because there was not a clear accounting of how many were on the bus to start with.

Sandoval said that 650 police and army troops were involved in the search. He did not identify the cartel responsible for the kidnapping but acknowledged the Gulf cartel and other gangs operate in the area. No arrests have been made. An unnamed person from Honduras, speaking in a video released by San Luis Potosi state prosecutors, said the bus had departed from the southern state of Chiapas. A person who stopped the bus demanded a payment of 40,000 Mexcian pesos (\$2,250) from the bus owner and kidnapped the migrants, the Honduran national said.

It was the latest mass kidnapping in Mexico, where migrants bound for the US must pass through areas rife with drug violence that lack adequate law enforcement, making travellers vulnerable to organised crime. Several busloads of Nicaraguans were kidnapped in December of last year in the northern state of Durango in one of the biggest known kidnappings of migrants in Mexico in recent years. In early May, a government report said more than 2,000 migrants were kidnapped by smuggling gangs and drug cartels in 2022. Mexico's national immigration agency said authorities had freed 2,115 migrants of all nationalities kidnapped by gangs that year. Disappearances have become a widespread problem in Mexico. A study by Quinto Elemento Lab found that an average of 32 people disappeared a day across the country in 2022.



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# Pak-Iran ties, past and present

**PRIME Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Iranian President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi have jointly inaugurated the Mand-Pishin border sustenance market aimed at boosting bilateral trade and a 100MW power transmission line, that will provide electricity to Gwadar. During his address to the inauguration ceremony, President Raisi congratulated the Government of Pakistan on the completion of the 100MW power transmission project that would beget employment opportunities for people in the area. The Iranian President expressed Iran's desire to work with Pakistan in the energy sector and noted that border markets will help increase the bilateral trade between both countries. Prime Minister Shehbaz termed it a great day for Pakistan-Iran friendship, that will prove a milestone for the development of the two countries. According to him, Pakistan and Iran had decided to finalize the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) soon to exploit the immense potential in trade and investment, while the setting up of the various border markets has opened a new era of cooperation and development between Islamabad and Tehran.**

Pakistan and Iran are two brotherly Muslim countries and their bilateral ties are rooted in historical linkages, based on religious, cultural, linguistic, and spiritual bonds. Iran was the first country who recognized an Independent Pakistan and their bilateral relations remained cordial and supportive during the 60s and 70s. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran and the emergence of a Shia Muslim Conservative government in Tehran, the bilateral relations were largely marred by the Shia-Sunni sectarian rivalry between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran while it was equally affected by the US-Iran tussle started after the US Embassy hostage crisis in the aftermath of the Islamic revolution in late 1979. Despite the tremendous potential for bilateral cooperation in trade, energy, tourism, industry, aviation, fisheries as well as defense and security, both nations failed to unlock those opportunities because of external pressure, global conspiracies, and local political reasons throughout the past. Similarly, the Pak-Iran gas pipeline project became prey to the US-Iran rivalry and could not be completed for over a decade while the volume of bilateral trade between the two nations hardly touch \$ 293 million with Pakistan's share of less than 10%.

Both neighbouring nations signed an agreement in 2012 to set up border markets in designated border locations to boost economic activities and curb the illegal smuggling of goods and commodities. Meanwhile, both nations also agreed to enhance their bilateral cooperation regarding border management, against terrorism, drug trafficking, and across-border illegal movement of miscreants that pose an equal risk to their security. Apparently, there is a serious lack of will, legal or administrative issues on either side as the magnificent bilateral project of border markets struck a delay and it took a decade to become a reality. As for Pakistan, the South Asian nation failed to secure its economic and strategic interests with respect to Iran because of the global sanctions and Saudi-Iran rivalry as Pakistani leaders always pursued a policy of avoidance instead of mitigation that badly hurt the public interest in both nations.

Currently, the political leadership of both neighboring nations has expressed their resolve to boost their bilateral ties, trade, tourism, and economic cooperation, while border trade and energy sectors had been identified as common priorities and completion of the construction work of the Pak-Iran gas pipeline is likely to resume in the near future. Both nations also agreed to jointly work in the solar energy domain, while the Mand-Pishin border sustenance marketplace and other such initiatives are expected to provide a thriving platform for increasing cross-border trade, fostering economic growth, and opening up new avenues of opportunity for local businesses and villagers in far-flung border areas. In fact, leaders are all time ready to grasp optimum benefit for their people but bureaucracy is stubborn and failed to pursue national objectives, resultantly most projects of public interest gradually failed and became unproductive, and burdensome. Hopefully, these projects will unleash development, open up business and trade, and will provide employment opportunities contributing to the future prosperity of the people of Balochistan and the entire region. However, that dream will realize only due to continued commitment, persistent work, and loyalty of the leaders, bureaucracy, and the public to get maximum and long-term benefits from it. Both governments must overcome political, legal, and fiscal challenges to successfully accomplish major energy, trade, and connectivity projects to revive the economy and bring prosperity to the region.

**THE Group of Seven (G7), a collection of the world's most industrialized countries, asserts to share the fundamental values of freedom, democracy and human rights as well as claims to have jointly responded to global challenges. However, when one analyzes the group through a critical lens, they will see that, in fact, it's a selective group of white-majority, wealthy states that pursues their own interests and dominance on the rest of the world.**

It has its roots in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war when the Mideast countries slapped an oil embargo on the United States of America in response to US President Richard Nixon's \$2.2 billion in military assistance to Israel. Two years later, G7 (then Group of Six) emerged on the world scene as "a sort of coup" to take control of the world energy market and "counterattack" against the southern countries seeking liberation from the Western-dominated global economy and demanding a fairer share in international income. Even as the embargo was extended to the Netherlands, Portugal and South Africa, they were not part of the alliance of the richest.

Not once has the G7 possessed a common vision to cope with the global challenges and, over the years, it has become an instrument to advance nationalistic interests and protectionist policies. As a result of the group's theatrical comedy characteristics and improvised dialogue, it has been

described as the renaissance of the "commedia dell'arte". The 2018 "G6 plus one" summit ended in disarray when the former US President Donald Trump reached Charlevoix to straighten unfair trade deals with his allies and left the venue without endorsing the final communiqué over differences on tariffs, climate change, America's unilateral withdrawal from a multinational Iran nuclear deal and Russia's readmission to the G7. Members agreed on a joint statement including trade protectionism and cutting trade barriers; divisions in the alliance were visible. Observers in Europe argued that the group lacked relevance without China and other emerging powers and saw "a mere vindication" of the long-held view the G7 had no reason to exist, calling on a need to replace it with a more significant Group of Twenty (G20).

After the Biarritz Summit next year, the event again was a moment when the US had "definitively" lost its role as the leader of the industrialized nations and was undermining the global economy, multilateralism, campaign against climate change and other global challenges. "Inertia" and "disunity" rediscovered the G-group was deeply fragmented and lacked the capacity to deliver a solution to crucial international issues. Following the cancellation of the 2020 G7 Summit due to the pandemic, scheduled at Camp David, US President Joe Biden at Cornwall in 2021 led an effort to unite the G7 members in dividing the world on

ideological, political and economic grounds. At a time of a raging Covid-19 crisis, the joint communiqué sought to impose its "shared agenda and democratic values" on the rest of the world and promised to "develop a new partnership to build back better for the world" to rival the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In the middle of a raging Covid-19 pandemic, this posture hid cold war overtones and threatened the global fight against the virus and efforts to protect the embattled nations from Covid-19's economic fall-outs as the leaders again disagreed on several issues including producing electric power to rein in global warming and committing billions to counter China's global development, investment and lending initiatives. Before the summit, the instance was being taken by the G7 as an opportunity to "show" and "advance" its democratic values to the world. With that in mind, the club of world's richest announced one billion vaccines to be delivered to poorer countries by the end of 2022, only after they had stockpiled enough shots to inoculate each of their citizens three times over as more than 130 other countries hadn't received a single dose. Joe declared the gathering was "extraordinarily collaborative and productive" and America had reestablished some of its "credibility" among allies; the "inadequate" climate change and vaccination tar-

Azhar Azam

gets urged the watchers and former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown to label the meeting as a "point-less exercise," "selfie summit" and an "unforgivable moral failure".

With European peace in shambles once the pandemic smashed the continental economy, the US president came out swinging in Elmau for the 2022 G7 Summit to take advantage of the Ukraine war and intensify cold war with Beijing. Prior to the summit, the White House claimed the crisis in Europe had firmed up the "democratic world" against Russia and China, promising Chinese alleged unfair economic practices to be "featured prominently" in the discussions. Biden's National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan also vowed to provide an "alternative" to the BRI. Here again, Biden looked to exploit the peace crisis on the European shores and focused on raising Europe's dependence on the US. The Build Back Better World initiative was rebranded as the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, which pledged to mobilize \$600 billion by 2027 and attempted to win back influence in the developing world. The joint communiqué marked accused China of distorting the global economy, sought Beijing to contribute to international security, recalled the importance of upholding the principle of the UN Charter, and urged non-Paris Club countries and private creditors to help low-income countries,

facing debt sustainability challenges. It boasted of delivering 1.175 billion vaccine doses to the world but put the onus of debt restructuring on the G20, an acknowledgement of the G7 eminence in global affairs.

Needless to say, most of the G7 members as part of the US-led NATO have time after time violated the UN Charter and are responsible for bringing chaos to the developing world through their participation in America's wars. The crux of the matter is they propagate their values to the developing countries to score political points but have never really taken concrete steps to help them strengthen their security and counter health and debt challenges, obstructing their development. An analysis ahead of last year's G7 summit dismantled the group's assertion of delivering vaccines to the developing world, placing the blame of 600,000 deaths (one every minute) in low- and middle-income countries on the "worst offenders" (Canada and the UK) as well as on the US and "Team Europe," each of whom had "betrayed" the poor countries by hoarding the vaccines, failing to meet their commitments and sending their leftovers.

The Oxfam International's report on the eve of the recent G7 summit in Hiroshima said the wealthy countries owe low- and middle-income countries \$13.3 trillion in unpaid aid and funding for climate action. Instead of giving a timeline of extending the financial assistance to their former colonies, they are

pressuring the global south to pay back \$232 million a day in debt repayments through 2028.

This exposes the coalition's "deadly double standards" to confront the debt and climate challenges, as well as debunks their commitment to pull poor countries - struggling to spend on healthcare, education, gender equality, social protection and battle out climate change - back from the brink. This year's G7 summit would pay similar attention to global challenges such as climate change, health and development, yet real focus will be given to the group's economic resilience, Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific; debt crisis in developing countries is nowhere on the agenda. America, which has a history of coercing other economies such as Iran, Syria and the European Union, would like to reform the G7 into an economic version of NATO to counter what the US alleges Beijing's "economic coercion" but not all countries are well-aligned in alienating their powerful trade partner - China. The wealthiest-only coalition is more plagued by internal differences than ever. For instance, Europe's overreliance on the US for energy and security has become devoid of a common vision as each of its member states pursue its own interests. There is nothing in it for the developing countries except for too much talk about helping them without actually strengthening their efforts to thwart overwhelming debt, economic and climate change challenges.

China Daily

# If Macron doesn't know why he's despised, he hasn't been listening

**AS France was commemorating the end of the second world war in Europe this month, Emmanuel Macron cut an isolated figure on a near-empty Champs-Élysées, surrounded by steel security barriers to prevent any member of the public from getting within shouting, let alone pot-banging, distance.**

For the first time, and by police order the French people were barred from a large area ringing the official 8 May remembrance of the liberation. Six years after his first presidential victory and a year after winning a second term in the Elysée, Macron can scarcely show his face in public without being booed, heckled or insulted.

Our youngest-ever president - who once embodied hope, triumphantly defeated the far right and claimed to have broken the political mould by rising above traditional divides - has gone from being admired to being despised. Macron's decision to push through an increase in the state pension age from 62 to 64, despite a huge groundswell of opposition, has created unprecedented levels of anger across the country - most of it directed at the president himself. It is not the first time that a French president

has had to face the people's wrath: Nicolas Sarkozy, François Hollande and Jacques Chirac were in their day also publicly insulted. But none experienced such an extensive collapse of respect. More than 70% of the electorate disapprove of Macron.

I have been on some of the recent protests, and understand why so much of the frustration is focused on the president personally. The strength of feeling is neither disproportionate nor unfair. Macron's election-eering catchphrase in 2017 was that France needed a "Jupiter-like" head of state, Jupiter being "not just a god, but the king of gods". In office, he has duly exercised power in a top-down and highly self-centred manner. It is hard to disconnect this from the instinct to hold him personally responsible for the government's actions. On the pensions issue, people remain justifiably outraged that the government intentionally misinformed them about the minimum amount that they would receive during retirement. There is no alternative, Macron said. Yet, as economists have shown, alternative ways to fund the pension system were available. But Macron famously did away with the French wealth tax and slashed corporate taxes after being

elected, decisions now borne by the working population. The "president of the rich", as he is labelled, is more than ever perceived to be their best ally.

But the pension reform is no longer the biggest issue. The way its approval into law was handled and the mistreatment of its opponents explain why 65% of respondents in a recent poll said they considered Macron "brutal". His arrogance has left people not just affronted but ready to conclude that he set out to dismantle fundamental pillars of the French social protection system. Macron lacks a majority in parliament, so got his way only by invoking constitutional exemptions. Article 49.3, which allows the executive to enact laws without a parliamentary vote, was the spark that started the fire. He can hardly have been surprised that defying the millions of people who were taking to the streets (78% had expressed their opposition to the use of article 49.3) would be interpreted as a provocation.

Macron's tone-deafness to the mood also seems calculated: on the eve of some of the biggest nationwide strikes in March, he went on a daytime TV slot for

which the average audience age was, at 68, already retired. "Do you think I enjoy doing this reform?" he asked. The clip went viral as even young TikTokers imitated his patronising tone. Police brutality has heightened anti-Macron sentiment to the point that 77% of people now say they regard the president as "authoritarian". Footage of police officers beating unarmed protesters, insulting them or joking about the harm they can inflict have gone viral. The hundreds of arbitrary detentions after each protest which led to no prosecution have been denounced by the official civil liberties oversight body, which has suggested that the authorities deliberately used police tactics to discourage legitimate protest. Despite this violently repressive climate, the crowds grew because people knew that in riding roughshod over the objections of a majority, Macron was also betraying a core promise. In May 2022, he was re-elected with the support of many on the left who had not endorsed him in the first round, but were urged to vote in the second round to keep out his far-right challenger Marine Le Pen. In his victory speech,

he acknowledged this, saying that the result "obliges me". He knows perfectly well that he was not elected to implement a neoliberal agenda that could unravel core elements of France's cherished social model. There is no greater sign of his contempt for those who helped his return to power than this willingness to force through such an unpopular reform, backed by a brutal police force.

With four years left in his presidency, Macron is appealing for "conciliation and unity" - but succeeding only in reinforcing the impression that he doesn't care what people think. In a TV interview on Tuesday night he stood his ground, again fiercely rejecting any suggestion that he had misjudged the situation. Asked if he understood why people felt he had displayed an attitude of contempt for them, he lectured the presenter on the definition of "contempt". Neither the president nor any government ministers can show up in public without facing hostile crowds, many banging pots and pans, now the symbol of popular discontent with a government that refuses to listen. Some have suggested that the ongoing unrest - a further round of nationwide protests is planned for 6 June - is into the hands of populists.

I see the protests as a positive sign that people refuse to lie down. This is the true spirit of French democracy. If Le Pen's far-right National Rally has been gaining ground it is not because it has anything credible to say on pension reform, but because it knows how to exploit anger. This is why Macron's refusal to listen is perhaps his most dangerous betrayal. In dismissing reasonable opposition to his reform as troublemaking, he has fanned public anger while at the same time confirming the fears of millions on the left that the centre right can't be trusted.

Abstention has become a feature of recent French elections: fewer and fewer citizens are willing to put their faith in voting, and more question the ability of elected officials to connect with their daily struggles. Macron's lack of empathy will only amplify that sense of distrust and boost the far right's false assertion that they alone are willing to put the people first. By betraying those who need to feel heard by their elected representatives, Macron risks opening the door not only to future blank ballot papers but to dangerous ideologies spread by extremists who pretend to speak for the voiceless.

The Guardian

# The disastrous consequences of Dagalo's Sudan coup attempt

Ali Mohamed Ahmed Osman

**THE recent coup attempt by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo was a threat to the whole of Sudan, including his own Rapid Support Forces militia, and created grave dangers that will continue to have dire consequences for decades to come. This is particularly troubling for a country like Sudan, which is seeking to recover from multiple internal conflicts and which has suffered greatly throughout its modern history.**

As one of the most powerful military forces in Africa, the Sudanese Armed Forces has a rich tradition of patriotism, bravery and professionalism. Its military doctrine dates back nearly 100 years and it is known to have taken part in the fight against Nazism and fascism during the Second World War, including liberating two of our neighbors, Libya and Ethiopia/Eritrea, from the perils of fascism. It was

the first threat that Dagalo, the rebel leader, disregarded. There is no comparison between regular forces with this background and his forces, which are primarily made up of tribal and mercenary groups from other African nations seeking to profit from Sudan's looted money, especially gold revenues. At the same time, Dagalo has benefited and greatly enriched himself by sending young fighters from poor African countries to take part in wars in the region. Above all, these rebel forces lack a well-established combat doctrine.

Dagalo's biggest mistake was attempting a coup in a situation where the Sudanese political arena was experiencing extreme divisions and a complete lack of consensus - in addition to the international community's position on military coups, including the firm opposition of the African Union. This represented both political and

military suicide, even if the intention was to hand over power to a civilian government, as it was claimed. However, that was just a pretext for circumventing power and is not supported by the facts of the man's history of treachery. Dagalo previously betrayed the isolated President Omar Bashir, who had established and sponsored his RSF, as well as his president in the Transitional Military Council and the Sovereignty Council, Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan. Before that, he had betrayed the masses of young revolutionaries in the vicinity of the General Command of the Sudanese Armed Forces in the wake of the fall of the previous regime and pounced on them, leaving large numbers of dead and missing.

It is the accepted norm globally that the path to democracy involves enhancing societal and

political discourse in order to arrive at a fair agreement on the key issues and guiding principles for the state. One of Dagalo's paradoxes is that he was the one who was adamant and refused to integrate his forces into the Sudanese Armed Forces. He demanded a minimum period of 10 years to integrate his forces, in contrast to the Sudanese Armed Forces' position, which demanded two years, or the total length of the transitional period, allowing the elected government to take office without being constrained by the remnants of the past. The systematic destruction of water and electricity infrastructure, the theft of public funds from banks and government institutions, the looting of people's money and the forced eviction of residents from their homes, while using them as human shields, are just some of the negative effects of the use of

rebel forces that lack proper military doctrine and training. For example, Dagalo's forces this week attacked a church, injuring the priest and some of the congregation. All of the violations committed by the dissolved rebel RSF in the wake of the failure of its coup attempt will be remembered for generations to come.

Along with the economic destruction brought on by the disruption of Sudan's market mobilization, the deep psychological effects on the majority of Sudanese people caused by the rebel forces' violations and hijacking of the political dialogue, which was in its final stages, will have a significant negative economic impact on the nation, especially in the shadow of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which has affected wheat imports to Sudan, thus threatening food security. All these unfavorable consequences have extended to the many foreign nationals

living in Sudan, including the staff members of diplomatic missions and international organizations. The rebel forces have continued to inflict harm on these people even after they made the decision to leave Sudan, as the RSF intercepted the evacuations of many diplomatic missions.

In conclusion, the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan, which was agreed last week by the Sudanese government and the rebel forces' leaders, is a first step toward resolving certain pressing humanitarian challenges. However, there are certified and documented violations by the rebel forces of the similar previous truce initiatives. Therefore, the rebel RSF will face wider isolation from the international community, which has indicated its support for this declaration, if it attempts to take advantage of the latest ceasefire.

Arab News



# Syria needs Gulf states for stability and security

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

**S**YRIA'S regional policy ought to be grounded in respecting the national and security interests of other Arab states, particularly the Gulf states. It is in Syria's interest if its foreign policy is based on pursuing diplomacy, dialogue and common interests to strengthen bilateral and multilateral relationships with the countries of the region. Gulf states can play a critical role in helping to resolve Syria's crisis. Several recent developments show that the Syrian people could also begin to experience more stability, security and economic development.

For example, the Arab League recently readmitted Syria, which ended a more than decade-long suspension. According to the Saudi Foreign Ministry, the Arab League foreign ministers "consulted and exchanged views on the efforts made to reach a political solution to the Syrian crisis that ends its repercussions and preserves Syria's unity, security, stability, and Arab identity; returns it to its Arab surroundings, to achieve the good of its brotherly people." Other important developments include the phone call between UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Syrian President Bashar Assad on bilateral ties between the two nations. In addition, Saudi Arabia has made an important decision to resume the work of its diplomatic mission in Syria.

Syria's readmission to the Arab League, in addition to the latest diplomatic rapprochements between Damascus and the Gulf

states, is most likely going to be just the start of a long process that will hopefully help to resolve the crisis in the country. This goal was also acknowledged by Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit. The Arab League, a 22-member organization founded in 1945, can play a critical role in discussing and resolving Syria's underlying problems, as the organization is one of the most influential and powerful inter-governmental bodies in the world. It was established with the purpose of strengthening relations between Arab states, safeguarding their sovereignty and addressing general concerns about the affairs and interests of member nations.

The Arab League's primary role is to coordinate the political, cultural, economic and social programs of its members, as well as to mediate disputes between them. In addition, the Arab League is a key international player that has the capability to pave the way for tremendous social, economic and political changes. It can also push for specific measures and policies to be considered by other international organizations.

For instance, the Arab League has successfully urged the UN to adopt resolutions that have had significant positive impacts on regional peace and security. However, it is critical to note that Syria's crisis is multifaceted and complex. The economy is crippled after years of conflict, which has inflicted an unimaginable degree of devastation.

Syria's gross domestic product has more than halved and its currency has lost a significant portion of its value, leading the World Bank to rank it as a low-income country.

Damascus needs to make it a priority to improve its economy and, more importantly, the living standards of its people. Prior to 2011, when Syria's economic and political relationships with the Gulf states were amicable, its economy was improving thanks to these bilateral ties and tourism. But after the civil war began, sanctions on the regime changed the situation and left Syria with "a limited national budget to subsidize commodities such as bread and fuel ... Displaced families and other vulnerable households are caught in the middle of a financial crisis caused by a rapidly depreciating currency and lack of available jobs.

This means it is incredibly hard for Syrian families to provide for themselves, particularly amid growing food insecurity. Reports ... describe families waiting for hours in bread lines, causing children to miss school or caregivers to miss work in order to find loaves of bread," according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The second issue is related to enhancing the security of the country in a way that ensures safety and stability for the Syrian people, protecting them from the threats posed by militia and terror groups.

The Gulf states are skilled in adopting modern counterterror-

ism strategies and in establishing institutions that promote an alternative and moderate ideology, while educating and raising awareness about extremist ideologies online. Examples include Saudi Arabia's setting up of the Ideological Warfare Center, the Digital Extremism Observatory, the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue and the Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology. The Kingdom aims to challenge the messages of extremist groups through these initiatives. If Syria's economic crisis is adequately addressed, security will likely be enhanced in the country as well, due to the fact that poverty and conflict-stricken states can often be ripe places for terror and militia groups to grow, gain power and inflict damage on the country and broader region. Finally, the largest refugee crisis in the world belongs to Syria. This has impacted neighboring countries economically and politically. By addressing the nation's security and economic issues, the refugee crisis will gradually see signs of improvement as well.

Syria's crisis is deep and complex, but the region can play a key role in resolving it. The latest diplomatic initiatives between Damascus and the Gulf states have the potential to bring more stability, safety, security and economic development to the Syrian people. This requires that the Syrian government seize the opportunity by respecting the national and security interests of the Gulf states, while grounding its foreign policy in diplomacy, dialogue and shared interests.



## Crimea was never Russian

Elmaz Asan

**F**OR the past nine years, Crimea has often been mentioned in international news and analyses. Foreign journalists, politicians, pundits and scholars have all pitched in on its "strategic location", its "military and political significance", and its "special place" in Russian historical memory. But while for them, Crimea is just a piece of land in a regional geopolitical game, Crimea for me is a homeland, it is at the very essence of the identity of my people - the Crimean Tatars.

It is the homeland that has been repeatedly, brutally taken from us; it is the homeland we will not stop fighting for. My grandmother, Shevkiye, was just 11 years old when on May 18, 1944, Soviet soldiers barged into her home at five o'clock in the morning. World War II was still raging and the Soviet regime had just accused the Crimean Tatars of collaborating with the enemy, the German Nazis - a baseless allegation that led to the unimaginable horror of genocide by deportation. My great-grandfather was at the front, fighting those same Nazis whom he was accused of collaborating with. So the Soviet soldiers found at home just his wife and four children - the youngest one only a few months old. The soldiers gave them 15 minutes to gather their belongings and did not stop hitting my great-grandmother with their guns as she struggled to pack.

They marched them out of the house and - along with other families from their home village of Ayserez - hoarded loaded them onto a train meant for transporting cattle. The wagons were packed with people and there were no toilets on them; people struggled to breathe. No food or water was provided on the long journey, during which my grandmother's family remained unaware of their destination. Exhausted and starved, they focused solely on survival as hunger and disease killed many along the way. One of the most traumatizing memories of the journey for my grandmother was witnessing a pregnant woman give birth on the train and then pass away shortly after. A Soviet soldier threw her body out of the wagon while the train kept moving. After 20 days on the train, they finally arrived at Golodnaya Steppe station in the Mirzachul region of Uzbekistan, where they were unceremoniously unloaded onto a scorching hot platform. With no money or support, they struggled to survive in this unknown land.

They settled in a dilapidated barrack with no roof, windows, or doors. Their food consisted of grass, nettles, potato peels, and rotten potatoes; their drinking water came from irrigation ditches and often caused dysentery. There was no medical assistance available; the Soviet authorities clearly wanted as many Crimean Tatars to die as possible. The forced deportation of the Crimean Tatars to Central Asia resulted in the death of 46 percent of the population, leaving a gaping wound in the hearts of those who survived. It was the culmination of a century and a half of deliberate and systematic destruction of the Crimean

Tatar people, heritage and culture after the subjugation of the Crimean state by Russian imperial forces in the late 18th century. It is on this obliteration of the Crimean Tatars that the bloody myth of Crimea as a "Russian territory" was built. Living in forced exile, Crimean Tatars never gave up on their homeland. My family certainly didn't. I was born in the city of Almalyk, Uzbekistan four decades after the deportation. We lived every day as if we would return home tomorrow.

My grandmother would constantly speak about what life was like in the homeland. My mother

lished the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People to act as our representative and executive body in Ukraine after Kyiv declared independence in 1991.

We even created our own television channel, ATR, which I joined as a young journalist in 2011. Those years were relatively peaceful and calm. Ukraine was opening up and the political winds had changed a bit in our favour. It gave us freedom, a sense of security and optimism for the future.

But in 2014, we lost everything once again when Russia invaded and occupied our historical homeland again. Since then, systematic searches, arrests, and kidnappings have been

***The forced deportation of the Crimean Tatars to Central Asia resulted in the death of 46 percent of the population, leaving a gaping wound in the hearts of those who survived. It was the culmination of a century and a half of deliberate and systematic destruction of the Crimean Tatar people, heritage and culture after the subjugation of the Crimean state by Russian imperial forces in the late 18th century. It is on this obliteration of the Crimean Tatars that the bloody myth of Crimea as a "Russian territory" was built. Living in forced exile, Crimean Tatars never gave up on their homeland. My family certainly didn't. I was born in the city of Almalyk, Uzbekistan four decades after the deportation.***

would buy household items that she would store away for "when we would return to the homeland". I and my siblings would learn Tatar poems to recite and Tatar songs to sing. Our modest house became a gathering place for activists who were organising to demand the right to return to our homeland. Those who fought for this right were harassed, expelled from their jobs, and even imprisoned. Our house was constantly searched by the Soviet security services, but that did not deter my parents. They ignored the threats and intimidation and continued to host activists. In a significant turn of events, in November 1989, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a declaration rehabilitating the Crimean Tatars and recognising the deportation as a criminal act. This decision allowed us to return en masse to our historical homeland.

I was six years old when, in 1991, we finally set foot on the land of our ancestors. But there was no warm welcome for us in Crimea. When the Crimean Tatars were deported, their houses and properties were given to ethnic Russians, who were brought in to further Russify the peninsula. We found our house occupied by Russians. With the local authorities favouring the Russian settlers and no prospects for a legal process of restitution, we had to start over. The hardship of the new beginning, however, did not overshadow our joy at finally being home. We rebuilt our homes, resurrected our communities, we reopened schools, theatres, libraries and museums. We estab-

lished against Crimean Tatars. Crimean voices have been silenced, our culture has been suppressed. The Mejlis has been shut down, having been declared an "extremist organisation". Our channel, ATR, was also shut down and had to relocate to Kyiv. Crimean Tatars have been denied even the right to mourn. The Russian authorities continue to forbid public gatherings in central squares to pay homage to the victims of the 1944 genocide.

Faced with persecution and the prospect of imprisonment, many of us have had to leave our homeland. Today, I find myself in exile for the second time in my life. It has been nine years since I had to leave my homeland, heartbroken, just like my grandmother did almost 80 years ago, when she was deported. But like her, I refuse to give up. As we mark the 79th anniversary of the Crimean Tatar genocide amid the brutality of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we are as committed to our struggle for the liberation of Crimea as ever before. We continue the fight for my right to return home, standing up to Russia's formidable propaganda machine and the disinterested observers who buy into it. I often hear comments about Crimea and the other territories occupied by Russia being the "price of peace" in Ukraine. I, like many Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians, know that rewarding aggression and brutal occupation does not bring peace. Crimea is not Russian to be "given back" to Russia. It never was. It never will be.

## In pursuing peace, Japan's leader must also prepare for war

Gearoid Reidy

**T**AKING place in the first city to suffer an atomic bombing, this weekend's Group of Seven summit has a certain poetry. The choice of Hiroshima as the venue is more than Japan's leader, Fumio Kishida, picking his home constituency. The country holds the G7 presidency just as the eight-decade taboo on the use of nuclear weapons feels closer than ever to being broken due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The prime minister has a lifelong commitment to denuclearization, stating in his 2021 book that "as a Japanese politician from Hiroshima, it is my duty to continue to speak about the inhumanity of nuclear weapons." He'll spend much of this weekend promoting their complete elimination.

But the timing and location have an irony, too. It's also Kishida who is overseeing the greatest expansion of Japanese military power since the end of World War II, a push that's moving the country even closer to the US - which is, after all, the greatest nuclear power in the world. It's the only nation to have used such weapons in conflict, and its nuclear umbrella is more vital than ever as Japan's security shield. Japanese leaders have wrestled with this contradiction for years, leading to compromises such as the country's three principles of not possessing, producing or permitting nuclear weapons on its soil. But Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the looming threat of a conflict over Taiwan has made

Tokyo's commitment to peace an ever-smaller needle to thread.

In US President Joe Biden, Kishida has a counterpart who believes in old-fashioned diplomacy and a rules-based order, and has displayed the kind of nerve on Chinese expansionism that was singularly lacking when he was Barack Obama's vice president and Beijing was militarizing islands in the South China Sea. US support is one of the reasons Kishida has been able to lift a decades-old cap on defense spending. Until recently, such a move would have been met with suspicion across the Pacific. Now, the US ambassador has hailed it as starting a "new era in the defense of democracy." While the prime minister's office may not have been happy with a Time magazine cover featuring Kishida in which said he wanted to "abandon decades of pacifism," the premier has nonetheless found himself at a point in time when Japan's geopolitical significance is surging.

With the G7 taking place in a country that borders Russia and would be on the front lines of a conflict over Taiwan, security will be at the top of the agenda. And while Kishida will seek agreement on a statement supporting the elimination of nuclear weapons, he'll know that progress on denuclearization has rarely seemed more distant. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has raised the stakes. Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy chair of Russia's Security

Council, threatened earlier this year that the West's move to supply weapons to Ukraine was bringing "nuclear apocalypse" closer. Kyiv - which briefly had the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal - gave up the weapons on its territory in 1994 after the fall of the Soviet Union, in exchange for security guarantees. It is incumbent on G7 leaders to make a strong commitment to continued military and financial support for Ukraine to ensure there isn't a resurgent interest in nuclear weapons as a way of safeguarding sovereignty and independence. In the case of North Korea that's too late, with Pyongyang undeniably having become a fully fledged nuclear power over the past decade. And that in turn has led South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol to recently suggest his country might need to develop atomic weapons, though he has since backed off the idea following a visit to Washington.

The G7 leaders will have little difficulty finding common ground on Ukraine, with Kishida showing a much stronger stance than his predecessors. And although he warned last year that "Ukraine today may be East Asia tomorrow," finding consensus on the crucial issue of China's increasing assertiveness through the region could be trickier. The summit in Asia represents a chance to convince the likes of French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, both of whom have made contro-

versial trips to Beijing since the last G7 meeting, of the risks. But more concrete steps might be trickier now that the Quad meeting, set to take place in Sydney, was cancelled after Biden elected to return to the US for debt ceiling talks. The leaders, which include Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and India's Narendra Modi as well as Biden and Kishida, will speak in Hiroshima instead. The Hiroshima summit also puts into perspective how quickly things have changed since the last time G7 leaders gathered in Japan. At Ise-shima in 2016, China wasn't even mentioned in the joint statement - and now, Beijing's economic coercion is expected to be a key concern noted in this year's communique. Seven years ago, Japan was still shaken by domestic protests over security legislation enacted in 2015, in stark contrast to the broad support for his military expansion plans that Kishida enjoys now.

Back then, Obama became the first sitting US president to visit Hiroshima, accompanied by Kishida, for whom it was a coming of age on the international stage. Biden's visit, with other world leaders, may well lack that gravitas. Kishida seems unlikely to get concrete steps toward his denuclearization goal. But nonetheless, his homeland - a city destroyed and rebuilt by the decisions and mistakes of leaders past - will be a poignant backdrop to a crucial meeting of their successors.

The Japan Times

## It's no accident world leaders are revisiting this site of nuclear devastation

Paul Sracic

**I**T'S no accident that Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida selected Hiroshima as the site for the 2023 G7 meeting. Shortly after announcing his choice, he pointed out that, "[a]s prime minister of Japan, the only country to have suffered atomic bombings, there is no better place than Hiroshima to show our commitment to peace."

Although many issues will be discussed at the G7 meeting, including climate change, the lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic and issues of economic security, Kishida sees the meeting's location as an opportunity to reflect on the legacy of Hiroshima and reaffirm Japan's commitment to nuclear disarmament. Since World War II, Hiroshima has served as a powerful symbol of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons. On August 6, 1945, hoping to convince Japan to surrender to the Allies, the US dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Although it is difficult to assess how many Japanese died from the bombing, low estimates run into the tens of thousands. Not surprisingly, 78 years later, many Japanese are still haunted by the horrors of nuclear war.

Though born in Tokyo, Kishida understands this history - and the present-day threat - very well; he hails from a political family in Hiroshima and represents the city's first district in the National Diet (Japanese legisla-

ture). And while Kishida was not alive in 1945, a relative of his died of injuries caused by the bombing. Kishida has also talked of his grandmother recounting stories of the destruction from the bombing and has said those stories have been a driving factor in his political career. The threat of nuclear weapons is one Kishida has both written and spoken about before. Back in 2014, while he was still Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, he published an article in Foreign Affairs magazine detailing specific actions that might be taken to encourage the reduction of nuclear arms and nuclear proliferation across the globe. His recommendations included strengthening multilateral channels for negotiating nuclear arms reductions and encouraging nations to be transparent about the number of weapons they now possess. Many of the points Kishida made in this article are also part of the Hiroshima Action Plan that he proposed in a speech he made last year at a conference for parties to the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty (NPT). The Hiroshima Action plan also obligates Japan to "promote the accurate understanding on the realities of nuclear weapons use through encouraging visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki by international leaders and others."

Yet despite his efforts toward nuclear disarmament, the G7 meeting is occurring while much

of the world is not at peace. Russia's nuclear saber-rattling in Ukraine and its March announcement that it is placing nuclear weapons in Belarus, a nation that borders not only Ukraine, but also the NATO countries of Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, has reminded the world that nuclear war remains a contemporary threat. According to the US government, the Russians have been modernizing their nuclear arsenal and have been sending new types of weapons, including hypersonic missiles that can evade existing missile defenses, toward Ukraine. This has raised concerns among world leaders about a new nuclear arms race and the potential for a catastrophic conflict.

The Russian war against Ukraine will be front and center at the summit, with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky possibly making a virtual or in-person appearance. It is expected that the Hiroshima meeting will provide an opportunity for the G7 leaders to work together to both tighten and increase economic sanctions on Russia. This is particularly important as Ukraine prepares for an expected new offensive. The hope is that expanded sanctions will not only prevent the Russian army from obtaining the provisions it needs to counter the offensive, but will also succeed in undermining support for the war among the Russian public. The Japanese Cabinet Secretary for Public

Affairs Noriyuki Shikata has explained that one of the goals of the summit will be for the G7 nations "to uphold the international order based upon the rule of law, and to firmly reject any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, or the threat to use nuclear weapons." This clearly alludes to Russia's actions in Ukraine, but might also apply to future hostilities in the Taiwan straits involving a nuclear-armed China.

It's likely that other nuclear-related issues will be discussed at the G7 meeting, including the specific threats posed by nearby North Korea's nuclear program and its ongoing missile tests. Although North Korea has not conducted a nuclear test in more than five years, they continue to conduct missile tests. The proliferation of nuclear weapons to North Korea, not to mention the ongoing nuclear program in Iran, alongside the ongoing concern that Russia might use nuclear weapons in Ukraine serve as a reminder of the urgent need for global cooperation to mitigate the risk of nuclear war. Unfortunately, it also shows that, if anything, the world appears to be moving in a direction that increases the threat posed by these weapons. Perhaps the best we can hope for, as the G7 leaders walk by the ruins of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, is the beginning of a conversation about how we can reverse course before it's too late.

CNN

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# SBP releases Half Year Report FY23 on the State of Pakistan's Economy

## E.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) today released its Half Year Report for FY23 on the State of Pakistan's Economy. The analysis in the Report was prepared on data outturns for the July-December FY23. According to the Report, Pakistan's macroeconomic conditions deteriorated during H1-FY23 despite policy induced improvement in external current account and primary fiscal balance.

The report notes that adverse global economic conditions, uncertainty surrounding the completion of IMF program's 9th review, insufficient external financing and low level of FX reserves remained major concerns during H1-FY23 which were exacerbated by the fallout of flash floods and political instability. Specifically, both agriculture production and large scale manufacturing (LSM) contracted; whereas, headline inflation rose to multi-decade high level.

To address the challenges, SBP raised the policy rate by a further 225 bps in H1-FY23, on top of the 675 bps increase during FY22. Similarly, the government resorted to curtail federal expenditures on grants, subsidies and development. Furthermore, to contain pressures on external account the government and the SBP introduced various regulatory measures to restrict imports.

Despite visible contraction in domestic demand, the report adds that the inflation outturns remained stubbornly persistent since H2-FY22. High global commodity prices along with elevated inflation expectations and a range of domestic factors pushed the national consumer price index (NCPI) inflation to 25.0 percent during H1-FY23 as compared to 9.8 percent in the same period last year. Higher food prices, on account of flood induced supply shortages, mainly drove overall inflation followed by non-food & non energy (NFNE) and energy groups. In addition, PKR depreciation along with the increase in power tariffs and energy prices provided further impetus to inflationary pressures. The second round effect of these supply shocks to broader prices and wages along with rising inflation expectations pushed up core inflation.

Covering the fiscal sector, the report highlights the contraction in major non-interest current expenditure, particularly subsidies, grants, and development spending, which contributed to improvement in primary surplus during H1-FY23. However, fiscal deficit remained at last year's level, in terms of GDP, because of a sharp expansion in interest payments. On the revenues side, tax administration efforts, inflation and higher return on deposits led to an

expansion in FBR taxes. However, a sharp contraction in imports and an overall dip in economic activity constrained tax collection below the target for the first half of FY23.

In the absence of sufficient external inflows, the government mainly relied on domestic bank and non-bank sources to meet its borrowing requirements, mostly through medium term floating rate instruments. Private sector credit (PSC) decelerated during H1-FY23 amid economic slowdown. Within PSC the growth in working capital loans weakened significantly, while fixed investment remained around the last year's level.

The external sector, in general, and external financing, in particular, remained under significant pressure during H1-FY23 due to uncertainty regarding the resumption of IMF program, along with tight global financial conditions. Also, supply chain disruptions resulting from Russia-Ukraine conflict and China's zero - Covid policy, hampered global demand, which also weighed on Pakistan's export performance. On the supply side, flood-related disruptions led to lower crop outturns, which not only dented the food exports but also deteriorated the commodity import outlook. Similarly, workers' remittances also declined during H1-FY23. In addition to the global economic slowdown,

increase in the use of informal channels also affected remittances flows to the country. However, the decline in exports and remittances was more than offset by a much larger fall in imports during H1-FY23, leading to a notable decline in current account deficit (CAD).

Despite this improvement in CAD, the report notes that the dearth of financial inflows led to decline in FX reserves during H1-FY23. In addition to the delays in the disbursements of the IMF tranches and the political uncertainty in the country, higher net FX outflows on account of scheduled debt repayments and disinvestments added to external account pressures. The combined effect of these developments, in the backdrop of US dollar's appreciation against a basket of global currencies, led to PKR depreciation during H1-FY23.

At the end, the report features a Special Section on the opportunities and challenges in Pakistan's software-led IT exports and technology start-ups. While highlighting country's small share in global IT exports and negligible domestic software usage, the special section sheds light on the enabling policies that have facilitated growth in this space and some of the critical gaps that are to be addressed, if recent growth in this sector is to be sustained.



LAHORE: An aged worker preparing husk frame for room coolers at his workplace.

## Gold prices decrease by Rs1000 to Rs 232,600 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs 1000 and was sold at Rs 232,600 on Friday against its sale at Rs 233,600 the previous day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams

of 24-karat gold also decreased by Rs 857 to Rs 199,417 from Rs 200,274, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold went down to Rs 182,800 from Rs 183,585. The price of per tola silver decreased by Rs 50 to

close at Rs 2850 and that of ten-gram silver also declined by Rs 42.87 to Rs 2443.41.

The price of gold in the international market dipped by US\$ 12 to \$1964 against its sale at \$1976, the association reported.

## Rupee sheds 21 paises against Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani rupee witnessed 21 paises devaluation against US Dollar (USD) in the inter-bank trading on Friday and closed at Rs 285.82 against the previous day's closing of Rs 285.61. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 297.5 and Rs 300, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 78 paises to close at Rs 308.11 against the last day's closing of Rs. 308.89, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs 2.06, whereas a decrease of 80 paises was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 354.76 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 355.56. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal went up by 05 paises and 06 paises to close at Rs. 77.83 and Rs.76.21, respectively.

## SECP committed to foster a respectful working environment

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on Friday arranged an awareness session on "Creating a Respectful Work Environment" conducted by Ms. Maliha Husain, Executive Director at MEHERGARH (A Centre

for Learning).

The session was attended by all staff members, who were given a detailed overview of the subject, the sensitivities involved as well as applicable laws.

Ms. Maliha Husain emphasised the need to encourage open communica-

tion within the organization, especially on topics such as sexual harassment, since awareness is the key to create a safe and inclusive workplace. She coached the attendees on the need to be empathetic and respectful to all, irrespective of age, race, gender or religion.

## Shipping Activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Clemens Schulte, CMA CGM Butterfly, Magnum Force and Kanha carrying Containers, Rape Seed and LPG, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Grain and Fertilizer Terminal and Engro Vopak Terminal respectively on Thursday.

Meanwhile, three more ships, Stena Important, Xin An-Ping and Kita LNG with Soya bean oil, Coal and LNG also arrived at the outer anchorage of the port during the last 24 hours. A total of six ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, Milaha Qatar, Clemens Schulte and CAM CGM Butterfly left the Port on Friday morning & another ship, EaslineZhangjiagang is expected to sail on (today).

## Japan inflation 3.4% in April, meeting market expectations

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Japan's consumer prices rose 3.4 percent on-year in April, in line with market expectations, government data showed Friday.

The figure, which excludes volatile fresh food prices, followed a 3.1 percent rise recorded in both March and February.

Inflation in Japan is lower than the sky-high price increases seen in the United States and elsewhere that have prompted central banks to hike interest rates. Yet it remains higher than the Bank of Japan's two percent target, which has been surpassed every month since April last year. The Japanese central bank argues that the price rises are fuelled by temporary factors, such as the war in Ukraine, and so

has stuck to its monetary easing policies in a bid to encourage sustained growth. Analysts said the price increases would likely continue to slow from a January peak, when inflation measured 4.2 percent on-year -- the highest level since September 1981, fuelled in part by higher energy bills.

Earlier this week, data showed Japan's economy grew a faster-than-expected 0.4 percent in the first quarter, helped by a recovery in inbound tourism after pandemic border restrictions were lifted in October.

The BoJ last month announced a review of its longstanding easing measures under new governor Kazuo Ueda, but said it would maintain them for the time being.

Excluding energy, the data released by Japan's internal affairs ministry on Friday showed prices rose 4.1 percent in April, after a 3.8 percent rise in March.

Increases in the cost of processed foods, durable goods and telecommunication fees, among other categories, contributed to inflation, it showed.

"Core CPI will likely remain in the level of 3.0-3.5 percent until this summer" due to high resource costs and the impact of the weak yen, said Saisuke Sakai, chief economist of Mizuho Research and Technologies. But "in the latter half of this fiscal year and beyond, rises in core CPI will likely slow, reflecting falls in prices of import goods, led by energy prices," he said before the data release.

## Most Asian markets rally on US debt deal hope

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Most Asian markets built on a global rally Friday as traders grow increasingly hopeful that US lawmakers will hammer out a deal to lift the debt ceiling and avert a calamitous default.

After weeks of lumbering talks on Capitol Hill, congressional leaders appeared ready to put a proposal to lawmakers before the government runs out of cash, said to be around June 1. In his most upbeat remarks yet on the high-stakes standoff, Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said: "We're not there -- we haven't agreed to anything yet -- but I see the path (where) we could come to an agreement." McCarthy secured the Speaker's gavel in January by pledging to his party's ultra-conservative Freedom Caucus that any raise in the borrowing limit would only come with an evisceration of the federal budget. He and Democratic Senate Leader Chuck Schumer were planning to call for a vote in the coming days. The optimism was shared by other lawmakers, with Texas Republican Kay Granger saying a deal was "close". And Democrat Steny Hoyer said: "I think we are going to get a deal".

But McCarthy ally Patrick McHenry, chairman of the US House Financial Services Committee, warned the two sides were "not close to being done". Still, all three main indexes on Wall Street rallied, extending the more than one percent gains enjoyed Wednesday.

And in Asia, Tokyo raced higher again, building on a recent surge in the Nikkei, while Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei, Manila, Wellington and Jakarta were also well up. "Although there has been no official pen to paper, there is enough white smoke emanating from Capitol Hill for investors to cheer after policymakers in Washington said that a bill to raise the US debt ceiling may be put on the table next week," said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes. But Hong Kong sank more than one percent owing to a sharp drop in tech firms after e-commerce titan Alibaba reported below-par earnings that reinforced concerns about China's stuttering economy and consumer demand.

Shanghai also fell, and traders are keeping an eye on the central People's Bank of China to see if it unveils any fresh stimulus measures.

While the debt row continues, investors are also keeping a tab on US Federal Reserve developments as officials prepare for next month's interest rate decision.

Several members of the board have given conflicting views on the way forward, with some warning inflation and employment remained too high, while others wanted to see the effects of more than a year of hiking. On Thursday, Dallas Fed boss Lorie Logan became the latest to say she was not ready to pause the tightening just yet owing to inflation being

three percentage points above the bank's two percent target.

Markets expect the bank to stand pat next month, though traders are increasingly worried another increase could be on the cards.

"The moderation in inflation from nine percent at its peak to five percent at the last print allows the Fed to take a pause," Belita Ong, of Dalton Investments, told Bloomberg Television. "Especially when coupled with weakness that we've seen in the employment data as well as the bank failures that have apparently led to tightening credit conditions."

Investors are also keeping watch on Japan, where G7 leaders are meeting to discuss a range of issues including trade, China and Russia.

- Key figures around 0230 GMT - Tokyo - Nikkei 225: UP 1.0 percent at 30,892.47 (break)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: DOWN 1.4 percent at 19,425.60.

## LOST OF PROPERTY PAPERS

I, Usman Gul S/o Mumtaz Gul, resident of University Town, Peshawar, have lost the Provisional Offer of Allotment of Apartment (Skyline Apartment Islamabad) F.No.A(SK-FE-07090/23-HA-2023324559 dated 30-03-2023. If the above documents found to anybody, please inform on cell No.03349144560

## Regional CCIs to be taken on board for setting up new industrial estate

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of Industry and Commerce of Punjab S.M.Tanveer on Friday said that Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Chakwal Chambers of Commerce and Industry would be taken on board to set up a new industrial estate in the region.

He said that the establishment of the zone would help in promoting industrialization and providing employment opportunities to the youth of those areas as well as other parts of the country, said a press release. Tanveer was

addressing a reception organized by the Chakwal Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Kallar Kahar.

He said that the Punjab government had already identified four sites for setting up a new industrial estate in the region on the demand of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, so the three Chambers should soon reach a consensus on site to execute this important project. Speaking on the occasion, Bilal Afzal, Punjab's Excise and Communications Minister

said that 10 km Bhawan Road had been completed in Chakwal district while Kallar Kahar Chowah Saidan Shah Road would be completed soon.

He said that Chakwal-Tala Gang road and other roads in the district would also be rehabilitated.

Afzal said that the Punjab government was focusing on roads as the improved road network would facilitate the people and promote business activities. Chakwal Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Waqar

Bakhtawari said that the Neela Dulla location in Chakwal was the most suitable place for setting up a new industrial estate.

"This place provides easy access to investors of Islamabad and Rawalpindi and other surrounding areas," he said, adding the establishment of the new industrial estate at this location should be given serious consideration. He also apprised the ministers of Punjab about the key issues of the business community and sought their cooperation to address them.

## Establishment of Pak-Iran border markets to help in economic growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman and Chairman Kyrgyzstan Trade House Meher Kashif Younis has said the establishment of border markets between Pakistan and Iran would have a significant impact on the economy of both countries, besides controlling the menace of smuggling.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists led by Mian Faiz Bukhsh Arain, CEO IT Professionals on Friday, he said border markets would further facilitate trade between the two Muslim countries by providing a convenient platform for the exchange of goods and services, said a press release.

He said it would boost bilateral trade volumes, leading to increased economic activity and revenue generation for both countries, adding that it would also promote regional integration by connecting the economies of either country.

Kashif Younis said increased trade and economic cooperation were poised to strengthen ties between the two nations and foster greater collaboration in other sectors, such as energy, transportation, and infrastructure development.

He said it would create employment opportunities for local communities on both sides of the border, adding that it would also

stimulate economic growth, especially in the border regions, and improve the livelihoods of people by providing them with jobs and income-generating activities. Pakistan-Iran trade cooperation would enable the diversification of trade and can encourage the exchange of a wide range of goods, including agricultural products, textiles, handicrafts, and consumer goods, contributing to a more balanced and diversified trade portfolio, Kashif Younis stressed. He said border points could attract tourists and encourage cross-border travel, adding that people from neighboring regions may visit these markets to

explore new products, experience different cultures, and engage in trade. Kashif said the influx of tourists could boost local economies, create opportunities for hospitality and tourism-related businesses, and generate revenue through tourism-related services. He said such markets provide opportunities for cultural exchange and interaction between people from Pakistan and Iran and frequent interactions could foster mutual understanding, promote cultural appreciation, and enhance people-to-people ties, which can contribute to stronger diplomatic relations and cooperation between the two nations.



LAHORE: Group Chief Financial Officer (GCFO), PTCL & Ufone 4G, Nadeem Khan speaks at the CFO Conference 2023 in Lahore.





In brief

Afghanistan, Nepal agree

LAHORE (INP): The cricket boards of Afghanistan and Nepal have assured that they will play matches of the Asia Cup tournament in Pakistan. The development comes as Bangladesh have also assured the same to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) through email as the latter is emphasising on hybrid model as India was reluctant to visit Pakistan to take part in the event. Under the hybrid model, India has been offered to play its matches on a neutral venue. India's reservations on the model proposed by PCB chief Najam Sethi hold no significance as it is not part of the matches to be played in Pakistan. The assurance from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Nepal has brightened the hops for approval of the hybrid model. Reports said negotiations on neutral venue could be held once the hybrid model is approved.

Murray's big fourth quarter

DENVER (AP): Jamal Murray scored 23 of his 37 points in the fourth quarter, propelling the Denver Nuggets to a 108-103 come-from-behind win over the Los Angeles Lakers on Thursday night for a 2-0 lead in the Western Conference finals. Nikola Jokic had his 13th playoff triple-double with 23 points, 17 rebounds and a dozen assists for the Nuggets, who have never been this close to reaching the NBA Finals in their history. Game 3 is Saturday night at Crypto.com Arena, where LeBron James and the Lakers are 8-0 in the playoffs. Murray missed 12 of his 17 shots through three quarters but found his touch in the fourth, going 6 for 7, including four 3-pointers and fueling a 15-1 run that gave Denver a 96-84 lead. Just like in Game 1, the Lakers didn't go down easily. They pulled to three points on Austin Reaves' jumper before Murray sank two free throws with 12 seconds left and Bruce Brown stole the ball from James, then dribbled out the final 8 seconds. The Nuggets improved to 41-8 at home, best in the NBA, including 8-0 in the playoffs. James and Reaves both scored 22 for Los Angeles. Anthony Davis scored 18 after pouring in 40 in the opener and Rui Hachimura scored 21 points off the bench. For much of the night, it appeared as though the Lakers would wrest home-court advantage from the Nuggets, who are the top seed for the first time in their history. The Lakers won the series openers at Memphis and Golden State to reach the conference championship. The outstanding defense Hachimura played on Jokic in the fourth quarter of the Lakers' loss in Game 1 led many to believe coach Darvin Ham would start Hachimura to try to stymie the Nuggets' star center from the start. But instead he came off the bench again. And what a spark he provided, sinking all seven of his first-half shots for a game-high 17 points at the half. His 3-pointer and pull-up jumper sparked a 9-0 run to open the second quarter and put the Lakers in charge despite slow starts from James and Davis, each of whom were held to two points in the first quarter. James' breakout dunk made it 68-57 midway through the third quarter, but the Nuggets got back into it with a 10-0 run and took their first lead since the first quarter when Murray's 3 made it 84-83.

Pakistan Shaheens lose to Zimbabwe Select in 2nd one-day

HARARE (APP): An all-round performance from Zimbabwe Select's Blessing Muzarabani handed Pakistan Shaheens an 80-run defeat in the second one-day of the six match series on Friday. This was Pakistan Shaheens' second loss in as many matches. Muzarabani scored half-century with an unbeaten 24-ball 50 that included seven fours and two sixes. This fighting knock towards the end of the hosts' innings lifted them to 236 before they were eventually bowled out in 38.5 overs. Zimbabwe Select had a poor start to their innings once again and this time they were five down for 57 before 47 off 60 from Ryan Burl and 43 off 44 from wicket-keeper Clive Madande brought them back into the match.

Pakistan Shaheens all-rounder Aamir Jamal picked up five wickets for 75 in 10 overs and pacer Shahnawaz Dahani took two wickets for 36 runs in eight overs. Zimbabwe Select began the defense of their total with the wicket of Saim Ayub on the first ball as Tendai Chatara trapped him in front. Pakistan Shaheens kept losing wickets on regular intervals and at a stage were 71 for five before they were bundled out in 38th over. Mubasir Khan scored 44 off 60 in the lower order and stitched 73 runs with captain Imran Butt, who top-scored with 45 off 81. The other notable performance came from one-drop Muhammad Huraira as he made 33 off 36. He was dismissed by Muzarabani who also sent Kamran Ghulam, Hussain Talat and



Shahnawaz back to the pavilion. Sean Williams and Victor Nyauchi took two wickets each. Scores in brief: Zimbabwe Select 236 all out,

38.5 overs (Blessing Muzarabani 50 not out, Ryan Burl 47, Clive Madane 43; Aamir Jamal 5-75, Shahnawaz Dahani 2-36)

Pakistan Shaheens 156 all out, 37.3 overs (Imran Butt 45, Mubasir Khan 44, Muhammad Huraira 33; Blessing Muzarabani 4-23, Sean Williams 2-16, Victor Nyauchi 2-43).

Pakistan wheelchair-bound cricket team's training camp for Asia Cup from Monday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The training camp of the Pakistan Wheelchair-bound cricket team for preparation for the Wheelchair Cricket Asia Cup will commence at Bagh-e-Jinnah Lahore Gymkhana. Pakistan is hosting the Asia Cup in July at the neutral venue of Nepal. President of Pakistan Wheelchair Cricket Council (PWCC) Rookhsana Rajpoot said on Friday. "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 exciting contests during the event," she added. The matches will be played at the two grounds in Kathmandu. According to Rookhsana, Pakistan's outfit consisted of a bunch of highly talented players, who were capable of winning the event. "Our players are in good shape. They have been working really hard for quite some time. I'm sure they will emerge victorious in the event," she added. Teams from Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan

will participate in the Asia Cup. "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 T20Is and two ODIs against Pakistan. "It will be a watershed moment as it will be for the first time in 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.

Best teams to compete in Men's Jr Asia Cup

ISLAMABAD (APP): The best young Asian men's hockey teams would compete in the Men's Junior Asia Cup Salalah 2023 from May 23 to June 1, with three spots up for grabs in the upcoming FIH Junior Hockey Men's World Cup 2023, to be played in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The ten participating teams have been split into two pools, with Pool A comprising Chinese Taipei, India, Japan, Pakistan and Thailand. In Pool B hosts Oman would be joined by Bangladesh, Korea, Malaysia and Uzbekistan, said a press release issued here on Friday. Each team in the pool stage would play the other four teams in their pool once. The top two teams in both pools would qualify for the semi-finals, while

the teams in third and fourth positions will compete for the 5-8 place classification. The teams finishing in fifth place in both pools would go head-to-head to avoid finishing in tenth place. The losing semi-finalists would play in the bronze medal match, with the two finalists and the bronze medalists qualifying for the FIH Junior Hockey World Cup 2023. Malaysia, as hosts, has already qualified for the World Cup, so if Malaysia enters the semifinals of the Junior Asia Cup, all the other three teams making it to the semi-finals would gain entry into the World Cup as well. The FIH Junior Hockey Men's World Cup 2023 would be played in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from December 5-16. Malaysia

has qualified as the host of the competition. Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands and Spain have qualified from Europe as the teams that were classified in the top-5 at the EuroHockey Junior Championship 2022. Australia and New Zealand have also qualified through the Oceania Junior World Cup Qualifiers 2022. South Africa and Egypt are the qualifiers from Africa finishing as the top two teams at the Junior Africa Cup 2023. Argentina, Canada and Chile are the three qualifiers from Pan America. The three top teams from Asia would complete the full set of sixteen teams that will compete for the title at the FIH Junior Hockey Men's World Cup 2023.



"I expected a punishment with all the things we know, and all the things we could hear and stuff like this," Klopp told reporters on Friday. "People around me were pretty negative, they thought it would be longer. So, one game is OK." Klopp's absence could be a blow to fifth placed Liverpool as they try to catch fourth placed Manchester United, who sit one point clear of their rivals with a game in hand. But the Liverpool boss is confident his players can cope without him against Villa. He already served a touchline ban earlier this season when he watched Liverpool beat Southampton in November from the stands. The Reds are on a run of seven successive victories and Klopp said: "From a watching point of view it is a much better position to see the game, it was with the Southampton game and it was super-helpful to see the game from there. "Nobody will shout like me at them if they don't track back but I will tell the boys if they don't want me to do that in the future they just have to do that now without me shouting. "I am really in contact with Vitor (Matos, one of the coaching staff) so we can speak about everything, substitutions, and apart from that Pep (Klopp's assistant Lijnders), is an incredible coach and he will be out there." Liverpool forward Darwin Nunez is unavailable for the Villa game after he missed Monday's win at Leicester with a toe injury.



ROME: Anhelina Kalinina in action against Veronika Kudermetova in the semi-final on Day Twelve of the Internazionali BNL D'Italia at Foro Italico.

Daniil Medvedev, Stefanos Tsitsipas race on to Italian Open semis

ROME (Agencies): Third seed Daniil Medvedev and 2022 finalist Stefanos Tsitsipas powered into the Italian Open semi-finals on Thursday with comfortable straight-set wins. Daniil Medvedev continued his clay breakthrough as he reached the final four 6-2, 6-2 over Yannick Hanfmann. Greek Tsitsipas, the 2022 finalist, subdued Croat Borna Coric 6-3, 6-4 on a day when the French Open field was blown wide open by the withdrawal of Rafael Nadal. The iconic 14-time champion, 36, cast a huge shadow over his future in the game, confessing that he did not know when he would be fit from a hip injury which has kept him off court since January. Medvedev, the 2021 US Open champion, has made big improvements in his clay game here after freely admitting he's never been comfortable on the dirt. He has shattered that stereotype with his steady progress at the Foro Italico, reaching his seventh semi-final of the season. Medvedev dominated number 101 German qualifier Hanfmann after settling in following breaks of serve in the opening three games in their Italian Open quarter-

final. After going down a break in the second set, the 31-year-old Hanfmann complained to his coaching box that he had no legs left as he played on prior to losing serve for the fifth time in the match. But he struck back briefly with a break of the seed to hold on for 2-4 before dropping serve again as Medvedev moved into winning position, closing it out on a second match point. "All of the courts are pretty different here, it was not easy to adapt for both of us," Medvedev said. "But I managed to adapt better. I'm really happy about it. A win is a win. Not counting the serve, I played well, returned well, moved well. "I'm looking forward to the next round." Prior to this edition, Daniil Medvedev had never won a match in Italian Open and had little confidence in his game on the clay. He is now into the final four after four victories and the loss of just one set. "Against Hanfmann I wanted to put as many balls into the court as possible. He plays very aggressive. I played deep to try and make him miss — and maybe he was not playing his best match.

"He was struggling more than me. I'm glad I was able to neutralise his game." Medvedev also increased his lead in Tour match wins as he claimed his 37th of the season. Stefanos Tsitsipas was meanwhile dominant against Coric after losing to the Croat in three of five matches, including here in 2018 and in last summer's Cincinnati final. Stefanos Tsitsipas secured the opening set with a break and took a 2-1 lead in the second. But two double-faults contributed as he dropped serve for 4-4 only to break straight back and serve out victory a game later. "These night sessions are becoming very fun," the fifth seed said. "This is clay and things can escalate very quickly," he said of his stutter near the end. "I managed my shotmaking at the important moments and was able to retrieve (the momentum) at the end. "I felt the energy point by point." Tsitsipas and Medvedev have played 12 times to date with the latter leading 7-4. "He's playing well and I'm also feeling good on court. I hope he brings out the best in me — good preparation and off we go," said Tsitsipas.

West Ham face Fiorentina after ending 47-year wait to reach European final

LONDON (Agencies): West Ham will face Fiorentina in their first European final for 47 years after Thursday's 1-0 victory at AZ Alkmaar clinched a 3-1 aggregate success in the Europa Conference League semifinals. Pablo Fornals scored West Ham's winner in the final moments of the tense second leg to set up a clash with Fiorentina in the final in Prague on June 7. The Hammers last reached a major European final in 1976 when they were beaten by Anderlecht in the Cup Winners Cup. In the other semifinal second leg, Antonin Barak's last-gasp goal sealed Fiorentina's dramatic 3-1 win at FC Basel. The Serie A club are the first team to reach the final of four different major European competitions. Vincenzo Italiano's side trailed 2-1 after the semifinal first leg, but they turned the tie around in Switzerland. Nicolas Gonzalez's double and Barak's goal in the final seconds of stoppage-time in extra-time clinched a 4-3 aggregate triumph. West Ham have not won a major trophy since Trevor Brooking's goal beat Arsenal in the 1980 FA Cup final. They lost the 'Steven Gerrard' FA Cup final on penalties after a 3-3 draw against Liverpool in 2006. "We're absolutely thrilled. It's a big achievement for the club, but now it's about going and winning it. AZ are very good at what they do, but I'm delighted we did it," West Ham boss David Moyes said. "We've brought in a lot of international players to get better, but we've really struggled this season. We had to go back to what gets you wins, and thankfully we did that." Last season, West Ham lost 3-1 on aggregate to eventual winners Eintracht Frankfurt in the Europa League semifinals. Moyes' side have made amends for



that painful near-miss by reaching the final of a competition much-maligned in some quarters, but never again in east London. West Ham have won 13 of their 14 games in the competition this season and will be favorites whoever they play in the final. "We have created history. It's the first time in 47 years. It's pure emotion and happiness to get it done," West Ham midfielder Declan Rice said. Moyes has led West Ham to top 10 finishes in the Premier League in the past two seasons, but they have struggled for much of the current campaign. They are 15th in the table with two games left, all but mathematically safe from relegation. Winning a European trophy would be an unexpectedly uplifting end to their troubled season. However, their victory over AZ was tarnished slightly after fans from both clubs were involved in fighting after the final whistle. A group of Alkmaar fans appeared to get into the section holding West Ham's 700 away supporters, prompting ugly scenes before police and stewards quelled the violence. AZ, sitting fourth in the Dutch

Eredivisie, were unbeaten in their last 25 European home matches. But after a hard-fought clash, West Ham ended that proud record in stoppage-time. Fornals sprinted clear of the tiring Alkmaar defense to slot a cool finish past Ryan as West Ham were finally able to celebrate a memorable success. Fiorentina have already appeared in the European Cup, UEFA Cup and Cup Winners' Cup finals. But the Viola, languishing in eighth place in Serie A, hadn't reached a European final since losing the 1990 UEFA Cup showpiece against Juventus. Their solitary piece of European silverware came in the Cup Winners Cup in 1961. Now they have a chance to end that drought. Gonzalez brought Fiorentina level on aggregate in the 35th minute when he was left unmarked to head in Cristiano Biraghi's corner. Zeki Amdouni bagged Basel's equalizer in the 55th minute, drilling past Pietro Terracciano after Andy Pelmar's free kick picked out the Swiss forward. Gonzalez forced extra-time with a clinical finish into the far corner after 72 minutes.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 151,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 151,900 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 143,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1426.53 feet and was 28.53 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 44,100 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1116.00 feet, which was 66.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 45,700 cusecs and 48,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 67,800, 59,700, 41,500 and 13,400 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 32,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 12,300 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### HSSC annual exams 2023

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (RBISE) has finalized all the arrangements for Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) annual exams 2023 which would start in Rawalpindi division on May 20, Saturday. According to Chairman RBISE, Muhammad Adnan Khan, foolproof arrangements have been made for the HSSC annual exams. Controller Examinations RBISE Prof. Sajid Mehmood Farooqi informed that the roll number slips of regular students had already been sent to the concerned institutions and those of the private students were uploaded on the board's website /http://www.biser-awalpindi.edu.pk besides dispatched at the addresses mentioned in their admission forms. He informed that the board on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatha, had made best possible arrangements for the exams. The date sheets of the exams, lists of the examiners and the examination centers and other officials had been sent to all the Deputy Commissioners of the division, District Police Officers and to the special branch. Apart from the board's office at Morgah near Attock Oil Refinery Rawalpindi, the students could also contact at phone number 051-5450917-18, Assistant Controller Inter Branch Rana Ilyas on cell phone 0333-5464775, focal person Inter Branch, Riasat Abbasi on 0332-8500846 and 051-5450920 in case of any problem, he added.

### DIG NHMP issues directives

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) North Zone Muhammad Yusuf Malik issued directives for addressing staffers' problems. During the meeting, the relevant officers and employees informed the Zonal Commander about their problems, said a press release issued here on Friday. "Departmental issues of officers and employees should be resolved immediately", the DIG said during a meeting in the Zonal Office here. DIG issued instructions to the relevant officers for immediate action to resolve the problems of the officers and employees. Yusuf Malik issued an order that in the future the departmental problems of the officers should be solved immediately and no negligence would be tolerated in that regard.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary Education Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry visited ICB F 8/4 to see the arrangements of National Achievement Test NAT 2023.

## Education World Forum discusses education system challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Education World Forum in London on Friday discussed education system challenges and sustainable solutions with education ministers, experts and civil society members from the world over.

Led by the Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Rana Tanveer Hussain, the Pakistani delegation included ministers for education and officeholders from Sindh, Baluchistan and Gilgit Baltistan. Representatives of the British High Commission, Pakistan and British Council, Pakistan accompanied the delegation. Titled 'New Beginnings: Nurturing Learning Culture, Building Resilience, Promoting Sustainability', the forum was focused on global challenges in education and the lessons learnt from recent disruptions, and sustainable solutions to build resilience in communities, organizations and education systems.

Around 140 education ministers from different countries including Pakistan attended the

Education World Forum 2023, said a news release issued by the High Commission in Pakistan. Federal minister Tanveer Hussain met the UK's Minister of State for Development and Africa Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP, and addressed the plenary session on the importance of balance between compliance and creativity among learners and students.

The delegation attended multiple sessions including a session on higher education with Mark Eastwood – UK's Trade Envoy for Pakistan and Sir Steve Smith – UK Government's International Education Champion. The delegation also met with Scott McDonald – CEO of the British Council, and Nick Gibbs – UK's Minister of State (Education).

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti, and the World Bank's flagship research initiative 'Global Education Evidence Panel (GEEAP)' also launched its new report during the

forum.

Development Director, British High Commission, Pakistan, Jo Moir said, 'The Education World Forum was a unique opportunity for Pakistan and all our global partners to work together to improve foundational learning.'

Evidence shared during the Education World Forum, including from Pakistan, shows that children learn better if their parents are aware of the long-term economic benefits of education, if they receive the right kind of educational stimulation from early childhood and if education providers focus on foundational literacy and numeracy skills.'

Pakistan has received the largest UK investment in education globally over the last decade (2011-12 to 2022) of £900 million.

The UK's support has benefited 4.5 million children including 2.1 million girls in gaining education, development of skills of teachers, upgrading of teaching facilities and improvement in public sector's resource spending.

### ANF seizes 108 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in their ongoing operations against drug smugglers managed to recover 108 kg drugs besides arresting six accused including two women, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that in an operation near Islamabad Motorway, ANF recovered 92.4 kg charras and 4.8 kg opium from the possession of four accused including two women residents of Khushab. In another operation on Motorway, one kg opium was recovered from the possession of an accused resident of Toba Tek Singh. In third operation conducted in Mianwali, 2.4 kg charras was recovered from the possession of a drug smuggler resident of Bhakkar. He informed that ANF managed to recover eight kg charras and over 1.2 kg ice drug concealed underground near Quetta-Kuchlak Bypass. A raid was conducted near Dalbandin Bypass and 50 kg opium was recovered from a pick-up vehicle, he added. Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process, he said.

### World Bee Day to be marked today

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Bee Day will be marked on May 20 (Saturday) across the globe including Pakistan under the theme "Bee engaged in pollinator-friendly agricultural production", world Bee Day 2023 calls for global action to support pollinator-friendly agricultural production and highlights the importance of protecting bees and other pollinators, particularly through evidence-based agricultural practices. Bees and other pollinators are fundamental for the health of ecosystems and food security. They help maintain biodiversity and ensure the production of nutritious food.

## Ashrafi accuses Zalmay for hatching plots against Pakistan, military leadership

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman and Prime Minister's Special Representative on Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Thursday accused Zalmay Khalilzad, for hatching plots against Pakistan and its military leadership domestically and internationally.

In a recent development, Zalmay Khalilzad, who had served as the special envoy for Afghan reconciliation, has come under scrutiny for allegedly engaging in conspiracies to destabilize Pakistan and create division within the country's military and its citizens.

This accusation has raised concerns about the unity and security of Pakistan.

Ashrafi criticized Khalilzad, accusing him of betraying his own nation, Afghanistan, by remaining silent about the atrocities committed there.

In a strongly-worded statement, he emphasized that Khalilzad's actions had consistently exhibited bias against Islam

and Muslims, fueling hatred and causing harm to the Muslim community.

Ashrafi also pointed out Khalilzad's recent tirade against Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir, as evidence of his alignment with anti-Islam and anti-Pakistan forces.

Highlighting the gravity of the situation, he called upon every Pakistani to actively oppose and thwart the conspiracies hatched by these alleged anti-Islam and anti-Pakistan forces.

He urged the nation to stand united in safeguarding Pakistan's peace, stability, and values.

Ashrafi expressed unwavering support for General Syed Asim Munir and the entire military leadership of Pakistan and commended their patience and tolerance demonstrated during the incidents that occurred on May 9.

He said the entire nation was paying tributes to Pakistan's security forces for their dedicated efforts in ensuring the country's security.

## IK still defending May 9th events instead of apologizing to nation: Sherry Rehman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Friday said Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan Imran Khan did not condemn the events of May 9th in clear words even after criticism within his party, but rather was still defending the violence instead of apologizing to the nation.

In a series of tweets, she criticized the Chairman PTI for his statements post-May 9th violence.

Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman said he

should not ask the media that "who is not condemning May 9?", adding, "Everyone knows who is condemning and who considers it a success."

The minister said there was only one person in the entire country who did not condemn the May 9th attacks.

"Now Imran Khan says that the 'conspiracy' of pitting the Pakistan Army against Tehreek-e-Insaf can 'dismember' the country," Sherry Rehman added.

The minister regretted that if Khan had any sense about the events of May 9th, he

would not have talked about the disintegration of the country.

"But no one else is responsible for violent politics, threatening tone, statements and accusations but himself (Imran Khan)," Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman said.

"If anyone is plotting between PTI and institutions, it is Imran Khan himself, his politics is chaos, Imran Khan's foundation of division and hatred in the country will have far-reaching effects on the country," the minister said.

## CDA all set to auction commercial plots in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is all set to auction commercial plots in Blue Area and other developed sectors of the federal capital, beginning on May 29, aiming to generate more revenue for the city and attract investors to participate in the auction.

Talking to APP, an official in the authority urged interested investors to participate in the auction, which will take place at the Jinnah Convention Centre in Islamabad. The development is expected to have a significant impact on the commercial estate market in the capital city.

He said the auction in various sectors of the Islamabad capital territory would continue till May 31, adding that the authority has already publicized the auction schedule of various plots in different newspapers.

The official said that the real estate experts have announced it as a must-avail investment opportunity for investors nationwide and overseas. The participants investing in the public sale can possess commercial plots with 'legal protection.'

The details about the commercial plots located in the developed sectors of the federal capital included various centres, agro farms, petrol pumps, E-11 northern strip, Class-III shopping centre, Park Enclave commercial and Blue

Area E-11/F-11, Canopy side, he added. The participant, the official said that whoever submits full payment within 30 days of the bid acceptance letter would be offered a 10 percent rebate on the remaining amount.

He said the list of protocols announced by the authority in the auction voucher for prospective investors included a facilitation team presence is mandatory for the assistance of investors, 25 percent amount of the bid amount would be considered the first instalment, 1st instalment should be submitted within thirty days of bid acceptance, CDA to collect the advance tax on a pro-rata basis, site and marketing offices charges would not be included, building plan will be approved after the submission of 1st instalment centres.

The official said the CDA auction voucher allowed accommodated investors with a one-window directorate to make their payments. The investors can also pay through selected Askari, UBL, HBL, MCB, and Bank of Punjab branches from March 25 onwards.

The official said the CDA advertisement also included details about the flexible completion period for commercial plots included 3 years: 1,000 yards, 4 years: 1,000 to 3,000 yards and 5 years above 3,000 yards.

## Wafaqi Mohtasib takes cognizance of non-payment of post-retirement benefits to the retired teachers

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Wafaqi Mohtasib Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi has taken cognizance of the non-payment of post-retirement benefits to the retired teachers of the educational institutions operating under the Federal Directorate of Education, Islamabad.

The plight of retired teachers was highlighted in

a web report titled, 'Forgotten Heroes: Retired Teachers Await Their Pending Dues' which appeared on 15th May, 2023. It was learnt that a large number of teachers who retired during the last two years remained deprived of their lawful post retirement entitlements due to acute shortage of funds. The pending amount totalled around

Rupees 2.6 Billion.

Taking notice of this huge financial pendency and dire condition of the affectees, Wafaqi Mohtasib has directed the Finance Division to allocate necessary funds for the purpose in the upcoming budget. He has also instructed the Federal Directorate of Education, Islamabad to disburse the same to the retired teachers without undue delay.

## Wafaqi Mohtasib's Institution Enhancing its outreach to General Public

### Abdul Majeed Niazi

Pakistan is among the few pioneering countries in South Asia that have successfully introduced the ombudsman Institution to ensure dispensation of inexpensive and expeditious administrative justice to promote good governance. It was on 24 January 1983, that the office of Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) was established with the explicit objective to diagnose, investigate, rectify, and redress public grievances against maladministration by the federal government agencies.

In this long journey of four decades, the institution has followed positive trajectory reflecting an uninterrupted growth and consolidation in qualitative as well as quantitative terms alongside taking steps to enhance its efficiency and efficacy. Every passing day brought refinement and fine tuning to its performance mechanism. Over the years, it has improved complaint handling mechanism comprising investigation, appraisal, review and implementation of the recommendation of Wafaqi Mohtasib. It is now fully capable of resolving complaints of maladministration in large numbers, reaching

out to the complainants by holding public hearings (Khuli Katcheries) at their doorsteps.

Wafaqi Mohtasib Institution also revived the centuries old Panchayator Jarga system and initiated Informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD) as a new initiative in 2022. The traditional system has since given way to informal dispute handling process through mutual reconciliation and mediation. Under the Article 33 of the President's Order No.1 of 1983, vests in Wafaqi Mohtasib authority to informally conciliate, amicably resolve, stipulate, settle or ameliorate any grievance without any written memorandum and without the necessity of docketing any complaint or issuing any official notice. This concept of Informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD) has been developed in the form of a pilot project both at Head Office and at Divisional level, particularly in those Divisions where no Regional Office of WMS currently exists. The operationalization of IRD Project is an important milestone in maximizing the outreach of the Wafaqi Mohtasib's Office especially in remote areas of the country.

The efforts of the common man to claim relief get frustrated due to

their inability to hire services of advocate for filing petitions in the courts of law and face lengthy legal process. Hence the system of informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD) adopted by the Office of Wafaqi Mohtasib responds to the dire need for resolving public complaints at the grass roots level.

To address the systemic issues leading to persistent complaints against the agencies, Wafaqi Mohtasib constituted inspection teams to undertake visit of Federal Agencies and provide them necessary guidance to improve good governance and mitigate the public grievances. Simultaneously, the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat took the lead on conducting numerous studies and proposed standards of good governance to various government agencies. The honorable Supreme Court also made a number of other references to the Wafaqi Mohtasib on the issues of public concern and after carrying out necessary investigation reports were submitted to the apex Court.

Under the Outreach Complaint Resolution (OCR) system, Investigation Officers visit various districts to redress grievances at the door steps of the complainants. The OCR has been

further strengthened by organizing Khuli Katcheries in remote areas to enable the complainants to raise the grievances in the presence of representatives of federal agencies closer to their homes and get immediate relief. It also creates greater awareness among the general public about the functioning of the office of the Wafaqi Mohtasib and availability of this cost free and easily accessible forum for redressal of their grievances against Federal Agencies. The presence of Wafaqi Mohtasib's Regional Offices in seventeen cities, as against four originally, with two complaint centres at Wana (South Waziristan) and Sadda (Kurram Agency) has further enhanced its outreach to general public.

The other important milestone achieved by Wafaqi Mohtasib is the establishment of Grievance Commissioner's Office for Overseas Pakistanis, which offers an institutional framework for addressing individual complaints and systemic issues faced by the Overseas Pakistanis. One Window Facilitation Desks have been established at all International Airports of the country to facilitate Overseas Pakistanis and their families travelling to or

from Pakistan. In addition, on the special direction of Federal Ombudsman, Focal Persons have been appointed in Pak Missions abroad to personally hear and resolve problems faced by Pakistani Diaspora.

The service and contribution of the Federal Ombudsman Institution in promoting good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights is well recognized at the international level as well. It has played a pivotal role from the platform of International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) and Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOA) in promoting Ombudsmanship in Asia and beyond. Pakistan hosted the first Asian Ombudsman Conference at Islamabad in 1996, establishing the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) which is non-political, independent, democratic and professional body of international character representing more than two thirds population of the world. With its secretariat at Islamabad, the AOA has traversed a long way since its inception which is reflected in continued expansion of its mem-

bership and adoption of well thought out rules and regulations of international standards.

In this long journey of four decades, the office of Wafaqi Mohtasib has established high standards of performance in the service of general public which is reflected in the highest ever number of 164, 173 complaints (49% increase) and disposal reached an all-time high of 157,798 (47.7% increase) during the last year. Similarly 137423 overseas Pakistanis were provided relief by the Grievances Commissioner Cell of Wafaqi Mohtasib in year 2022, marking 133% increase as against 58990 cases of relief in 2021. The office of Wafaqi Mohtasib enjoys full support at the highest level to bring about much needed change in the lives of our people by improving the service delivery of the Federal agencies. Building on the accomplishment of the past, the goals that the Office of the Wafaqi Mohtasib seeks to pursue in the coming years have a lot to offer to the people facing administrative excesses of the governmental agencies. The continued goodwill and across the board support from all segments of society holds a great promise for the future of this institution.



### 3 kidnappers killed in Kabul

KABUL (Pajhwok): Three kidnappers have been killed during a clash with security forces in capital Kabul, an official said. Interior Ministry Spokesperson Abdul Nafai Takor on his facebook page wrote: "These kidnappers had abducted a well off individuals from the 4th Municipality District and wanted to transfer him to an undisclosed location." He said when security forces got information they surrounded the kidnappers and engaged in a firefight.

### Children among 4 killed

PUL-I-KHUMRI (Pajhwok): Four people including children have been killed and one person injured when a vehicle plunged into a river in Pul-i-Khumri, the capital of northern Baghlan province, an official said on Friday. Police Spokesperson Mawlawi Sher Ahmad Burhani told Pajhwok Afghan News a fielder type vehicle plunged into water on Thursday evening and as a result of this accident four people, including two children, were killed and the driver was injured.

# The Frontier Post

# AFGHANISTAN

Shawaal 29, 1444 — Saturday, May 20, 2023

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

## Azizi urges regional countries to work with Afghanistan



KABUL (Agencies): The acting minister of Industry and Commerce, Nooruddin Azizi, urged regional countries to cooperate with Afghanistan in trade by reducing the cost of transport.

The acting minister held several meetings with delegations of regional countries on the sidelines of the Kazanforum, according to the MoI.

Turkmenistan Minister of Railway Transport proposed the establishment of a two-sided committee to discuss the issue," said Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, a spokesman for the MoI.

ing is important. "Contacts, meetings and visits with the countries, particularly in economic affairs, can also help regional countries and Afghanistan. We want Afghanistan to have an economic centric policy," Mujahid said. This comes as the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) said that Afghanistan brings the majority of its heating materials from the Central Asian countries. "We import commodities from Russia. It should pass through Kazakhstan's territory and we should pay prices there as well and then again when it crosses the territory of Uzbekistan. It is the same for both exports and imports," said Khanjan Alokozai, a member of the ACCI.

## Improper water related statement served nobody's interest: IEA



KABUL (Pajhwok): Reaffirming commitment to water treaty between Afghanistan and Iran, the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' (IEA) urged Iran to avoid repetition of such statement and believed that it served the interest of no side and should not be repeated.

where he asked the Afghan government to provide water to the people of Balochistan. He said the IEA government should not ignore the Iranian government logic, adding that Tehran was serious regarding its de right in Helmand River Water. Responding to Raeesi's warning the IEA statement said that Afghanistan was committed to 1972 water treaty between the two nations.

He said due to drought in recent years the level of water had decline and people suffered as there was no enough water. "Frequent demand for water by Iranian authorities and issuance of improper statement in this regard was not in the interest of any side," the statement said. It is pertinent to mention that Iran's Foreign Minister

Hussain Ameer Abdul Lahian also held a telephonic conversation with acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi on Thursday an discussed matters related to water with Afghanistan. According to the water 1972 treaty between the two countries Afghanistan will release 820 cubic meter water to Iran from Helmand River annually if enough water existed.

## Patients receive free eye treatment in Uruzgan



URUZGAN (TOLONews): A team of doctors is treating patients who are struggling with eye diseases for free in the southern province of Uruzgan. The program is being supported by an Australian organization, Human Appeal Australia. Officials of the provincial public health department said that dozens of people who are struggling with eye problems

lems will receive treatment, including surgery. "So far here we have examined 2,000 patients. The people have various types of eye illnesses," said Mohammad Yousuf, a doctor. "Based on our information, the doctors are conducting between 14 to 25 surgeries here...They have been here before as well," said Fathullah Sehatmand, deputy head of the provincial

department of public health. The provincial health officials also expressed concern over a shortage of doctors for eye treatment. TOLONews interviewed some patients in Uruzgan who are struggling with eye problems. Ghulam Sakhi, 68, said that he had not been able to get treatment for his eyes due to poor economic conditions

until he received free treatment. "I couldn't walk. I couldn't go to the mosque. This surgery is very good for me and I am happy," he said. "I was struggling hard with eye illness," said Huma, a patient. Relatives of a single family, whose number of members exceeds 100, have been suffering from hereditary eye diseases.

## 2 Afghan girls among 30 under 30 influential figures of Forbes

Two Afghan girls Sarah Wahidi and Summia Tora are among the 30 under 30 young influential figures listed in Forbes 2023 for their innovative works to support the people of Afghanistan. Sarah Wahidi, the Founder and CEO of the Ehtesab application, which helps to assess security risks and Summia Tora for creating a Dosti Network "Friendship Network" have been chosen for their innovative works of helping Afghan refugees by Forbes Magazine.



global support networks. Summia completed a Master's of Public Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in International Human Rights Law at the University of Oxford and supporting Afghans to access safety through Dosti Network. After the overthrow of the former Afghan government in August 2021, the Dosti Network launched a global effort to connect Afghans fleeing persecution with resources to resettle in a safe country and for those staying in Afghanistan to access needed resources. For many, the network was considered a vital tool to stay up to date with the latest developments and evacuation efforts to flee the country to safer destinations.

The users of the Ehtesab application can report security risks to one another and receive alerts about them in a timely manner. Sarah Wahidi created this application in the Summer of 2020 amid an increase in Taliban attacks, which gained global popularity. In 2021 Ms. Wahidi was named one of the leaders of Times Magazine's young generation and in 2022, she was selected among the innovators under the age of 35 at MIT Technology Review. Currently, Sarah Wahidi studies Human Rights and Urban Public Space at Colombia University in the US. The Forbes Magazine has written about the innovative work of Sarah Wahidi and Summia Tora.

Wahidi that users can assess firing, road blockade, blasts and other potential security threats and possibly save lives. Meanwhile, Summia Tora is the founder of Dosti Network, an organization focused on providing Afghans access to resources and information to flee persecution in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan and access

## Afghanistan extracts 250 tons of oil daily from Qashqari wells



SAR-E-PUL (Agencies): According to the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, 250 tons of crude oil are extracted daily from the Qashqari oil wells in the Sar-e-Pul province of Afghanistan. According to the ministry, three more wells have now been operational, along with four previously active wells. Daily oil extraction from these wells amounts to 250 tons (more than 1,800

barrels), and more than 17,000 tons of oil have been refined. "Our extraction level is currently 250 tons per day, which was 200 tons in the past," stated Homayoun Afghan, a Ministry spokesman. "13,669 tons of raw oil have been refined in the Qashqari area and 3,659 tons in the Angot area."

The Qashqari oil field in the north of the country, which consists of the three regions of Aqdaria, Qashqari, and Angut, covers a total area of 1723 square km. 19.6 million tons of oil can be used from this field, and in the not-too-distant future, if additional wells are drilled, that amount of oil will be extracted from it and will reach nearly 1000 tons in one day.

According to the Engineer of Qashqari Oil, the extraction of the Qashqari oil has been halted since 2018; however, since the de facto authorities' return, the oil extraction has been contracted to the Chinese National Company. It should be noted that the provinces of Sar-e-pul, Faryab, and Jawzjan in the country's north contain most of the nation's estimated 120 million tons of proven oil reserves.

## Ministry of defense repairs 3,573 military vehicles

KABUL (Agencies): The Taliban Ministry of Defense has claimed that its military corps have successfully repaired a total of 3,573 military vehicles in the last year. The ministry also said that the repaired vehicles are ready for operation and are at the logistical support base of the 201 Khalid Ibn Walid Army Corps in Laghman province, Afghanistan.

In addition to the repaired vehicles, the ministry added that 11 tanks from the 303 Central army corps were also repaired and are ready for operation. Earlier in March, the Taliban defence ministry had also confirmed that the group had repaired around 300 military vehicles. According to the ministry, American forces damaged these vehicles when they withdrew from the country in August 2021.

The Defense Ministry regularly announces the repair of the military vehicles left by the US forces in Afghanistan. According to US officials, more than seven billion dollars worth of military equipment has been left behind in the country after the withdrawal of their troops. The US also expressed concern over the use of military equipment by terrorist groups or would be accessed by its rivals, China and Russia.

Earlier, several reports indicated that the Taliban might ask for help from Russia and China to repair the damaged military vehicles in Afghanistan.







**KARACHI:** Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing the party Central Executive Committee meeting.

## Issues of tribal people to be resolved: KP CM

**F.P. Report**

**PESHAWAR:** Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan was called on by a 13-member delegation of Tehsil chairmen from newly merged districts to apprise him of the issues being faced by local governments in merged districts.

Besides, provincial caretaker ministers Hamid Shah and Manzoor Afridi, Secretary Local government Aamir Afaq were also present in the meeting.

The delegation informed the chief minister about the issues being faced by local representatives which include unavailability of offices and other basic facilities for tehsil chairmen, shortage of Tehsil Municipal officers and other staff in merged dis-

tricts. The delegates said that due to lack of staff in tehsil municipal administrations, the office work of local governments is suffering, adding that local governments staff are also facing the issue of non-payment of salaries.

The tehsil chairman requested the Chief Minister for provision of operational grants to TMAs of merged districts to make them sustainable as they are financially weak. The chief minister on the occasion directed the concerned authorities to take concrete steps for immediate resolution of the basic issues being faced by the tehsil governments in merged districts and said that all the required staff including Tehsil Municipal officers be posted to TMAs in merged districts. He also directed the quarters con-

cerned to make arrangements for the offices of local government representatives in merged districts.

Talking to the delegation, the chief minister said that resolution of public issues of tribal people is one of the top most priorities of care taker government adding that every Thursday has been reserved for tribal people to directly listen to their problems and take steps for their immediate resolution. Muhammad Azam Khan said that the caretaker government is going all out to get the due rights of the province, particularly newly merged districts. 'the province is going through financial crunches as the situation gets better, merged districts will be funded on priority to address their long-standing deprivations,' he concluded.

## Three more PTI leaders quit party

**F.P. Report**

**LAHORE:** Three more Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders have parted their ways with the party over May 9 violence, where-in military installations including military's General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi and Corps Commander House Lahore were attacked.

According to details, the three PTI leaders – who parted ways with party – are former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa minister Muhammad Iqbal Wazir, former Balochistan minister Mubeen Khilji and Malik Jawad, former MNA from Orakzai.

Addressing a press conference in Peshawar, Mubeen Khilji announced he is parting ways with the PTI in protests against the May 9 violence. "We wanted peaceful protests," he said, condemning the vandalism following the arrest of party chairman Imran Khan.

Khilji claimed that he was not pressurised into taking the decision, instead elaborated that the reason behind leaving the party was the 'nation's security'. "We cannot under any condition remain a party to the violence that took place on May 9," he added. Muhammad Iqbal Wazir – while addressing a press conference – said that he was resigning from PTI's basic membership and North Waziristan's district presidency.

"My consciousness will never allow to me stay with a political party that is going against state institutions," he added. Meanwhile, Malik Jawad – while announcing to quit the party – condemned the violence that took place on May 9 following the arrest of PTI chief. "I cannot support a political party, which attack the military installations," he added.

## 6 hurt in BRT bus, motorcar collision

**F.P. Report**

**PESHAWAR:** At least 6 people were injured as a result of a collision between a BRT bus and a motor car in Achini area, Peshawar. The injured include 17-year-old Obaid, 20-year-old Irfan, 14-year-old Shayan, 10-year-old Mujeeb, 17-year-old Ilyas and 22-year-old driver Armin.

After the accident, all the injured persons were immediately shifted to Hayatabad Medical Complex for treatment. According to the spokesperson of Hayatabad Medical Complex, the condition of all the injured is out of danger and their treatment is ongoing.

# Trans people cannot get their gender changed, rules Shariat court

**ISLAMABAD (Agencies):** The Federal Shariat Court (FSC) on Friday pronounced the reserved verdict on the pleas against Transgender Act and ruled that transgender persons cannot get their gender changed.

The FSC in its ruling has said that transgender persons cannot have themselves called man or woman, adding that the government is bound to provide all rights to transgender persons. "Islam provides all human rights to transgender persons," it added and declared that Sections 2, 3 and 7 of the Transgender Act were un-Islamic.

A two-member bench consisting of Acting Chief Justice Syed Muhammad Anwar and Justice Khadim Hussain pronounced the verdict. The court had reserved the verdict on May 11 last after the arguments of the parties in the case were completed. Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Senator Mushtaq Ahmed, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), journalist Orya Magbool Jan and others had filed petitions against the Transgender Act. The court after pronouncing the verdict disposed of the pleas.

During the hearing on Friday, the court declared Sections 2(f) (definition of 'gender identity') and 2(n)(iii) (definition of 'Transgender Person') of the act to be against Sharia. The FSC also ruled Sections 3 (recognition of identity of transgender person) and 7 (right to inherit) of the Transgenders Act 2018 to be against Sharia.

In a written order issued later, the court said that it had heard the arguments of the parties and experts at length, and reviewed research and other material provided by the parties.

"We have come to the conclusion to first declare that according to Islamic injunctions as laid down in the Quran and Sunnah, the gender of a person is subject to the biological sex of a person, therefore, the gender of a person must conform to the biological sex of a person."

Elaborating on the declaration, the order stated that there were many rulings or "Ahkamat and Ibadat of Islam which are subject to the biological sex of a person and not the gender of a person". "Such Ahkamat include the performance of salat, keeping of Som, the performance of Haj, and distribution of inheritance, etc," it highlighted. "We have noticed that in section 2(n) and of the Impugned Act five different terms; namely (i) intersex, (ii) eunuch, (iii) transgender man, (iv) transgender woman and (v) khawajasira are included in one definition of 'transgender person'.

"Whereas, the terms Intersex, eunuch and khawajasira refer to bio-

logical variations in sex characteristics of a person that do not fit into male or female classification, while 'transgender man' and 'transgender woman', refer to individuals whose self-perceived gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth or from the sex they have biologically," the court said.

It noted that the inclusion of all the different terms in one single term "is the main cause of confusion and conflation about the impugned Act because not only all those persons who fall within the category of any of the five categories of persons used in section 2(n) are different physically but the ruling of Islamic injunctions according to Quran and Sunnah about them are also different on the basis of their biological sex".

The court said that Islamic law and jurisprudence provided intersex persons with all the rights mentioned in the law. "An Islamic State may take affirmative actions to support intersex persons being special persons who are members of a discriminated community and are deprived of their fundamental rights which are guaranteed by our religion. They are entitled to each and every fundamental right provided by the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 to every citizen of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan." "Hence, Section 2(n)(ii) of the Impugned Act is not against the injunctions of Islam but needs clarity as identified hereinabove that according to Islamic injunctions, a person cannot undergo castration to become a eunuch at his will. It is only allowed on medical requirements and on medical grounds," the FSC ruled.

Referring to Section 3 of the act, the court noted that it allowed a person to get his or her "gender identity" changed from his or her biological sex in identity documents with Nadra on the CNIC, CRC, driving licence and passport. "Permitting any person, male or female, to change his or her gender in accordance with his or her inner feelings, or self-perceived identity, which may not conform to the sex assigned to that person at the time of birth, will create many serious religious, legal and social problems in society under section 3 of the impugned Act by having the gender identity of a 'transgender women' a person who is biologically male will be legally able to get access to socio-religious gatherings of females or public places meant exclusively for females, and same will be the case of a person who is biologically a female and gets the gender identity of 'transgender man' under Section 3 of the impugned Act, she will legally be considered as male, which will

pave the way towards many socio-religious problems in the society."

In the written verdict, the court also stated that it was "inclined to accept the arguments of the petitioners that on the basis of 'prohibition against discrimination', as envisaged in section 4 of the impugned Act, the right to privacy of females in our society will become vulnerable and can be violated". "As stated herein before that this law will pave the way for criminals in society to easily commit crimes like sexual molestation, sexual assault and even rape against females because this law makes it easy for a biological male to get access to the exclusive spaces and gatherings of females in the disguise of a 'transgender woman'.

"Hence, blocking the way of evil in a society is the duty of the State under the principles of Sadd az-Darai or the principle of blocking evil. Hence, Section 3 of the Impugned Act is declared against the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah as the biological sex of a person can only determine the gender identity of a person male or female," the verdict added. On Section 7 of the act — which talks about the right of inheritance of transgender persons — the court said: "[It] is also against the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah; because no one can get any share of the inheritance on the basis of 'self-perceived gender identity' which is possible under Section 7 read with other sections of the impugned Act.

"According to the Injunction of Islam as laid down in the Quran and Sunnah all the legal shares of inheritance are to be divided among the legal heirs of the deceased on the basis of their biological sex." "For these reasons stated hereinabove, we declare Section 2(f) containing the definition of 'gender identity', Section 2(n)(iii), Section 3 and Section 7 of the impugned Act, titled, 'The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018' as against the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and will cease to have any legal effect immediately," the FSC ruled.

Hence, the verdict stated that the petitions challenging the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018 had been accepted. "Consequently, the provisions of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 relating to the above-mentioned Sections of the impugned Act, which have been declared as against the injunctions of Islam, shall also cease to have legal effect," it added.

## ATC extends Imran's interim bail in three cases

**LAHORE (INP):** An anti-terrorism court in the Punjab capital on Friday granted bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran till June 2 in three different cases.

ATC Judge Ijaz Ahmed Buttar announced the verdict after hearing arguments from the former premier's counsel Salman Safdar in cases related to attack on the Jinnah House, PTI protesters' clashes with police at Zaman Park and Ali Bilal aka Zillay Shah's murder. The cases were registered against the PTI chief at Sarwar road, Shahdman and Gulberg police stations. Mr Khan, who has been facing multiple cases since his ouster from the PM's Office through no-confidence vote, also appeared before the court after he was summoned by the court. Strict security measures were taken to avoid any untoward situation.

While announcing the ruling, the ATC judge barred the police from arresting him till June 2. He also directed Imran Khan to join the investigation in the cases and submit surety bonds worth Rs100,000 in all the cases.

Meanwhile, the court has reserved verdict on bail pleas filed by the PTI chief in two others cases, saying it will announce its ruling after hearing arguments from the prosecution. During the hearing, Salman Safdar argued that his client was being victimised politically. He also rejected the allegations that public and private properties were damaged at the invocation of the PTI chief.

**Imran seeks bail in Zille shah murder case:** Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan on Friday moved Lahore High Court for bail in Zille Shah murder case. Khan in his plea claimed that the government deliberately nominated him in the Zille Shah murder case. "I have nothing to do with Zille Shah murder case," the former prime minister added in his plea.

Citing security concerns, Imran Khan has pleaded with the LHC to grant him interim bail in the case. According to the investigation report, Zille Shah was hit by a speeding car, when he was walking in the middle of the road. He was rushed to Services

Hospital, but could not survive. Meanwhile, PTI claims Ali Bilal aka Zille Shah was murdered in broad daylight and left at the Services Hospital. According to PTI the post-mortem report of Ali Bilal revealed that he was subjected to severe torture.

## Iqbal Wazir quits PTI

**F.P. Report**

**PESHAWAR:** Former provincial minister and PTI leader from North Waziristan, Muhammad Iqbal Wazir on Friday announced to quit the basic membership of his party.

Addressing a press conference here, Iqbal Wazir Said he was part of the PTI government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and president PTI North Waziristan. He said, he remained loyal with the party in every situation however he added he was much hurt to see incidents against the state institution on 9th and 10th May. Some of the imprudent and misguided workers of PTI, he said attacked the institutions, responsible for the state security and integrity.

## Weekly inflation decrease by 0.16 percent

**F.P. Report**

**ISLAMABAD:** The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 0.16 per cent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on May 18, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 255.12 points as compared to 255.53 points during the past week, according to the PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 45.72 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs17,732 witnessed a 0.05 per cent increase and went up to 261.65 points from last week's 261.53 points.

## One killed 20 injured in Tank terror attack

**F.P. Report**

**TANK:** Police van was targeted with grenade attack in Tank Bazaar resulted in injuries of two policemen and 20 civilians. The assailant responsible for the attack was killed in an encounter with the police, while a passerby lost their life during the exchange of fire. The deceased terrorist has been identified as Umair, on Friday.

Inspector Sharif Ullah Khan Kundi, who was present in the targeted police van, remained unharmed during the attack. The incident occurred near Dr. Muhammad Amin Clinic on Bannu Road. According to details, two unidentified terrorists on motorcycles approached

the front seat of Inspector Sharifullah Khan Kundi's vehicle and launched the assault. One of the terrorists threw a hand grenade, which was swiftly thrown back by driver constable Afnan, causing it to explode and injuring both Afnan and constable Jameel.

The attackers managed to flee the scene, prompting the police's raiders squad to give chase in an effort to apprehend them. An exchange of gunfire ensued between the raiders squad and the terrorists in the Golden Market area.

During the exchange, one terrorist was killed, and unfortunately, a civilian named Misbahuddin, son of Nik Bakht, also lost his life. The injured constable Jameel was initially

rushed to District Headquarters Hospital Tank but was later transferred to Dera Ismail Khan for further treatment. Police in collaboration with a substantial police contingent, launched a search operation to track down the terrorists involved in the attack. Several civilians were also injured during the hand grenade attack and subsequent gunfire exchange.

The injured civilians are identified as Muhammad Alam, Nimatullah, Nazir Gul, Hazrat Ullah, Abdul Rahman, Akhtar Khan, Habib-ur-Rehman, Ahmad, Rizwan, Kala Khan, Abdul Latif and Ayan Khan residents of different localities of Tank district.

erately knowing very well that they themselves have been ordered by the court not to arrest the PTI politician. "The Punjab Police cannot arrest anyone directly from Islamabad. In hindsight, the Islamabad Police cannot separate itself from it," the judge observed. He then turned to AGP Awan and instructed him to bring the matter of the police's disregard of the court order before the country's highest authorities.

"Our power lies with you. Place the matter before the highest authority," the judge told AGP Awan. Justice Aurangzeb added: "The writ of the court is the dignity of this country, and no one is justifying the violent incidents." In response, the attorney general said: "This country has to be run according to the Constitution. The courts and all constitutional bodies have to work within the [framework of the] Constitution."

The judge then commented: "This time will pass but its effects will

remain." "We say this is a civilised country," he remarked, "but what is happening with court orders does not prove we are civilised." Justice Aurangzeb observed that a campaign was being launched against courts. "These courts are here to deliver justice according to law," he said, adding those who are running the campaign were availing relief from the courts in the past. He further added that, unlike politicians, the judges can't do talk shows and defend themselves on media. During the hearing, Justice Aurangzeb got emotional and noted: "We are here only for service." In response, the lawyers in the courtroom reiterated their commitment to the IHC and said: "We are with the court." When Bukhari and Khan's plea was being heard, the government's lawyer contended that the court's order was implemented. After their release, Khan and Bokhari were arrested again in other cases, he said.

The petitioner's lawyer said: "We have seen a video clip in which Ali Muhammad Khan is being put in a car by police officials as soon as he comes out of Adiala Jail." The court then adjourned the hearing till May 23 (Tuesday).

Following the court proceedings, the attorney general, while talking to media personnel outside the IHC said: "No one can defeat the court's writ." A reporter then commented: "Despite the court's bar, arrests still took place." The AGP responded that according to his information, the Punjab government passed the orders of arrest under the Maintenance of the Public Order (MPO) law. "It is a provincial matter; I am looking at how it was executed from the jurisdiction of the federal capital." He then said the order for re-arrest was given by the Punjab government and that the court could see the legal aspect of the order passed by the provincial authorities.

"If the province orders detention, Islamabad police is bound to hand them over," he remarked, adding that according to the law, the Punjab police can arrest anyone from Islamabad. He then said: "The matter of arrests is in the court, so I cannot talk more." The attorney general further said that the matter of MPO is in the Lahore High Court. "Whether they are legal or not is for the court to decide."

Speaking on the matter of negotiations between the government and PTI, the attorney general said that a lot of efforts were put in by the former to hold the negotiations. "In April, PTI was brought to the negotiation table after a lot of efforts; however, it is unfortunate that the negotiations were interrupted by the PTI." He said that the government had asked the Supreme Court on May 2 to continue the negotiations, and had conceded on a number of demands put forward by the PTI.