

LAHORE (INP): A case was registered Friday against former provincial minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Mian Aslam Iqbal in Lahore on charges of torture, threat and assault. The case was registered at Samanabad police station on the complaint of a citizen named Syed Sajjad. The complainant in the FIR maintained that he had shot a video on the occasion of the PTI's foundation day in a fit of emotion.

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# Parliament's right of legislation cannot be taken away: Shehbaz

LONDON (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday said legislation was the right of the Parliament and all the institutions should perform their role within the limits determined by the constitution because it was imperative for country's integrity and security and for progress and prosperity of the people.

Talking to media here, he said the coalition government was trying its best to tackle the challenges and Pakistan would come out of the difficulties. He said justice should be seen to be done, adding betterment of people and country meant that the system should be run according to the constitution. "Everyone will have to play his role for the supremacy of the constitution. Everybody has to respect law and constitution."

He said Parliament's right to legislate was laid down in the constitution and this right could not be taken away, adding at present Parliament was playing its effective role. He said the previous government victimized the opposition and put its leaders in jail in fabricated cases and they had no place to seek justice.

Members of opposition were oppressed, were not even spared in sickness and women were arrested on Eid days and nobody cared, he recalled. He said now others were

getting speedy bails in dozens of cases at once and it all showed the double standards which nobody liked. Double standards were not healthy and beneficial for any society, he added. To a question, he said due to better government policies, record production of wheat was achieved this year.

**PM, SG Scotland discuss Commonwealth affairs:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a warm and cordial meeting with Secretary General of Commonwealth of the Nations Ms. Patricia Scotland on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Leaders' Event that took place here on Friday to welcome King Charles III in the latter's capacity as the new Head of the Commonwealth.

During their conversation, the Prime Minister briefed the Secretary General on how he envisaged re-imagining the Commonwealth in light of the major challenges confronting the global community. He also assured the SG that Pakistan was keen to work closely with the member states and the Secretary General to make the organization more relevant and effective in areas such as climate change and for enhancing the role of the youth.

In this context, the Prime Minister also informed the Secretary General that Pakistan

would host the tenth Commonwealth Youth Ministerial Meeting which had to be postponed on account of the unprecedented floods that had caused severe damage to the country's economy and infrastructure. The Prime Minister also extended an invitation to the Secretary General to undertake an official visit to Pakistan which the SG assured him that she would do so at an early date.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif attended a meeting of Commonwealth leaders in London on Friday. During his address to the meeting, the Prime Minister called upon the leaders of the Commonwealth countries to mark the accession of King Charles III as the dawn of a new era and the opening of new vistas and fresh avenues for the remarkable family of nations known as the Commonwealth.

The Prime Minister urged the leaders to reimagine and reinvigorate the Commonwealth and infuse it with ever greater synergy and even stronger sense of purpose. The Prime Minister also spoke of his Government's commitment to equipping the Pakistani youth with the right kind of skill sets and opportunities. He added that his Government was empowering the women and mainstreaming the

marginalized youth, religious and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and transgender community.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also interacted with with His Majesty King Charles III and the Prime Minister of Britain Mr. Rishi Sunak on the sidelines of the meeting of other eaders of Commonwealth countries on Friday. The Prime Minister felicitated both the British dignitaries for the excellent arrangements made for the elaborate two-day ceremonies being held to celebrate the coronation of the new King.

The Prime Minister also expressed deep appreciation for the UK's generous assistance in the wake of the disastrous floods that struck Pakistan last year. He suggested that both countries needed to enhance the bilateral relations in various fields. In this regard, the Prime Minister proposed the establishment of a joint commission that would be headed by the leaders of the two countries. His Majesty King Charles III and the British PM Rishi Sunak also showed their interest in further strengthening the bilateral relations between the two countries and praised the Pakistan community based in the UK for its role in the development of the UK.



LONDON: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif shaking hands with UK Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak.

## Pakistan, China reaffirm resolve to work together for peace

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and China have reaffirmed their resolve to work together for promoting regional peace and prosperity and for jointly coping with external challenges.

Both sides emphasised the need to further advance and deepen bilateral cooperation in the areas of trade, economy, culture and defence for the mutual benefit of the two countries. The two sides also called for increasing bilateral exchanges, people-to-people contacts, and cooperation in the fields of culture and tourism to further cement bilateral ties.

The bilateral matters were discussed at a meeting between President Dr Arif Alvi and the visiting State Counsellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Qin Gang, who along with the members of his delegation, called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Friday. The meeting was also attended by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar, Chinese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Sun Weidong, and senior government officials of Pakistan and China.

Welcoming the Foreign Minister of China, the President said that Pakistan-China relations were rooted in mutual trust, understanding, goodwill and both sides firmly supported each other on core issues. He high-

lighted that Pakistan-China mutual cooperation was assuming an even greater significance in the light of new developments taking place in the regional and international arenas. The President said that Pakistan was committed to the completion of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Gwadar port, which would play a significant role in the promotion of bilateral trade, besides enhancing regional trade and connectivity.

He said that Pakistan would take effective measures to ensure the security of the Chinese personnel working on various CPEC projects. He expressed optimism that the recent opening of Khunjerab Pass would facilitate the movement of goods from Xinjiang to Gwadar and vice versa. The President emphasised the need to increase economic and commercial cooperation, particularly in the IT and agriculture sectors, adding that Chinese investors should benefit from Pakistan's business and investment-friendly policies. The President expressed concern over the planned holding of G-20 Summit events by India in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and termed it an attempt on the part of India to divert the world's attention away from the ground realities and its atrocities against the people of IIOJK.

He said that Pakistan supported China on all its core issues, including the "One-China policy", Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and the South China Sea.

He also appreciated the support provided by China during last year's unprecedented floods in Pakistan and the COVID-19 pandemic. The State Counsellor and Foreign Minister of China Qin Gang, said that China and Pakistan were all-weather friends and the friendship between the two countries was "as solid as a rock".

He stated that in view of the fast-changing world, Pakistan and China needed to further fortify and strengthen bilateral cooperation to meet the emerging regional and international challenges. He called for advancing cooperation in all areas of mutual interest, especially on projects of strategic importance. Qin Gang stated that China was cognizant of Pakistan's economic difficulties, saying that it was the priority of his country to help Pakistan. He said that China would welcome Pakistani students to study in Chinese educational institutions. He also thanked the President of Pakistan for visiting China in March 2020 to show solidarity with the people and government of China during the COVID-19 pandemic.



ISLAMABAD: State Counsellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, Mr Qin Gang, along with his delegation called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## SC won't hesitate to take action if talks fail: CJP

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial said on Friday that the Supreme Court would use the Constitution to implement its verdict of holding elections in Punjab on May 14 if the talks between the government and the PTI failed.

The top judge passed these remarks during the hearing of the petition seeking simultaneous elections across the country. A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial comprising Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar heard the case. At the outset of the hearing, Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) lawyer Farooq Naek read out the report submitted over PTI-govt talks on the election date.

CJP Bandial emphasized

the importance of political leadership in resolving political issues and also inquired about ongoing discussions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and asked if the budget was formulated under the guidelines of the IMF package. The Chief Justice noted that the court had already issued a verdict regarding holding polls within 90 days, and further stated that the court would not sit idle with the verdict for the May 14 polls if the parties involved failed to reach a resolution. He stressed that the matter in court was constitutional, not political and that the Supreme Court had left political matters to political parties.

Naek explained that without the assemblies, it would be impossible to

approve the budget and that this crisis would not have arisen if the assemblies of Punjab and KP were not dissolved. The Chief Justice asked why the approval of the IMF agreement and trade policy were important, to which Naek replied: "Getting the IMF loan is key for the budget." He added that the issue at hand would be resolved if an understanding was reached between the government and the opposition.

Justice Bandial also asked if the IMF loan would be used for reserves or the repayment of debts, to which Naek responded that only the finance minister could answer that question. The Chief Justice pointed out that even if the assemblies were dissolved,

(Continued on Back Page)

## Afghan FM reaches Islamabad

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Mullaqi along with a high-level delegation reached Islamabad on a four-day official visit on Friday.

According to a report, the Afghan Foreign Minister will participate in the 5th Pak-China-Afghanistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue at the Foreign Office today (Saturday). State Counsellor and Foreign Minister of China Qin Gang will also participate in the Trilateral Foreign Minister's Dialogue.

The visit of the Acting Afghan Foreign Minister is a continuation of Pakistan's political engagement process with Afghanistan, which, inter alia, included a visit of Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs to Kabul on November 29, 2022, and visit of a high-level delegation led by the Defence Minister of Pakistan to Kabul on February 22, 2023.

During the visit, the two sides will review the entire spectrum of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the political, economic, trade, connectivity, peace and security, and education domains. Pakistan is desirous of a peaceful, prosperous, stable and connected Afghanistan and reiterates its commitment to pursue continuous and practical engagement with the Interim Afghan Government. The Afghan Foreign Minister's visit will continue till May 8.

## Imran to be indicted on 10th

ISLAMABAD (INP): An Islamabad district and sessions court will frame charges against former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan in Toshakhana case on May 10 (Wednesday).

Islamabad District and Sessions Courts Additional Sessions Judge Humayun Dilawar rejected both PTI petitions and summoned former premier Imran Khan on May 10 in person for indictment. Imran's counsel Khawaja Harris had filed a petition in the court against the admissibility of the Toshakhana case under the Elections ACT.

The reference, which alleges that Imran failed to share details of the gifts he retained from the Toshakhana (during his time as the prime minister) was filed by lawmakers from the ruling coalition last year.

## FM in India says 'peace is our destiny'

### No dialogue with India till review of Aug 5, 2019 actions

GOA (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Friday, linking any change in Pakistan's India policy to the reversal of unilateral and illegal actions of August 5, 2019, said the onus was on India to build a conducive environment for talks.

The foreign minister, talking to the newsmen after addressing the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Council of Foreign Ministers here, said the Pakistan Peoples Party always advocated the normalisation of ties with India but the latter's unilateral action of revoking a special status of Kashmir had undermined the environment. The unilateral actions of August 5, 2019, had not only violated international laws and the United Nations Security Council's resolutions but also the bilateral agreements, he added.

The Indian violation, he said, had created a trust deficit as the country could not unilaterally violate the bilateral agreements in the future too. Asked about the Indian decision of hosting the G20 summit in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK), the foreign minister said, "Obviously we condemn it and at the time we will give such a response that it will be remembered."

"It is a show of Indian arrogance to the world that to hell with the international law, to hell with the United Nations Security Council resolutions, to hell with any bilateral agreements, India will hold their event in Kashmir." He also said India would soon find that "they will be unable to achieve 110 percent attendance because other people will not compromise on their morals".

To a question, Bilawal Bhutto said without any distinction, Indian External Affairs Minister Jaishankar received all the foreign ministers the same way which

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Friday, reiterating Pakistan's "unchanged" position, said his country could not engage in any meaningful dialogue with India till the latter reviewed its unilateral and illegal actions of August 5, 2019, revoking the special status of Kashmir.

"Unless India reviews the action it took on August 5, 2019 (abrogation of Article 370), Pakistan is not in a position to engage bilaterally with India... As far as Pakistan's position on bilateral relations with India or any meaningful engagement or dialogue with my Indian counterpart, our position remains unchanged," the foreign minister said in an interview with India Today.

Bilawal, who was in India on a two-day visit to attend the meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Council of Foreign Ministers held in Goa, said Pakistan wanted to combat the menace of terrorism because it had caused the largest number of casualties among any other SCO countries. "Pakistan wants to quell terrorism not because India said it or the Indian government said so, but because we want to end this menace."

"Pakistan has suffered the most. I myself am a victim of terrorism, so Pakistan and myself are wholly committed to combating this menace," he reiterated. To a question, the foreign minister said Pakistan was willing to engage any Indian concerns but India would also have to address Pakistan's concerns. "India will have to explain what Kulbhusan Jadhav – a state actor, a navy commander – was doing in Pakistan, carrying out terrorist attacks on Pakistani soil. Does that not come under cross-border terrorism?" he asked. He said the victims of the 2007 Samjhauta Express bombing, which had killed around 70 people, mostly Pakistanis, had yet to see any justice. To a question, he said the trial on the Mumbai attacks was facing delay because India had not been producing witnesses as a legal requirement.

was also identical to the style practised in Sindh and Multan. He told the media that in 2026, Pakistan would be holding the CFM chair, and hoped that India would take a good step to participate in the summit on the basis of "reciprocal diplomatic agreements". He said most of the people in both India and Pakistan wanted to live in peace and achieve development without being held hostage by history.

"I believe we shouldn't hold sports hostage to politics or foreign policy and the purpose of sports is that you keep it away from such issues..." The hope is that a petty action won't be taken and we should keep our sportsmen and cricket separate from politics and foreign policy."

CFM management and cultural show which represented all member states. Responding to a query, Bilawal Bhutto said the SCO forum should be used for collective security and urged the member states to work collectively to combat the menace.

Regarding Indian demand for a neutral venue for Asia Cup 2023, the foreign minister said, "I believe we shouldn't hold sports hostage to politics or foreign policy and the purpose of sports is that you keep it away from such issues..." The hope is that a petty action won't be taken and we should keep our sportsmen and cricket separate from politics and foreign policy."

## Special children deserves attention of all segments of society: KP CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan here Friday said that special children deserve special attention of all of us including the government, welfare organizations and well off segment of society.

He said that special children are blessed with special abilities; and concerted efforts are needed both at public and private levels in order to enable them to stand on their own feet and to make them useful citizens of society. This he said while addressing a function of spe-

cial children held here at Chief Minister House attended by special children of Special Education Centre.

Special Assistant to Chief Minister for Social Welfare Salma Begum, Secretary Social Welfare Zia-ul-Haq, management and teachers of the Special Education Centre also attended the function. In his address, the Chief Minister said that he felt immense pleasure to meet special children and participation in such events is a matter of pride for him.

He said that role of welfare organizations in imparting education and training to

special children is highly commendable, adding that well off segment of society should cooperate with such welfare organizations in this noble cause.

The chief minister stated that he will continue his efforts for the welfare of special and underprivileged children in his personal capacity. Lauding the role of aforementioned special education centre in imparting education and skills to special children, Muhammad Azam Khan hoped that the centre will continue its services in a more effective and organized manner.



### All Punjab schools to have internet facility

LAHORE (INP): The Punjab Schools Education Department has decided to provide internet facility to all schools in the province on Friday.

According to the decision, the internet education facility will be ensured in all schools of the Punjab.

The Department further said that an application is ready to arrange lectures for students of up to FA. Through this practice the students can get rid of the tuition. Lectures of all subjects will be available on this app. The Punjab Schools Education Department has also approved establishment of 10 mobile schools in the province, for which the Department will provide 10 buses. This mobile school facility was exclusive for the children of low-lying areas. Funds for these mobile schools will be provided by the federal government. Punjab Secretary Schools Maqbool Dhavla has directed to launch the project immediately.

### LWMC decides to make waste-free model markets

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) has decided to penalise people for spreading waste to make all markets zero-waste in the provincial capital. To achieve the goal, the LWMC Community Mobilisation Wing organised an awareness programme to educate shopkeepers about proper and timely waste disposal at Hall Road. Deputy Chief Executive Officer (CEO) LWMC Muhammad Aurangzeb, President Hall Road Trade Union Babar Mehmood and a large number of traders of Hall Road participated in the event.

About the initiative of making commercial markets zero-waste, LWMC CEO Babar Sahib Din said that the company had decided to make all city trade centers model markets and waste segregation model had also been introduced in these markets. Bins of three colours were being installed in all commercial markets of Lahore to promote the "Three bin model" system. He added that waste bins would also be installed outside every shop with the support of the trade union of Hall Road. President Trade Union promised all kinds of cooperation to ensure cleanliness in market. Shopkeepers were requested not to throw or dump garbage on the road during the daytime.

### Motorcycle thieves arrested

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police in a joint patrolling arrested three motorcycle lifters and recovered a stolen motorcycle from their possession. According to spokesman for Rangers on Friday, a Rangers team along with police during patrolling arrested an alleged motorcycle thief Huzaifah red handed when he was stealing a motorcycle in Sikandar Goth. During initial interrogation arrested accused Huzaifah revealed that he along with his two other accomplices namely Akif and Adeel has stolen more than 30 motorcycles and sold them in parts.

### Population department making efforts

RAWALPINDI (APP): District Population Welfare Department was taking all measures to create awareness among the masses about the importance of family planning and extending relevant services so that marginalized and young people could plan their families.

District Officer Sherry Sukhan said this while speaking to the participants of the doctor's training workshop here at Benazir Bhutto Hospital.

She said the department in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) was taking all measures to create awareness among the masses about the importance of family planning and extending relevant services so that sidelined section of the population and young people could plan their families.

## Punjab cabinet decides to end traditional file system

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi presided over the 15th provincial cabinet meeting at CM Office on Friday, which took an important step regarding e-governance and decided to end traditional file system in all government departments.

An approval for the imposition of paperless system was accorded during the meeting. E-filing system for the departments would be implemented by May 15, which would save huge amount of funds.

The caretaker CM ordered for digitalising the annual confidential reports (ACRs). The Punjab cabinet acknowledged the endeavours of Chairman Planning & Development Board, Secretary Implementation and Chairman Punjab Information Technology Board on introducing paperless system in the departments.

The Punjab cabinet decided to give laptops to shining male and female students of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir. The cabinet also granted approval to award available laptops to the promising male and female students. The Punjab cabinet granted approval to give Rs 1.5 million financial assistance per head to the heirs of

the youth resident of Ichhra, who lost their lives due to falling down of a jeep into River Neelum.

Approval to the amendment to Punjab Police (Ministerial Posts) Rules 2017 was granted during the meeting. Conditional approval was granted during the meeting for signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Special Education Department and 'Tare Zameen Per' NGO Trust. The Cabinet Standing Committee for Legal Affairs will make a final decision after reviewing the MoU.

The cabinet endorsed the decisions of the provincial cabinet taken at the 11th, 12th, 13th & 14th meetings. The cabinet meeting also endorsed the decisions of 2nd and 3rd meetings of the cabinet standing committee for finance and development.

The decisions of the first and second meeting of the Cabinet Standing Committee for Legal Affairs and Privatisation were also endorsed. The decisions of second, third and fourth meeting of the Cabinet Standing Committee for Law & Order were endorsed.

Provincial ministers, advisers, chief secretary, IG police and officials concerned attended the meeting.

## ‘Govt striving to portray country’s soft image’

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Ehsan-ur-Rehman Mazari on Friday said that the government was committed to promote healthy activities in the country and all-out efforts were being made in this regard.

Addressing as a chief guest at the opening ceremony of 22nd Bridge Federation of Asia and Middle East (BFAME) Championship at a local hotel, he said that the federal government was providing a platform to conduct such sport events as it portray a soft image of the country.

He welcomed the participating teams from seven countries, including Pakistan, to the 22nd Bridge Federation of Asia and Middle East (BFAME) Championship being held from May 5 to 13 here.

Ehsan Mazari said that the participation of all the teams in the event was

self evident that Pakistan was a peaceful and sport loving nation.

The minister welcomed the participating teams from Bangladesh, India, Jordan, Palestine, United Arab Emirates and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and expressed the hope that the distinguished guests would have a wonderful time in Pakistan while enjoying the hospitality of Pakistanis.

He thanked the Pakistan Bridge Foundation and its President Mubashar Lucman for hosting the event.

President Pakistan Bridge Foundation Mubashar Lucman welcomed the participating teams to historical city of Lahore. He also announced life time achievement award to a 95-year-old woman bridge player, Kangla Alam, for her commitment to the sport.

Later, national anthem of all the participating countries were played to give a warm welcome to the teams.

## ‘Fire safety awareness campaign to be launched for SMEs’

KARACHI (APP): Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman Friday said that a fire safety awareness campaign will be launched for small and medium industries to provide them with protection and safety from fire. He said this on the occasion of a visit to the head office of Landhi Association of Trade and Industries (LATI) located in Landhi Industrial Area.

He said that the industries located in Karachi are our valuable assets, their safety and improvement of the environment were essential, LATI Fire Station has been established for 200 industries located in Landhi Industrial Area where fire tenders, modern equipment and personnel are available. The construction and repair of the roads of Landhi Industrial Area will be done on a priority basis, he added.

Chief Coordinator Landhi Association of Trade and Industries Zain Bashir, President Siraj Sadiq Monoo, Anees Majeed, Ajmal Afzal, Major Fahad, Major Fazal Ali and other members were also present while KMC was represented by Senior Director Municipal Services Nauman Arshad, Chief Fire Officer Ishtiaq Ahmed and other officers. Administrator Karachi said that the future of millions of people is related to industrial enterprises, their development is a guarantee of economic prosperity, the owners of small and medium industries are requested to cooperate fully with KMC Fire Brigade because the fire safety awareness campaign will help them to avoid fire and it is aimed to provide protection and security measures to industries.

The association concerned will also

cooperate with KMC in this awareness campaign which will help in improving the fire safety system.

He said that Landhi Industrial Area was established in 1940 during the British era with 90 percent of the textile, steel, pharmaceutical, automobile, chemical, engineering and flour mills in which about 270 thousand people work and 90 percent of the company's goods are exported abroad.

According to an estimate, this industrial zone contributes 20 percent to the national treasury and has a very important role in the improvement of the country's economy. All over the world, industrial zones are equipped with modern facilities and special measures are taken, especially in the field of fire safety and rescue, with the aim of protecting the factories located in these industrial zones from loss of life and property and in case of any sudden accident to minimize the damage through prompt and timely action. Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman welcomed the fact that the managing body of LATI and all the members are eager for the development of their region and are ready for all possible cooperation in this regard.

He said that we have to provide such a clean and green environment in the industrial areas in which industrial and business activities can be developed and by increasing domestic exports as much as possible, we can ensure the acquisition of valuable foreign exchange. KMC being the central municipal body is well aware of its responsibilities and will take whatever steps are necessary to improve the basic infrastructure of the Landhi Industrial Area.

## MILITARY ENGINEERING SERVICES TENDER NOTICE

1. The office of CMES (A) Psc invites sealed tenders for the following works in the light of PPRA Rule 13 (1) of 2004.

Ser	Name of Work
1.	Const of resdl/non resdl bldgs under AOR of CMES (Army) Peshawar
2.	Repair/Maint of resdl/non resdl bldgs under AOR of CMES (Army) Peshawar
3.	Provn of Ext Svcs works under AOR of CMES (Army) Peshawar
4.	Repair/Maint of Ext Svcs Works Under AOR of CMES (Army) Peshawar

2. The contractors are required to submit their applications for issuance of tender documents alongwith their complete credentials as shown at (serial No.8). The applications Shall be scrutinized and the tender documents will only be issued to the firms who have sufficient experience the relevant field and satisfy other special conditions required for the job and area. Tenders will only be issued to the scrutinized contractors. The tender must be received in the accepting officer by **1130 Hrs on 24 May 2023** and will be opened at 1200 Hrs on the same date.

**NOTE:** Contractors shall provide certificate that they are not involved in any type of litigation with Government department in the Court of Law and that no special report of Directorate of inspection and evaluation (E-in-Cs Br GHQ) is outstanding against them.

3. All contractors will certify in writing that they are registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), and will submit a copy of their registration. Contractors not registered with PEC are ineligible to apply.

4. Contractors born on approved list of MES in Categories 'A', 'B', 'C' or 'D' and also having experience of this type should only apply.

5. Contractors who desire may be present at the time of opening of tenders.

6. The accepting officer reserves the right to accept or reject the tender. Rejected tenders will be dealt with as per Para 33 (i) of PPRA Rules.

7. The interested parties can contact to concern CMES/authorized further details from 8. 0800 hrs to 1500 hrs on all working days.

Ser	Name of works executed during last two years and in hand	Agency	Amount of works (Rs)	Timing allowed in months	Date of Commencement	Date of Completion	%age progress of works in hand	Departmental performance report on each work by the Engineer in Charge
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LAHORE: Students performing on the stage drama titled "Tipu Sultan" organized by Government College Dramatics Club at GCU.

## Governor Punjab hails role of businessmen in country’s economy

LAHORE (INP): Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has said that the businessmen are playing an important role in the country's economy by bringing valuable foreign exchange to the country along with creating employment opportunities. He was speaking as chief guest at a special convocation organized here on Friday to award the honorary degree (Honoris Causa) of PhD Management to Pakistan's well-known businessman and philanthropist, SM Parvez, organized by University of Management and Technology (UMT) at Governor House Lahore. The Governor Punjab and Patron UMT Muhammad Balighur Rehman awarded honorary degree of PhD Management to SM Parvez.

Addressing the ceremony, Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the businessmen are playing an important role in the country's economy by bringing valuable foreign exchange to the country along with creating employment opportunities. He said that the role of business community in education and health sector for public welfare is commendable.

He said that SM Pervez has played an important role and contributed in the welfare of the people along with business. He said that we should cooperate with each other in good deeds to bring positive change in the society. The Governor Punjab while congratulating SM Parvez said that he has played an important role in busi-

ness and industry as well as humanitarian service and welfare. He further said that the incumbent government is practically trying to align with international standards so that our youth can compete with developed countries in every field.

The ceremony was also attended by Caretaker Local Government Minister Punjab, Ibrahim Hasan Murad, provincial minister for industries, SM Tanveer, provincial minister for sports Wahab Riaz, provincial minister for Religious Affairs and Auqaf, Syed Azfar Ali Nasir and other ministers, chairman UMT Dr. Ahmad Umar Murad, U. Acting President of MT Lt Gen (Retd) Javed Hasan, Rector UMT Dr. Asif Raza, Gohar Ejaz, industrialists and government officials.

## Minister directs PHC to seal any lab only after serving notice

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Minister for Primary & Secondary Healthcare Department Dr. Jamal Nasir has directed the Punjab Healthcare Commission (PHC) to serve notices on the laboratories before sealing them, in case of any complaints.

He was addressing the 13th CEOs Health Conference at a local hotel here on Friday. He said that the laboratories, which were not following the standard operating procedures (SOPs), laid down by the Healthcare Commission, might be fined instead of sealing their premises.

Dr Jamal Nasir observed that visits to hospitals had yielded positive results and brought about visible improvement in laboratories. He asked the Health Department and the

PHC to conduct a crackdown on quacks in the province in a bid to protect the lives of citizens.

He directed the medical superintendents and doctors to display their identity cards while performing their duties in hospitals. He said that the data of screening during World Health Week would help devise modern mechanism of treatment for patients.

Secretary Health Ali Jan Khan said that the department had issued a letter to the IGP asking for screening of all police employees. He directed the Health Department to expedite promotion cases of its employees. The officers not completing inquiries for last six months would be transferred and reported to the department, he warned.

He said there was no case of

monkeypox in the province, and people should not worry about contagious disease.

He said that the monthly conference of chief executive officers (CEOs) health would continue to be held to review their performance and devise a state-of-the-art healthcare system at the health facilities.

The minister and secretary appreciated the management for holding the conference in a befitting manner. Secretary South Punjab Mehr Hayat Lak, Special Secretaries Ammara Khan and Fatima Sheikh, Additional Secretary Khizer Afzal and Dr. Younis Iqbal, DG Health Services Dr. Ilyas Gondal and PDS IRMNCH, HCIP, EPI, TB Control, PACP as well as CEOs health from across the province attended the conference.

## Punjab CM Naqvi formally launches Mera Pyara app

LAHORE (INP): Punjab caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi formally launched "Mera Pyara", a public app of Punjab police, on Friday.

Punjab Information Minister Aamir Mir, Inspector general of police (IGP), Safe Cities Authority managing director, capital city

police officer (CCPO), chief traffic officer (CTO) and other officers concerned were present on the launch of the app. It is to be noted here that the app has been designed to reunite the lost children and people with their families.

CM condoles with Salman Iqbal:

Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has expressed his deep sense of sorrow and grief over the death of daughter of CEO ARY Network Salman Iqbal.

In a condolence message, he expressed his heartfelt sympathy and grief with the bereaved family.

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

PAKISTAN PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

INVITATION OF BIDS (SINGLE STAGE SINGLE ENVELOPE)

Sealed tender/bids on the basis of "Single Stage Single Envelops Procedure" are hereby invited for execution of the following works from eligible contractors/firms duly enlisted/register with Pakistan Engineering council (PEC) in relevant specialization technical category & financial limit Category C-4 & above is required on percentage rates basis on Pak. PWD Schedule of Rates 2022, who possess valid renewal with PEC, having renewal upto 30/06/2023.

S #	Name of Work	Approved Cost	E/ Money	Tender Cost
1	Construction of Operation Theatre Complex in Central Hospital Mingora District Swat	Rs. 156,121,600/-	2% of the bid amount	Rs. 5000/-

TERMS & CONDITION FOR ISSUANCE OF TENDER DOCUMENTS:

Attested copy of CNIC of Owner/Authorized Representative and Valid/Renewed PEC Registration Certificate in relevant category having specialized codes CE-01, CE-09 and CE-10.

Firms/Contractors must be an active tax payers list (ATL) of FBR.

Valid registration with Tax Authorities i.e. NTN.

No litigation certificate on Attested Judicial Paper.

The applicant firm should have completed at-least 02-Nos works of similar nature in last 05-years equal to or more than NIT amount & 02-Nos on-going projects not less than NIT amount and documentary proof duly verified by the issuing office must be attached with the application.

The bidders shall submit copy of annual account/audit reports (satisfactory QCR from will Rating firm) for the last 03 years duly certified by the Chartered Accountant.

List of relevant equipment/machinery on judicial stamp paper & list of personnel including PEC registered Civil Engineer having experience 05 years, DAE Engineers, Supervisory staff etc.

All Other terms and conditions are contained in the bidding documents.

Submitted documents will be scrutinized by the technical/financial committee and result will be conveyed through letters.

The eligible/interested firms will be called for issuance of bid and non eligible firm will also be informed through letter.

The applicant must submit documents as per term & condition with application upto 22/05/2023.

The tender documents will be issued to eligible firms on 25/05/2023 & will be opened on 26/05/2023 at 2.00 PM.

Nazir Ahmad | Executive Engineer

Central Civil Division No.II, Pakistan Public Works Department

Shami Road Peshawar.

Phone/Fax: 091-9211471/ Fax 091-9211471

E-mail: ccd1pwdpsh@gmail.com

PID(P) 14023



## Excise recovers hashish

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Following instructions issued by Secretary Excise, Ehsan Ullah and DG Excise, Akmal Khan Khattak, the department has geared up its actions against narcotics dealers, smugglers and their facilitators across the province.

According to the spokesman Excise, a team headed by Excise Officer, Engineer Dr Eid Badshah, Circle Officer, Sayed Naveed Jamal of Mardan Region, and SHO Excise Mardan Muhammad Riaz conducted a successful action at Ring Road Mardan on late night Thursday and recovered 105.6kg hashish from a vehicle.

The spokesman said after receiving a tip-off about smuggling of narcotics, the Excise officials blocked Charsadda-Mardan Road and signaled a car to stop. The car driver accelerated the vehicle in a bid to escape and abandoned the car on Service Road before escaping the area in darkness. The Excise officials recovered 105.6kg of hashish from the trunk of the car. A case was registered at Excise police station Mardan.

Secretary Excise, Ehsan Ullah has highly appreciated the efforts and services of the Excise Department Mardan in curbing the menace of narcotics.

## Chilam Josh Festival from 13th

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The four-day Chilam Josh Festival will be held in three Kalash valleys, including Bumburet, Birir and Rumbur from May 13 th to 17 th May, 2023. The annual festival comprises traditional events including dances of Kalash girls and boys to the beats of traditional drums and will be attended by a large number of tourists, including foreigners from all over the world.

The Chilam Josh Festival will start with 'Milkday,' in which Kalash people offer libations of milk that had been saved for 10 days prior to the occasion. The celebrations will highlight their cultural richness, plethora of colors and the underlying message of happiness. During the festival, the Kalash people will seek the blessings of their God and pray for the safety of their herds and crops of the community. Women usually dress up in traditional clothes of vibrant colors gold and silver jewelry, and elaborate headgear, while men wear traditional shalwar kameez with a woolen waistcoat. Kalash women and men dance and sing in a circle to the rhythmical chant of drum beats. Kalashi festivals are famous throughout the world and celebrated in different months of the year.

The Chilam Joshi festival starts at Rumbur valley and then festivities extend to other valleys of Kalash. People pray for the protection of their fields and animals before going to their fields and for this purpose, they usually spread milk on their Gods. On the first day, the Z'oshi/Zosh ceremony takes place, where boys and girls go to the higher pastures to pluck wildflowers and walnut leaves to the beat of drums.

## Guilty of harassment

# PHC orders to produce ombudsperson's record

**Humayun Khan**

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) ordered to produced Provincial Ombudsperson decision record against Chairman Department of Political Science Emir Ullah, Islamia College University before court regard harassment of students, on Friday.

The counsel for petitioner Sangeen Khan Advocate informed that Provincial Ombudsperson inquiry found guilty Chairman Department of Political Science Emir Ullah for his involvement in harassment of female students and recommended his termination but Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa accepted his appeal and didn't terminated him.

However, Justice SM Attique Shah inquired from the counsel regarding jurisdiction of Provincial Ombudsperson especially termination of employees while Sangeen Khan

## Travel agent obtains bail in producing fraudulent documents

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Judicial Magistrate Peshawar Fahim Ahmad has ordered release of Travel Agent on bail for preparing alleged fraudulent bank statement, on Friday.

According to prosecution, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested the petitioner's travel agent after nominating by Farhad for producing fraudulent bank statement to obtain foreign visa.

The counsel for petitioner Abdur Rehman and Amir Junaid advocates informed that the petitioner can't be liable for producing bank statement for applying to foreign visa before for Farhad because it is responsibility of the applicant. The argued that petitioner can't be charged on his client statement because it would pave way for other to blame other people for agitation to break law.

argued that Sexual Harassment Act has empowered Ombudsperson in this regard.

In the meantime, Justice Attique inquired regarding availability of record on file, however, the counsel replied that he didn't the record of provincial ombudsperson inquiry



PESHAWAR: PTI workers holding a protest for acceptance of their demands. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

## Faiq expresses grief over martyrdom of soldiers

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Chairman, Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP) Muhammad Faiq Shah voiced grave concern over surge in terrorists' incidents and target killings in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, saying that the deteriorating law and order situation was creating sense of insecurity among people of the province.

"We express extreme sorrow over martyrdom of six soldiers in gunbattle and killing of schoolteachers in ghastly attack in northwest region of the country", Shah in a statement issued here on Friday expressed sympathy with bereaved families of martyred soldiers and schoolteachers.

He warned the situation will further get worse if timely steps didn't taken to prevent the terrorists' attacks and such awful incidents in future. Faiq commented on the failure of talks between government and opposition to end deadlock on polls, saying that ending talks without any breakthrough was a defeat of politics and democracy.

With barely nine days left for the deadline, it seems unlikely that polls in Punjab would be held on

May 14, as talks remained inconclusive, he added. The party leader blamed that it was all happening because of the politics-based on personality and ego, as a result of that loss was only to the country, economy and people.

He once again suggested formation of a joint board, wherein concrete policies and decisions should be made to pull the country out from the present crisis situation. Shah called for following the trichotomy of power principle to bring Pakistan out of problems. He underlined the need for unity among political and democratic forces.

The country wouldn't afford anymore street politics, he added. Shah said it is the duty of the government to carry out the dialogue process and lead it toward success by using every means, stressing the need for showing flexibility from both sides. He emphasized all institutions should work in their constitutional ambit to bring Pakistan out of various problems including economic, inflation, unemployment and terrorism being confronted by the country. It was the right time to forge unity and work jointly for political

## APFMA announces strike

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: All Pakistan Flour Mills Association (APFMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has urged government to take notice of the ban imposed by Punjab on transportation of wheat and announced strike from May 8th if the ban was not lifted.

Addressing a press conference here Friday, Chairman APFMA KP, Haji Muhammad Iqbal said that government should take notice of the ban and save KP flour industry from collapsing. He said ban on wheat transportation is unconstitutional and it should be lifted immediately while check post established to check wheat movement should be abolished. He also demanded permission to purchase wheat for open markets in Punjab and said that it would revive flour mill industry of KP and also ensure provision of quality and cheap flour to people of KP.



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan in a group photo with special children.

## Cloudy weather with scattered rain likely in KP

F.P. Report

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

However, scattered rain-wind/thunderstorm (with isolated heavy rainfall/hailstorm) is likely to occur over Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Swat, Buner, Malakand, Shangla, Kohistan, Torghar, Battagram, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, Hangu, Karak and Kohat districts.

Isolated rain-wind/thunderstorm is likely to occur over Lakki Marwat, Bannu, Tank, D. I. Khan, North & South Waziristan districts.

During the last 24 hours mainly partly cloudy/dry weather prevailed over most districts of the province. However, rain-wind/thunderstorm with isolated hailstorm occurred in Swat, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Lower & Upper Dir, Kohat, Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan and Nowshera districts.

Rain (recorded in mm): Saidu Sharif 50, Malam Jabba 34, Kakul 15, Balakot 13, Timergara & Kohat Airbase 05 (each), Peshawar Airport & Upper Dir 03 (each), D.I. Khan 01 and Risalpur Trace. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 28/23, Chitral 27/13, Timergara 27/15, Dir 23/10, Mirkhani 27/10, Kalam 19/05, Drosh 27/14, Saidu Sharif 25/12, Pattan 28/17, Malam Jabba 15/06, Takht Bhai 26/17, Kakul 17/08, Balakot 19/11, Parachinar 23/07, Bannu 29/15, Cherat 22/13, D.I. Khan 32/19. The highest temperature recorded in the province was 32°C in Dera Ismail Khan.

## 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 Batkhela Grid Station on 6, 7 & 8th May from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. due to which consumers of 11KV Hisar Baba, Khaar, Pervaiz Shaheed, Batkhela, City Batkhela and Exp: Batkhela feeders will face inconvenience.

## ‘The externalities of Turbela Dam in Swabi’

**Nusrat Bibi**

**PAKISTAN due to its geographical location is the most affected area of the globe to the climate change extremes in the world on German watch's Long-Term Climate Risk Index (1998-2017) which has witnessed 152 extreme weather change events from 1999 to 2018. Still its laws and policies are in infancy and donor dependent. Despite of the large infrastructure and immense staff allocated on federal and on provincial level in Climate Change Ministry, Environmental Protection Agency and Disaster Risk Management Centers but their work starts in reaction to the damage always.**

The behavior of our people in these offices is to cry over the spilt milk only and usually complaining for deficiency of funds. Pakistan is not a poor country in resources but is poorest of the poor in finding committed people to rightly manage these resources. Above all the worst luck of my country is that we the people are the most sufferers in any calamity either it is natural or man-made. Why our government is least interested in providing us protection?

Since 1974 Swabians have sacrificed a massive area of land to the construction of Turbela Dam and consequently 100,000 people were displaced who are still not settled. Also, in summer season the days are hotter due to extreme humidity from this impound area of dam. Aside from such externalities, now we are suffering

from heavy rain and flash flooding since two years due to which our millions worth standing crops of Wheat and Maize have been badly affected with unlimited losses of infrastructure and other biota. Despite of the huge economic gains to the government in hydropower, the common man of Swabi is still poor and daily wagger. Moreover, due to this massive Dam, the soil of swabi is facing continuous salt deposits and fertility problems. Furthermore, the biggest cause of the flash flooding in Swabi is an intense precipitation and heavy rain due to humidity in the surrounding environment of this larger dam.

While now the climate change event has augmented the frequency and intensity of this precipitation to threshold level in summer in district Swabi and if not strategically planned and controlled this issue of flooding, there will be higher risk of Tsunami in the dam and district Swabi will suffer from collateral damages. Therefore, flood management is the utmost remedy on the part of the government.

In order to manage such catastrophic events, it is imperative to take preventive and precautionary measures along with preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment of Flood to analyze, assess, predict and formulate strategic solution of controlling the causes of precipitation and heavy rain and combat the causes and effect of climate change. More sustainable and sound regulations are needed urgently in this regard.

Attention must also be drawn to more scientific data and accurate research in ecology and environmental protection. In addition to, state of the art metrological system should be installed to predict the weather pattern and early alert warning to the communities along with other resilience policies. Similarly, nature friendly policies of land use planning and management should be directed along with sound outreach program to all the communities in the area for their awareness and up gradation in environmental management and climate change programs. Furthermore, ensure more plantations in the whole area and more wetlands development.

Above all, Zone wise division of land and scientific policies in engineering works of development should be readily made possible to avoid further development in the natural passages of water courses. Similarly encourage rain harvesting technologies and energy efficient housing with more plantation and natural soil to speed up the infiltration of rain water in the soil and regulate water recharge to the aquifers. Paved tops boost runoff and intense flooding so must be avoided in houses. The most important tool in addition to other sound solutions is to direct the agriculture department for research in early and flood resistant varieties of crops to withstand flooding. Encourage environmental policy and climate management degree programs and boost environmental policy makers and scientists.

*The writer is Environmental Policy advocate.*



PESHAWAR: A residence of Ramdas area Samiullah along with his mother address a press conference at Press Club. — F.P. photo

# Culture tourism: A unique feature of KP requires govt patronage for promotion through digital technology

PESHAWAR (APP): Known as land of Ghandhara civilization, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was always a centre of attraction for tourists due to its diversified culture, mouth-watering cuisines and primitive civilization besides unique cultural heritage that needed government patronage for its promotion especially through digital technology to attract foreigners.

From DI Khan to Swat and Khyber to Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was attracting monks, archeologists, architects, art lovers and historians throughout the year and started exploring the rich Gandhara civilization at Swat, Dir, Mardan and Peshawar with plenty of heritage sites.

Besides other districts, Chitral's Kalash valley also draws culture lovers from within the country and abroad due to its unique cultural dances and festivals besides natural and mountainous beauty. In three Kalash valleys, the four-day Chilam Josh festival would start from May

13-17 for which all arrangements were being finalized. The annual festival would be held at Bumburet, Birir and Rumbur valleys.

A Tourism and Culture Authority spokesman told APP on Friday that the annual festival comprises traditional events including cultural dances of Kalash girls and boys to beats of traditional drums would be attended by a large number of tourists, including foreigners from all over the world. The Chilam Josh festival will start with 'Milkday,' in which Kalash people offer libations of milk that had been saved for 10 days prior to the occasion. The celebrations will highlight their cultural richness, plethora of colours and the underlying message of happiness and joys.

During the festival, Kalash people will seek the blessings of their God and pray for the safety of their herds and crops of the community. Women usually dress up in traditional clothes of vibrant colors, gold and silver jewelry, and elaborate headgear, while

men wear traditional shalwar kameez with a woolen waistcoat. Kalash women and men dance and sing in a circle to the rhythmical chant of drum beats.

Kalashi festivals are famous throughout the world and celebrated in different months of the year. The Chilam Joshi festival starts at Rumbur valley and then festivities extend to other valleys of Kalash. People pray for the protection of their fields and animals before going to their fields and for this purpose, they usually spread milk on their Gods. On the first day, the Z'oshi/Zosh ceremony takes place, where boys and girls go to the higher pastures to pluck wildflowers and walnut leaves to the beat of drums.

On the second day, C'irik pi pi (Milk drinking and distribution day) is held, in which goat stables are decorated with wildflowers and walnut leaves, singing rituals, and ceremonies take place in every village. On the third day, villages get together at

the top of the village, distribute dried mulberries and walnuts for the ceremony of newly born babies while on the fourth day, during the Ghona ceremony, all the villagers of the Kalash community gather at the main venue, and similar rituals and ceremonies are followed.

The spokesman said KP tourism authority has planned to reopen the PTDC hotels for the attraction and facilitation of tourists, while ensuring security measures for the festival, including the deployment of tourism police for assistance and the safety of visitors. Similarly, Khattak and Mehsud dances were still popular in Waziristan, Khyber, Nowshera, Karak and others districts of the KP attracting music and dance lovers from across the country and worldwide due to its unique style.

Despite incidents of terrorism in the past, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has kept alive the centuries-old traditional Khattak dance. Being the national dance of Pakistan, Khattak dance

introduced by Pashtun's Khattak tribe in the 14th century, is still being performed mostly on the occasions of weddings, births and welcoming functions of VIPs in the province including merged tribal districts, leaving an indelible imprint on the minds of spectators. In spite of the passing of six centuries, Khattak dance is still able to withstand the change of times as its essence depicts an agility of a dancer, who performs at the thrilling beat of drums and from the core of his heart.

Khattak dance passed from one generation to another in Khattak tribe and gave birth to many dances including braghoni, shahdola, bangra, balballah, chatrali, tamseeli cana and charri dana that made deep inroads in our society. The Khattaks mostly lived in Karak, Nowshera and other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had used to dance on mesmerizing movement of swords as a warm-up exercise prior to taking on their rival tribes in a battlefield or achieving success against other warring tribes in wars.

The dance was also popular during Mughal and British eras, who recruited Khattaks in their respective armies for their heroic warfare skills on battlefields. The Mughals rulers were highly impressed with the bravery of Khattak tribesmen including freedom fighter Khushal Khan Khattak, who stood for the freedom and unity of Pakhtoons and highly praised their heroic battlefield performances.

With the passage of time, he said the dance became a permanent feature of their funfairs, marriages, engagements, welcoming of guests and sports events that gave the tribe an additional emblem of their distinct identity in KP. Khattak dance is performed in a bright and colourful traditional 'shalwar' and custom-made frock like 'Kamiz' in addition to a red embroidered waistcoat with a large decorative scarf tied around the waist. The dancers wave glittering swords in the air and swirl to drumbeats and tunes of the surnai that often enthralled the spectators.





## In brief

### One killed in tribal dispute

CHICHAWATNI (INP): A former revenue official was shot dead and his son with another relative were injured over a petty dispute in Chichawatni tehsil of Sahiwal district, Police confirmed on Friday. According to police, the incident took place in village 39/14L-P near Kassowal city. The issue exacerbated into an armed conflict between two clans. The exchange of fire claimed life of Ghulam Rasool Jatt, while his son Hassan and relative Yunus got injured. The firing triggered panic among the locals and situation remained tense for some time. A heavy force of police rushed to the crime scene to handle the situation. Police after reaching on the crime scene collected all possible evidence. Police shifted dead body to hospital for autopsy and injured are getting medical treatment in hospital. Police after registering FIR have launched raids to arrest the elements involved in clash.

### Four dacoits arrested

FAISALABAD (INP): Police arrested four members of two dacoit gang near here, during the last 12 hours. Police sources said here on Friday that a team of Eagle squad signalled four persons riding a motorcycle near Chak No 489-GB. But they, instead of stopping, left the two-wheeler on the road and fled to the nearby fields. The Eagle squad called the police force and started chasing the suspects. Later, after a small exchange of fire, police arrested a dacoit, later identified as Safdar of Chak No 494-GB, while three others managed to escape. Separately, a team of Bhairwala police post, arrested three accused including Wasim in another raid and recovered weapons, cell-phones and cash from them. All the accused were sent behind bars after registration of cases against them.

### Four arrested for torturing girl

PAKPATTAN (PPI): Four people were arrested from Pakpattan for allegedly torturing a minor girl and then parading her naked. According to the police on Friday, the suspects tortured the girl and later paraded her naked throughout the area. The suspects also recorded her video and uploaded it on social media. As the video made rounds on social media, the police also swung into action and arrested four suspects. The police further added that the suspects were arrested under the case registered by the girl's father. The police claimed to have initiated an investigation and soon get to the core of this matter.

### 5 motorcycles, valuables stolen

ATTOCK (INP): Robbers deprived citizens of five motorcycles, bundles of electricity wires, UPS, fans and irrigation valve in different localities of Attock on Friday, police said. According to details, Danish Khan s/o Gulzar Ahmed went to see his agricultural land in Madrota after parking his motor bike CD-70 number AKK-634 in a nearby place but when returned back found bike missing. In second incident, a visitor who came to the residence of Khan Afsar employee of FBR Attock in the same area was also deprived of his DC-70 motorcycle by some unidentified bike lifters. Two Honda 125 motorcycles owned by Adeel Awan s/o Misri Khan and a CD-70 motorbike of Umar Hayat s/o Zamurad Khan were also stolen from the same locality.

# Parachinar mourns killings of 8 people including 5 teachers

## F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: The killing of eight people including five teachers in Parachinar, Upper Kurram is being mourned on Friday. On Thursday, a tragic incident occurred in Parachinar, Upper Kurram, where eight people, including five teachers, were killed by armed men at Government High School Tari Mangal. According to the correspondent, the locals, civil societies, teach-

ers and lawyers staged protest demonstrations while all the markets and businesses were closed in protest and mourning.

The teachers' community, which has announced five days of mourning, also protested against the incident. Thousands of people participated in the protest. All the government schools in Parachinar will remain closed for five days. The lawyers have also joined in the protests, announcing that they will not appear in

the courts. The burial of the victims was held after the Friday prayer.

This incident has shaken the community to its core, and people are calling for justice for the victims. The authorities have launched an investigation into the incident, and it is hoped that those responsible will be brought to justice soon. In the meantime, people in large numbers are coming to express sympathy and solidarity with the families of the victims.

# Commissioner, elders discuss sustainable peace

## Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Commissioner Malakand Division Shahid Ullah Khan held a consultative meeting with local elders and community leaders in Saidu Sharif to discuss strategies for promoting sustainable peace and development in the region.

The meeting was held in light of the recent security related debates on social media platforms at the backdrop of Kabal Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) incident and aimed to seek input from local stakeholders on ways to address these challenges. Regional Police Officer Nasir Mahmood Satti also attended the meeting.

During the meeting, Commissioner Shahidullah Khan emphasized the importance of community engagement and collaboration in achieving lasting peace and stability in Swat. He recognized the role of local elders and community leaders in promoting dialogue and reiterated the government's commitment to supporting their efforts.

The participants discussed various issues related to security, governance, and socio-economic development in Swat and proposed several initiatives for addressing these challenges. These included enhanced communication and cooperation between different communities and law enforcement agencies, engaging youth in the dialogue processes and positive and effective utilization of social media platforms.

"The provincial government, along with local

authorities and community leaders, has been working tirelessly to restore peace in Swat Valley. Over the past few years, significant progress has been made towards creating a safe and secure environment for residents and visitors. Efforts have been made to improve security measures, including the establishment of police checkpoints and the deployment of additional security personnel in the region", said RPO Malakand in his address.

"In addition to security measures, various development projects have been initiated to improve the socioeconomic conditions in the region. These include infrastructure development projects, such as the construction of roads, bridges, and schools, as well as initiatives aimed at promoting tourism and boosting the local economy. The restoration of peace in Swat Valley has been a collective effort, with various stakeholders playing a crucial role in promoting peace and stability in the region. The government remains committed to continuing these efforts and ensuring that Swat Valley remains a safe and welcoming destination for visitors and residents alike", said Commissioner Malakand.

The Commissioner said that the provincial government, in collaboration with local stakeholders, is committed for sustainable peace and security in Swat Valley. In recent years, the region has witnessed significant progress in terms of socioeconomic development and improved security, thanks to the tireless efforts of the

security forces, local administration, civil society organizations, and the people of Swat he said.

"While much remains to be done, the progress made so far is a testament to the resilience and determination of the people of Swat, who have refused to be defeated by the forces of extremism and violence. The government remains committed to supporting them in their efforts to build a peaceful and prosperous future for themselves and their families", said the Commissioner during his address to the local elders.

The participants emphasized that the use of social media platforms for spreading propaganda and inciting violence has emerged as a major challenge to peace and stability in Swat Valley. Extremist groups and other anti-social elements have been using social media to disseminate hate speech and promote radical ideologies.

The participants said that this propaganda not only poses a direct threat to the security of the people of Swat but also undermines the efforts of the government and other stakeholders to promote peace and development in the region. It fuels mistrust and division among different communities and undermines the values of tolerance, pluralism, and coexistence that are essential for sustainable peace. The participants demanded that to counter this threat, there is a need for concerted efforts from all stakeholders, including the government, civil society, and media.

# Crackdown against wheat smuggling continue

## Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Crackdown on wheat smugglers and hoarders is underway in the district Hafizabad, district administration and PASCO have unearthed 72748 sacks of wheat worth Rs. 354.6 million illegally stocked at different places and during the crackdown. This was stated by the Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Umar Farooq Warriach. He said that special check posts were setup at entry and exits points of the district to contain smuggling of wheat while cases were also get registered against smugglers and hoarders.

**Pre-flood arrangements reviewed:** A meeting held to reviewed pre-flood arrangements made by the district administration and other departments. Additional Deputy Commissioner Intiaz Ali Baig presided over the meeting. Addressing the meeting ADCR directed the concerned department to complete all necessary arrangements to combat likely flood in the River Chenab during monsoon season. He directed the officers of Irrigation Department to ensure repairing of protective

bands of the rivers and canals in the district.

ADC also directed the all municipal committees of the district to finalized all arrangements for clearing rain water from low laying areas and clean all sewerage lines and drains ahead to start monsoon season in respective areas. District Emergency Officer Rescue 1122 Muhammad Adnan informed the meeting that teams of rescue 1122 are ready round the clock for protection of lives and property of the people in case of emergency situation. DEO told that boats, camps, engines of boats and other necessary equipments were in functional positions already to setup flood relief camps and to start rescue operation in case of flood situation in the River Chenab.

**Mobile health provided for rural community:** A mobile health unit has been launched to provide free of cost healthcare facilities to people in far-flung rural areas of the district. This was stated by the Chief Executive Officer Health Dr. Farehah Akram Malik. She said that mobile health unit was equipped with laboratory, X-Ray, ECG, ultrasound and other necessary

machinery while specialist male and female doctors have been deputed with mobile health unit.

**M e a n w h i l e ,** Programme Administrator Dr. Fahad Aziz briefed the CEO regarding working of the unit. He said that this unit would serve five days a week in rural and remote areas of the district for providing health facilities to the people at their doorsteps.

**Six unauthorized oil agencies sealed:** On the special directions of the Controller Civil Defense Hafizabad Umer Farooq Warriach, Civil Defence Department Hafizabad has started action against mushroom like growth of illegal oil agencies established in populated areas of the district to avoid any untoward and fatal incident.

In this connection, civil defense teams have sealed six unauthorized oil agencies operating in different areas of the district and get registered cases with local police station. Meanwhile, Assistant Director Environment Naveed Ahmad imposed fine on two bricks kiln owners to sell bricks on inflated prices and get registered cases to violate SOPs of the government.

# Woman, daughter killed in firing

MULTAN (INP): A woman and her minor daughter were killed by firing of unknown outlaws in the limits of Makhdoom Rasheed police station on Friday.

According to police sources, the woman identified as 23-year-old Sana was sleeping along with her

minor daughter Robab on the roof of her house in the garden town area when unidentified assailants opened fire on them, killing them on the spot. Upon receiving information, SP Saddar division and DSP Makhdoom Rasheed Circle reached the spot, however, the suspects had managed

to flee.

The bodies were shifted to Nishtar Hospital for autopsy while police started legal action into the incident. SHO Makhdoom Rasheed police station said that the blind murder case would be traced and culprits would soon be brought to justice.



PARACHINAR: Female teachers holding banner and placards during a protest against killing of their male colleagues. — F.P. photo

# KKKUK VC visits varsity depts

## F.P. Report

KARAK: The Vice Chancellor Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak Professor Dr. Sardar Khan visited various departments of the University on Friday and asked the concerned heads of departments about the classroom and other academic facilities.

Professor Dr. Sardar Khan was accompanied by the Registrar Muhammad Rashad Khattak and Deputy Director Administration Mr. Abdul Baseer. The Vice Chancellor also inspected classrooms and discussed the improvements standards in imparting education through use of different teaching methods. During his visit to the departments, he inquired students about their learning form the lectures and directed the faculty to use multimedia and other teaching technology in the classrooms to achieve the learning objectives and outcomes.

Professor Dr. Sardar Khan, also visited Laboratories and expressed satisfaction on the equipment and tools available for the students' research and experiments in the labs.

The Department of Library and information Science faculty informed the Vice Chancellor about the HEC recognized Journal of Information Management and Library Studies and the International Conferences organized by the department. Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan lauded the efforts of the department and asked the faculty to facilitate the MPhil and PhD scholars of the department in research.

The Heads of Physics, Geology and English departments also briefed the honorable Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Sardar Khan about teaching and research activities of their departments. The Vice Chancellor directed all the department heads to be regular and punctual in their duties.

Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan reiterated that classes would soon be started at the main campus of the University which will further facilitate faculty and students.

# Sugar seizes at Michni check post

## F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Approximately 27100 kg sugar has been seized so far by foiling smuggling attempts from Pakistan to Afghanistan in the on-going drive, launched by the administration at Michni checkpoint, Landi Kotal and Torkham.

Details provided by the Deputy Commissioner, Khyber on Friday stated that on the strict directive of the Chief Secretary, a joint team of departments of food and agriculture officials under the head of Assistant Commissioner, Landi Kotal Irshad Ali carried out anti-sugar smuggling activities at the check post.

During examination of Afghanistan bound loaded trucks, huge quantities of sugar and fertilizer, concealed in various cavities of vehicles, were recovered. Imposing a ban on export of sugar, scores of smugglers became active and they buy the contraband goods from an open market in Peshawar and after transporting it to the Torkham, smuggle it across the border.

# World Press Freedom Day KKK CMS dept arranges ceremony



## F.P. Report

KARAK: The Department of Communication and Media Studies Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak has arranged a ceremony here Wednesday to mark the World Press Freedom Day 2023. This day is celebrated at world level in line with resolutions of UN and UNESCO to honor the efforts of those media persons who risk their lives in providing essential information to the public. The students of Communication and Media Studies department and other departments of Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak participated in the ceremony.

Speaking at the Ceremony, Lecturer Department of Communication and Media Studies Mr. Abdur Rauf Khattak said that the roles of Media Professionals, Government Departments and Masses are pivotal in ensuring free flow of information to the public. He compared the press and government relations in

Pakistan since it came into being. He went on saying that abiding by the law of the country will protect the media persons from unnecessary litigations.

In his address to the ceremony, Assistant Professor of Communication & Media Studies department Mr. Wajahat Karim critically analyzed the press freedom situation in the country. He opined that we should work more to provide essential information to the masses as guaranteed in Constitution of Pakistan, UNESCO and UN resolutions. He has asked all the departments and media professionals and civil society to come forward and warrant free access to the vital information.

A student of CMS 8th Semester Mr. Zia Khattak, has expressed concern that some media professionals in Pakistan are having loyalties to some political parties which effects the press freedom. Speaking at the concluding ceremony, the Head Department of Communication and Media Studies Dr. Muhammad

Anwar, said that there shall be freedom of expression but this shall not be at the cost of religious and political rights of the world nations especially the developing countries. Dr. Anwar said that access to the information is the fundamental right of every citizen and no one be allowed to manipulate this right. He said that media literacy has become mandatory for every individual to get himself ready for the growing influence of social media. He lauded the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies for arranging ceremony on such important day.

The Faculty of Communication and Media Studies Department Mr. Basar Ali, Mr. Anwar Khan Mehsud and Mr. Abdullah Khan also spoke on this occasion and highlighted the importance of press freedom for social, political and economic development of the country. Later, the Speakers answered questions of the audience regarding world press freedom day.

# Academician delivers lecture on career opportunities

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A lecture on "life skills and career opportunities in Canada" was held in the convocation hall, University of Malakand here the other day. The guest speaker Professor Dr Fazli Manan, who has been teaching in Canada for the last 30 years, sensitized the students about the emerging challenges and opportunities in higher education in Canada. He said that collaboration and exchange programs of the faculty and students among University of Malakand and Canadian universities would open new avenues for academic excellence.

The Vice Chancellor, UoM Prof Dr Raheed Ahmad, lauded the guest speaker for his valuable thoughts and experiences. He pledged that it would provide a platform for the students and faculty to cope with international standards

and challenges in the education sector.

Dr Usman director ORIC, appreciated the interactive session and termed it productive and meaningful and said that it would provide a great opportunity for those students who intended to get Canadian scholarship and explore jobs in Canada. He pledged that such lectures would be held for the students in the future as well.

The ORIC team, UoM including Dr Mohammad Usman, Dr Muhammad Zahid Khan, Dr Tariq Khan, Maqsood Mazhar, members of the 'Kamyab Jawan Markaz' and volunteerism program including Dr Jawad Hussain, Dr Hamid Alam, Mr Jamil Anwar Abbasi, faculty members and students of various teaching departments attended the event.

**Kurram's incident flayed:** The Lower Dir teachers' organizations on Friday widely condemned

the killings of teachers in Upper Kurram district on the school's premises. In their separate statements the former provincial chairman of the All Government Employees Grand Alliance Syed Muhammad Shah, district president of the Insaaf Teachers Association Tahir Altaf Sarhadi, provincial leader of the Itihad e Asateza haji Khalique Rehman, district general secretary of the Wahdat e Asateza Shahid Mahmood and Malgari Ustazan leader Wazir Muhammad criticized the government and the Kurram's administration for their failure to protect the lives of teachers. They strongly condemned the incident and demanded the government and high ups of the police department to immediately arrest the killers. They said the teachers' community would have no option other than to come onto the roads if the killers were not arrested soon.

# D&SJ visits district jail Lakki Marwat inspected facilities

## F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: District and Sessions Judge (D&SJ) Ejaz Khursheed visited Lakki Marwat as directives issued by Chief Justice Peshawar Justice Musarrat Hilali in this regard.

The District and Sessions Judge Ejaz Khursheed was accompanied by the ADJ Amer Ali Sha, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Hadi, Superintendent to DSJ Tariq Saleem Minakhel and Medical Superintendent District Headquarters Hospital Dr Akbar Zaman.

The Superintendent of the Jail, Abdul Nasir, took

the officials to every nook and corner of the jail where the judicial officers inspected the barracks and spoke to the prisoners and heard their problems. Peshawar Electric Supply Company, Executive Engineer, Muhammad Ilyas, was also called to the jail where the judicial officers expressed dismay over the hourlong power outage to the jail, saying that all the prisons across the province were exempted from load shedding.

The XEN assured that he would make arrangement for uninterrupted power supply to the jail. MS Dr Akbar Zaman said that he would depute a medical officer to visit the

jail for prisoners' checkup on daily basis. Tehsil Municipal Administration Sanitation Inspector Fatehullah said that the employees would visit the jail on each weekend for spraying.

It may be added that Peshawar High Court Chief Justice Musarrat Hilali had a surprise visit to the district Jail Lakki Marwat on Tuesday where she noticed certain loopholes and directed the district and sessions judge Lakki to have another visit to the jail. It was really surprising to note that the CJ's visit was so secret that the district administration and media did not come to know about that.





# British citizens fleeing from Sudan left unsupported in UK

LONDON (BBC): British citizens evacuated from Sudan say they were left with nowhere to go on their immediate arrival in England after being unable to access support. Reefat Hassanin slept in a police station when a hotel said it had no knowledge of a Foreign Office booking. Sumer and her family said they were also unable to find council support.

Bristol City Council, which manages emergency accommodation, has since found them both somewhere to stay and said Bristol was a "city of sanctuary". Mr Hassanin and Sumer's family appear to have been impacted by government guidelines which mean those with a British passport do not qualify for emergency accommodation if they have been out of the country for an extended time. The government said it was trying to change the rules for people fleeing fighting in Sudan but that would take time. Mr Hassanin said he was told he had been booked into a hotel in Bristol after being evacuated from Sudan, but when he arrived the hotel said it had no details of a booking in his name and he was turned away. He said he had no phone number to call for assistance and that left him with nowhere to go, so he ended up going to a police station to ask for help.

"I went to the police station at three o'clock in the morning. I explained to the police and they gave me some biscuits and water. I have nobody here," he said. Sumer, 18, and her five siblings, including three-year-old Sarah, saw the conflict in Sudan up close, sheltering from bullets in their home before being able to return to Bristol, where they used to live before moving to the African nation. "Some of the shooting was right in front of our house and we were on the floor for two hours. "It was really hard. Some of the bullets came into our house and it was really

bad," she said. Sumer had been studying at university and said life was good in Sudan but everything changed when fighting broke out, which had left her family living in a warzone. As they are British citizens they were airlifted out by the RAF. At first they were given food and somewhere to stay by government agencies but found the council could not help with emergency accommodation when they arrived in Bristol. Both families initially relied on the kindness of the city's Sudanese community to give them a place to stay, but have now been found emergency accommodation by Bristol City Council. A council spokesperson said government guidance had changed and local authorities should apply a "flexible approach" to the Habitual Residence Test. "Bristol is a City of Sanctuary and we will always do what we can to support those fleeing conflict," they said.

"We will assess whether UK nationals returning to Bristol from Sudan are homeless and in priority need. Families with dependent children are automatically in priority need under homeless legislation." A government spokesperson said: "We have been working intensively to evacuate British nationals and their dependants since the outbreak of violence in Sudan. "Councils have a duty to ensure families are not left without a roof over their heads." Meanwhile, heavy shelling in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum disrupted efforts to deliver badly needed aid to trapped civilians, after yet another fragile and frequently violated truce ran out, residents said. Sudan has plunged into chaos since fighting erupted in mid-April between the country's two rival top generals. There is increasing concern for those trapped and displaced by the fighting, and aid workers and civilians have said there's a dire lack

of basic services, medical care, food and water. In central areas of Khartoum, sporadic explosions could be heard, a day after the United Nations warned that the Sudanese people are "facing a humanitarian catastrophe," and after the latest in a series of cease-fires expired earlier in the day. "The situation is very dire," said Atiya Abdalla Atiya, who leads a key doctors union. "All forms of shelling can still be heard in Khartoum, whether air or artillery shelling." Black plumes of smoke rising from downtown neighborhoods dotted Khartoum's skyline at midday. The fighting also raised questions about the viability of internationally backed initiatives seeking to bring an end to the violence that upended the African country's transition to democracy. The conflict started on April 15, preceded by months of escalating tensions between the military, led by Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and a rival paramilitary group called the Rapid Support Forces, or RSF, commanded by Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. The fighting turned urban areas into battlefields and foreign governments rushed to evacuate their diplomats and thousands of foreign nationals out of Sudan. Both sides have traded accusations of truce violations over the past weeks. , each side claimed its forces were the subject of attacks. The military said it clashed with RSF forces around key government institutions in Khartoum, including the Republican Palace in the capital's center. Cease-fire initiatives by the United States, Saudi Arabia and the East African bloc known as IGAD have all floated a path towards longer negotiations. But the warring sides have shown little commitment to even short-term promises to stop the fighting.

The doctors' group has in recent days warned that at least 60%, of



hospitals located near areas of active fighting are out of service, either because they have been shelled or due to the shortage of medical personnel and supplies. Among those in a critical, life-threatening situation are some 12,000 patients with kidney failure with no access to dialysis facilities. "People suffering from chronic diseases are dying at home because functioning hospitals are only attending to the wounded," said Atiya, of the Sudanese Doctors' Syndicate. The head of the UN children's agency, Catherine Russell, said from Kenya that "Sudan is teetering toward catastrophe" and warned that children are increasingly caught in the crossfire. "While we are unable to confirm estimates due to the intensity of the violence, UNICEF has received reports that 190 children have been killed and another 1,700 injured in Sudan since conflict erupted almost three weeks ago," she said. "For the sake of Sudan's children, the violence must stop," Russell added.

Kuwait's government announced that it will be dispatching flights carrying medical and humanitarian sup-

plies to the city of Port Sudan, on Sudan's Red Sea coast, the Gulf Arab country's state-run news agency KUNA said. Sudan's state news agency reported that the first Kuwaiti plane carrying medical supplies and food aid arrived afternoon. The flights are meant to deliver at least 75 tons of humanitarian assistance to the Sudanese health authorities and the Sudanese Red Crescent. However, the lawlessness brought on by the violence has also thwarted aid distribution across Sudan, with looting and attacks on aid and medical facilities posing major setbacks. A coordinator for the UN's refugee agency in the Darfur region, Toby Howard, said the organization's facilities in the areas of Nyala, South Darfur, El Geneina and West Darfur had been looted. Asked about who was doing the looting, Howard said it was common in the restive region even before the violence of the past two weeks. "I would put it down to basically uncontrolled militias, bandits, criminals. Some of them are loosely affiliated with one of the two sides in the conflict," he said during a virtual news conference from Kenya, where

he relocated after his evacuation from Darfur.

Port Sudan, the country's main seaport, experienced relative calm amid chaos elsewhere in Sudan and became a hub for tens of thousands of people looking to flee the fighting - and has now become the entry point for an international effort to get aid supplies into the country. The conflict has so far killed at least 550 people, including civilians, and wounded more than 4,900. The Sudanese Doctors' Syndicate, which tracks only civilian casualties, said that 457 civilians have been killed in the violence, and more than 2,300 have been wounded. At least 334,000 people have been displaced inside Sudan, and tens of thousands more to neighboring countries - Egypt, Chad, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Ethiopia, according to UN agencies. Thousands have funneled through crowded, desert crossing points between Egypt and Sudan in recent days, with many calling for aid groups to do more to provide the waiting crowds with basic assistance. , the World Health Organization said its workers were on the ground at the Egyptian-Sudanese border crossing of Arqin to help meet urgent medical needs for the first time since the influx of people started.

The UN refugee agency said that more than 50,000 people had crossed into Egypt alone, including 47,000 Sudanese and 3,500 third-country nationals. The US State Department said it has "successfully completed" the evacuation of more than 2,000 people from Sudan following the initial evacuation of US Embassy diplomats and staff. Of all the evacuated, roughly 1,300 are American citizens, green card holders, Sudanese working for the embassy or nationals of US partners and allies, deputy department spokesman Vedant Patel told reporters.

## US to control land sales to foreigners near 8 mily bases

WASHINGTON (AP): Foreign citizens and companies would need US government approval to buy property within 100 miles (160 kilometers) of eight military bases, under a proposed rule change that follows a Chinese firm's attempt to build a plant near an Air Force base in North Dakota. The Treasury Department's Office of Investment Security is set to propose the rule on Friday. It would give expanded powers to the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, which screens business deals between US firms and foreign investors and can block sales or force the parties to change the terms of an agreement to protect national security.

Controversy arose over plans by the Fufeng Group to build a \$700 million wet corn milling plant about 12 miles (19 kilometers) from the Grand Forks Air Force Base, which houses both air and space operations. As opposition to the project grew, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and US Sens. John Hoeven and Kevin Cramer, all Republicans, raised questions about the security risks and asked the federal government last July for an expedited review. CFIUS told Fufeng in September that it was reviewing the proposal and eventually concluded that it did not have jurisdiction to stop the investment.

The plans were eventually dropped after the Air Force said the plant would pose a significant threat to

national security. The new rule would affect Grand Forks and seven other bases, including three that are tied to the B-21 Raider, the nation's future stealth bomber. The Pentagon has taken great pains to protect its new, most-advanced bomber from spying by China. The bomber will carry nuclear weapons and be able to fly manned and unmanned missions. Six bombers are in various stages of production at Air Force Plant 42, located in Palmdale, California, while the two other bases will serve as future homes for the 100-aircraft stealth bomber fleet: Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and Dyess Air Force Base in Texas. The national security concerns regarding the other bases were not immediately clear. Also on the list were Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio and Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio, Texas, which are both training bases. The others selected for greater protection are the Iowa National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in Des Moines and Luke Air Force Base, located in Glendale, Arizona. The Air Force was not immediately available for comment on why the eight bases were selected.

CFIUS, a committee whose members come from the State, Justice, Energy and Commerce departments among others, already had the power to block property sales within 100 miles of other military bases under a 2018 law. Hoeven said the CFIUS process for review-

ing proposed projects needed to be updated. "Accordingly, China's investments in the US need to be carefully scrutinized, particularly for facilities like the Grand Forks Air Force Base, which is a key national security asset that serves as the lead for all Air Force Global Hawk intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations and has a growing role in US space operations," he said. In February, Andrew Hunter, an assistant secretary of the Air Force, said in a letter to North Dakota officials that the military considered the project a security risk but did not elaborate on the kinds of risks Fufeng's project would pose. The letter prompted Grand Forks officials, who had initially welcomed the milling plant as an economic boon for the region, to withdraw support by denying building permits and refusing to connect the 370-acre (150-hectare) site to public infrastructure.

Fufeng makes products for animal nutrition, the food and beverage industry, pharmaceuticals, health and wellness, oil and gas, and others industries. It's a leading producer of xanthan gum. It denied that the plant would be used for espionage. Lawmakers have also called for a review of foreign investments in agricultural lands. Earlier this year, Sens. Jon Tester, D-Mont., and Mike Rounds, R-S.D., introduced legislation aimed at preventing China, Russia, Iran and North Korea from acquiring US farmland.

## Millions pledged for oil transfer from tanker off Yemen

UNITED NATIONS (AP): Donors pledged an additional \$5.6 milli that will enable the United Nations to start transferring more than 1 million barrels of crude oil from a rusting tanker off the coast of war-torn Yemen that poses a major environmental threat, but the UN said nearly \$24 million is still needed to offload all the oil.

A large vessel called the Nautica, which was purchased by the UN Development Program in March to take on the oil from the FSO Safer, is expected to arrive in the region in the coming days and the transfer operation is expected to start before the end of the month, UN deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said. The UNDP said Egypt, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, South Korea, the United Kingdom and private company Octavia Energy and its subsidiary Calvalley Petroleum announced pledges totaling almost \$8 million, of which \$5.6 million represents net funding.

With the new pledges, the UN has now raised \$105.2 million for the operation to remove the oil from the Safer, with an additional \$23.8 million still needed, UNDP said. "But we're hopeful that as nations are aware of the need to avert a crisis in the Red Sea, they'll come up with the funding we need," Haq said. For the second phase of the operation, UNDP said an additional \$19 million will be needed to secure the Nautica and its newly transferred cargo of oil and to tow the Safer tanker to a salvage yard for recycling. The Japanese-made Safer was built in the 1970s and sold to the Yemeni government in the 1980s to store up to 3 million barrels of oil pumped from fields in Marib, a province in eastern Yemen. The impoverished Arab Peninsula country has for years been engulfed in civil war.

Yemen's conflict started in 2014 when the Iran-backed Houthi rebels seized the capital, Sanaa, and much of the country's north, forcing the government to flee to the south, then to Saudi Arabia. The following year, a Saudi-led coalition entered the war to fight the Houthis and try to restore the internationally recognized government to power. No annual maintenance has been done since 2015 on the ship, which is 360 meters (1,181 feet) long with 34 storage tanks. Most crew members, except for 10 people, were pulled off the vessel after the Saudis entered the conflict, and it's uncertain what the crew of the Nautica will find when they get to the tanker. In 2020, internal documents obtained by The Associated Press showed that seawater has entered Safer's engine compartment, causing damage to pipes and increasing the risk of sinking.

## Biden urged to halt US aid to Tunisia

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Academics, rights advocates and former diplomats in the United States have called on President Joe Biden to suspend aid to Tunisia and impose sanctions on its leaders to halt what they called the North African country's "dramatic turn" towards authoritarian rule. In a letter addressed to Biden earlier this week, nearly two dozen signatories warned that democracy in Tunisia was "dying" as President Kais Saied continues to consolidate power and crack down on dissent.

"If the US is truly serious about shoring up democracies worldwide, it must send a signal that there are real costs to democratic backsliding," letter reads. "The US should immediately suspend all US assistance to the Tunisian government, as it is legally bound to do after both military coups or civilian coups in which the military plays a decisive role." The letter was signed by former US ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul; Jeffrey Feltman, former assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs; Jake Wallis, ex-envoy to Tunisia; and Sarah Leah Whitson, head of

Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), among others. Elected in 2019, Saied froze the Tunisian parliament in 2021 and subsequently dissolved the legislature to rule by decree. Tunisia held legislative elections over two rounds in late 2022 and earlier this year that were mired by low turnout amid an opposition boycott.

Last month, Tunisian authorities arrested Rached Ghannouchi, the country's main opposition leader and head of the Ennahda Party, on charges of plotting against state security. Other prominent opposition figures, including Chaïma Issa, Ghazi Chaouachi and Jauhar Ben Mbarek, have also been arrested. "Since his coup in July 2021, President Kais Saied has dismantled every democratic institution in the country, pushing through a hyper-presidential system with no checks on his power," letter said. "He has intensified his crackdown against dissidents, casually labeling them 'cancers' and 'traitors' and hauling them before military courts." The letter urged Biden to impose sanctions on Saied and "his enablers, including the ministers of interior, defense, and justice", as well as stop

providing "any funds, training, or equipment to these ministries while they persecute journalists, activists and dissidents".

It also called on Washington to oppose a \$1.9bn International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan to the Tunisian government until it releases political prisoners and starts an "inclusive" national dialogue. Critics decried Saied's power grab as a "coup" that risked bringing the country back to the authoritarianism of the pre-2011 uprising that toppled longtime Tunisian leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. But the president's supporters say his actions are necessary "reforms" aimed at fighting corruption. Saied also sparked international outrage earlier this year when he suggested that what he called "illegal immigration" from sub-Saharan African countries aimed to change Tunisia's character as an Arab and Muslim nation. Letter accused the Tunisian president of embracing "racist conspiracies" against migrants. "We believe ... sustained pressure represents the best possible way to halt Tunisia's authoritarian turn," the advocates wrote to Biden.

## Raisi meets Palestinian officials

DAMASCUS (AP): Iran's president met senior Palestinian officials in Damascus and expressed his country's support to them as Tehran and Syria signed a series of agreements. Damascus-based Palestinian official Khaled Abdul-Majid told The Associated Press that the delegation briefed Iran's Ebrahim Raisi on the situation in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza Strip.

Iran has been a main backer of some Palestinian factions supplying them with weapons and money. "The Palestinian leaders thanked Iran for its support to the resistance and the Palestinian cause," Abdul-Majid, who attended the talks, said after the meeting. He added that Raisi confirmed to the Palestinian officials, including top leaders from the militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, that Iran will continue supporting the Palestinians. Raisi began a two-day visit to Syria during which the two countries signed a series of long-term cooperation agreements on oil and other sectors to bolster economic ties between the two allies. Raisi held talks with Syrian President Bashar Assad and visited holy shrines for Shiite Muslims near the capital Damascus. Tehran has been a main backer of Assad's government since a 2011 uprising turned into full-blown civil war and has played an instrumental role in turning the tide of the conflict in his favor. Iran has sent scores of military advisers and thousands of Iran-backed fighters from around the Middle East to Syria to fight on Assad's side. Tehran has also been an economic lifeline for Assad, sending fuel and credit lines worth billions of dollars.

Syrian government forces have regained control of large parts of the country in recent years, with the help of its two main allies - Russia and Iran. With Arab governments that once advocated Assad's downfall now slowly making amends with Damascus, Iran appears to be hoping to reap the rewards for its decades-long support of the Syrian president with investment and economic opportunities to help alleviate its own ailing economy. Syrian state media said Raisi and Assad signed agreements and memorandums of understanding related to several sectors, including oil, agriculture, railways and free trade zones. Iran's state-owned railway company has long aspired to expand its network through neighboring Iraq and Syria, linking it to the Syrian port of Latakia on the Mediterranean Sea to boost trade.

## White House's Sullivan to travel to Saudi this weekend

WASHINGTON (Reuters): White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said he will travel to Saudi Arabia this weekend for talks with Saudi leaders, as the United States seeks to bolster often-frayed ties with Riyadh. Sullivan, speaking at a think tank conference, also said the United States will "take the necessary action to ensure that Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon" and still seeks a diplomatic outcome to the challenge posed by Tehran.

Sullivan, speaking at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said he would be traveling to Saudi Arabia for talks with Saudi leaders. A source said Sullivan is expected to meet with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Oil production cuts by Saudi-led OPEC+ and differences between the United States and Saudi Arabia over the 2018 death of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi have damaged ties. Sullivan said that also going to Saudi Arabia will be representatives from

India and the United Arab Emirates to discuss "new areas of cooperation between New Delhi and the Gulf as well as the United States and the rest of the region." Former President Donald Trump's administration brokered a number of normalization deals between Gulf allies and Israel. Sullivan said the United States was working hard to normalize relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

"Ultimately getting to full normalization is a declared national security interest of the United States. We have been clear about that," he said. "Now as a sign of my seriousness about how much we're focused on this, and how seriously we are taking this, I am not going to say anything further lest I upset the efforts we are undertaking on this issue," he said. Sullivan said the United States still seeks a diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear program and lamented Trump's decision in 2018 to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal. "Yes, we will

take the necessary action to ensure that Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon," Sullivan said.

"At the end of the day, that is the fundamental test - Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon. They do not today and they cannot have one," he said. Sullivan said Washington was working with allies including Israel to deter Iran from developing a weapon. "We will continue to send a clear message about the costs and consequences of going too far, while at the same time continuing to seek the possibility of a diplomatically brokered outcome that puts Iran's nuclear program back into a box," Sullivan played down US tensions with Israel that have developed since Benjamin Netanyahu took over again as Israeli prime minister late last year. He said he held a video conference with his Israeli counterpart and Netanyahu joined in for part of it. He did not say, however, when Biden would extend an invitation to the Israeli leader to visit Washington.



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# Pak-Afghan ties and tri-lateral huddle

A high-level Afghan delegation led by the acting Afghan Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi is currently on a 4-day official trip to Pakistan. Afghan delegation comprises diverse ministries including the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Foreign Affairs, and Transport, and is scheduled to have multiple inter ministries engagements with their Pakistani counterparts to boost ministries level cooperation between the two brotherly nations. At the same time, the Afghan acting Foreign Minister will participate in the 5th China-Pakistan-Afghanistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue along with his Pakistani and Chinese Counterparts on May 6, in Islamabad. According to the official press release of the Pakistan Foreign Office, during the ongoing visit, the two sides will review the entire spectrum of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the political, economic, trade, connectivity, peace and security, education, and other domains of bilateral interest.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are two brotherly nations that are linked by diverse and Comprehensive bonds ranging from religion to history, trade, and economy to culture and tourism. Meanwhile, massive migration and refuge from Afghanistan due to persistent political unrest and turmoil had transformed had cemented this decadeslong bond between the two countries. Historically, the people of Pakistan have extreme sympathy and commiseration for their Afghan brethren, and Pakistani leadership actively works at the UN and other global forums to conceive a global consensus for constructive engagement with the Afghan interim government to pave the way for durable peace, political stability and economic revival in war-hit Afghanistan. Afghanistan sits as a key geographical trade and transit route between South and Central Asia. The mountainous region is blessed with billions of dollars of untapped natural reserves that could change the fate of Afghans if peace and stability prevail in war-hit Afghanistan. Hence, sustainable peace in the neighboring nation will not only lead to a safe and dignified return of millions of Afghan refugees but will also embolden the prospects for regional connectivity, enhanced trade, and cooperation in the region and beyond.

The current visit by Afghanistan's acting foreign minister comes at a time when Pakistan is witnessing a sharp uptick in terrorist attacks by the proscribed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the bilateral relations between the two neighbors suffered a brief setback over the issue of terrorism allegedly stems out of Afghanistan. The Pakistani authorities had urged Kabul to eliminate terrorist safe havens and take action against the banned terror outfits camped and operate out of Afghanistan. However, the Taliban rulers denied these accusations and no equally accepted solution to the issue could be not conceived by both neighbors so far. Meanwhile, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan yet not get ceremonial recognition from a single state in the world and faces total diplomatic isolation after seizing control in August 2021. The Western nations and the global community are still not ready to deal with the interim Afghan rulers who did not stand by their obligations under the Doha agreement in respect of political inclusiveness, human, women, and religious rights along with ensuring that Afghan land could be used by terrorist groups against any nation in post-US Afghanistan. The current scenario presents a gloomy picture regarding the future of the Afghan nation which is currently embattled with severe economic and humanitarian crises, risks of renewed violence, and finding no pathway to get out of the persistent violence and instability in the country.

Despite getting a cold shoulder from Afghan interim authorities against the banned terror outfits, Pakistan is still engaged at global, regional, and bilateral levels to create conditions that reduce the sufferings of the people of Afghanistan and promote fraternity and brotherhood between the two nations. To that end, Pakistan has recently approached the UN to facilitate the Afghan acting Foreign Minister's participation in the current China-Pakistan-Afghanistan Trilateral Dialogue. Hopefully, the three neighboring nations would deliberate on mutual issues and prospects for optimum trilateral cooperation to grasp maximum benefits from joint efforts, resources, expertise, and collective wisdom. As, the destiny of the people of the region lies in peaceful co-existence, joint work, and cooperation.

# Rishi Sunak is making us ever more reliant on mass immigration

IT'S almost seven years since the country voted for Brexit - and a new economic settlement. For Europhiles like me, who loved the idea of a borderless future, it was time to let go of an old dream. The fall of the Iron Curtain had brought plenty of opportunities, but the gains had been too lopsided. It wasn't a vote against mass immigration or globalisation but a vote to manage it better, in a way that had carried greater democratic buy-in. Everyone imagined immigration would fall, and by quite a bit.

Everyone got it wrong. David Cameron had famously tried to get net immigration down to the "tens of thousands" but the figures due later this month will show it well into the hundreds of thousands. New arrivals may encounter more friction: queues can be longer in airports, the paperwork more of a headache. But never have more people settled these islands than are doing so now, in these post-Brexit years. If British unemployment was low, as in the postwar years, this would be a good sign of a growing economy. But we have an unemployment crisis, with over a million vacancies across the UK, yet a near-record five million on out-of-work benefits. Brexit was an opportunity to wean employers off the drug of cheap foreign labour, force them to offer better pay and training and lure Britons back to work. It would be painful, but it would be necessary. A new economic model would have to be built.

Boris Johnson, for all of his faults, anticipated this post-Brexit power struggle. The employers would howl in protest at the lack of immigrants, saying that the

British would not do the jobs. To which the government would respond: pay more, and they will come. Invest in automation. Don't waste humans on jobs that machines could do. Don't expect politicians to procure cheap workers, that was the whole point of Brexit. And if this means slower GDP growth, even higher prices: so be it. An important readjustment needs to get under way. Then Covid came, lockdowns scrambled every-

migration tap is being turned on fuller than ever before. Attempts to get Britons back to work, it seems, have been all but abandoned.

Rishi Sunak would vigorously reject this analysis, saying the last Budget was designed to be pro-work. But his own officials have given up on this and are quietly preparing to pay the price of massive failure. Their figures - which have

Freser Nelson

Since Sunak arrived in Downing Street as Chancellor, welfare costs for the working-age have risen by £33?billion - more than the combined budgets for the Home Office and Foreign Office. Not tackling this problem is easily the most expensive decision that has been taken. And it's one that has had almost no discussion. Set aside the financial cost: the human cost is on a scale

claiming a disability. It represents a staggering, unexplained and devastatingly expensive economic change.

This scandal hides in plain sight. A quarter of Hartlepool and almost half of those in central Blackpool are on out-of-work benefits, in spite of local worker shortages. But such places are easily ignored in the national political debate. The Tories don't want to draw attention to their own failure and

marks a line of least resistance: welfare reform is a tough, thankless task. Economically, it's eye-wateringly expensive. Socially, it's no way to run a country. You can argue (as I do) that immigration has enriched Britain and that we have good claim to be the world's most successful melting pot. But if we are to welcome two million more over the next five years, it raises certain questions - such as where they all might live. It strengthens the case for planning reform. At the last count, the new housing stock (200,000 a year) was barely enough to keep pace with net migration (500,000 a year). More homes will now, of course, be needed - so at very least, Michael Gove might want to stop vetoing new housing schemes on the grounds that he finds them too ugly.

One of the benefits of Brexit was to make Britain the only country in Europe without populists in Parliament. Voters thought that Labour and Tories, who both campaigned for Remain, had changed: they understood the need to discuss demographic change. It was never a vote against immigration, just to manage it better. And not use these industrious immigrants as cover to duck difficult discussions about wages, welfare or economic reform. Brexit was never, on its own, going to make Britain better or worse. It simply meant the retrieval of powerful tools: all would depend on how they are used. If there ever was a plan to use immigration controls to force economic reform and raise wages, we can now safely declare it abandoned. Mr Sunak may have to hope voters don't notice before the next general election.

The Telegraph

*The migration tap is being turned on fuller than ever before. Attempts to get Britons back to work, it seems, have been all but abandoned. Rishi Sunak would vigorously reject this analysis, saying the last Budget was designed to be pro-work. But his own officials have given up on this and are quietly preparing to pay the price of massive failure. Their figures - which have never been reported - envisage £1.9?billion a week now spent on welfare for working-age people, up 52 per cent on pre-pandemic levels. Up 13 per cent since last year alone. And scheduled to keep rising for the foreseeable future. The Prime Minister is lucky that Labour has not cottoned on to this, because it really is the kind of failure that could be added to a poster with his signature on it. Since Sunak arrived in Downing Street as Chancellor, welfare costs for the working-age have risen by £33?billion - more than the combined budgets for the Home Office and Foreign Office. Not tackling this problem is easily the most expensive decision that has been taken. And it's one that has had almost no discussion. Set aside the financial cost: the human cost is on a scale that, still, has not properly been taken in. Before the pandemic, 2.3 million working-age people were claiming disability benefits.*

thing, and immigrants played a full role in getting the country working again - making up a record 19 per cent of the workforce, higher than even the United States. But the failure to nudge Britons back into work has still meant huge, painful worker shortages. Employers held their nerve, care home pay actually fell in terms of the average salary, and eventually the government buckled. The

never been reported - envisage £1.9?billion a week now spent on welfare for working-age people, up 52 per cent on pre-pandemic levels. Up 13 per cent since last year alone. And scheduled to keep rising for the foreseeable future. The Prime Minister is lucky that Labour has not cottoned on to this, because it really is the kind of failure that could be added to a poster with his signature on it.

that, still, has not properly been taken in. Before the pandemic, 2.3 million working-age people were claiming disability benefits. The working assumption of the Department for Work and Pensions is that this rises to 3.7 million in five years' time. What will become of these extra 1.3 million? That's equivalent to a city the size of Birmingham exiting the national workforce after

Labour still struggles to regard high welfare numbers as a problem. A conspiracy of silence might very well hold. So net immigration is expected to stabilise at an average 250,000 a year - the equivalent to a city the size of Stoke-on-Trent - for the foreseeable future. This will cover the impact of the 200,000 now expected to sign on to disability benefit each year. Politically, it

# Ukrainians are white and Sudanese are not - it's as simple as that

Mudassar Ahmed

SUELLA Braverman, the UK home secretary, last week helped shrink Britain further, with her lack of basic empathy toward victims of displacement and conflict not only embarrassing us, but further accelerating our global decline. While our government was bravely scrambling to rescue British citizens from Sudan's spiraling violence, Braverman callously dismissed the idea of a safe and legal route to the UK for Sudanese asylum seekers.

When the BBC asked Braverman whether the government would set up routes for Sudanese asylum seekers, no different from the program they put in place for Ukrainians last year, Braverman claimed the situation is "very different" because of the "longer-term implications" of the conflict. This is false. For one, the long-term implications of the war in Ukraine were not considered when the Ukrainian asylum program was put in place.

The situation on the ground in Sudan may well be "fast-moving and rapidly changing," with "a lot of unknowns," but how is that any different to what hap-

pened in Ukraine? The Ukraine conflict arguably has greater long-term potential for spreading violence. We are now well over a year into this war and there is no end in sight. We are, in fact, likely to see a huge new wave of violence as Ukraine prepares to go on the offensive.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine brought warfare to Europe on a scale not seen since the Second World War. Russia is, of course, a nuclear power - as is NATO, which backs Ukraine. The possibilities of miscalculations are enormous. But this is not about geopolitical analysis. The difference between the situation in Sudan and the one in Ukraine is, unfortunately, clearer than that: Ukrainians are white and Sudanese are Black. Braverman herself has not shied away from making it clear that asylum seekers who come to the UK on small boats - the majority of whom are of a different skin color or religion - are ultimately less welcome, because they "possess values which are at odds with our country" and engage in "heightened levels of criminality."

These are vile and

inflammatory remarks that have no basis in fact. Braverman claims that senior police officers across the country have told her asylum seekers who have come by small boats engage in "criminality and prostitution," yet not a single officer has corroborated these claims or provided any hard data to back them up. In her quest to ensure the public turns on asylum seekers so that the government can ultimately treat them like hostile adversaries, Braverman is not afraid to scrape the barrel of public discourse.

Ukrainian refugees rightly benefited from a relatively efficient system that welcomed them into safe and warm accommodation. But Sudanese refugees have very few options open to them if they want to seek safety in Europe. Sudan's immediate neighbors are struggling with their own internal conflicts and instability, meaning that any Sudanese wishing to flee to Europe will be at the mercy of dangerous smuggling gangs, which will be more than happy to exploit their misery. Denying the possibility of safe routes to the

UK is not just deeply callous to Sudanese, but also deeply offensive to British citizens who do not think in racist terms - or who themselves might not be white.

There is an infamous "Family Guy" meme, in which a police officer consults a skin color chart to determine whether someone is a terrorist or not. When we look at the discrepancies between this government's positions on Sudanese and Ukrainian refugees, it seems those in power in the UK have been consulting the very same chart. Of course, this should be of no surprise, as Braverman has been on a roll of late, "dreaming" of deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda, describing the uncoordinated, desperate arrival of refugees on small boats as an "invasion," and rehashing debunked Islamophobic grooming gang stories. Her desperate appeals to the far right around the Conservative government's immigration and asylum policies are even going down poorly with some fellow Tory MPs. Jonathan Gullis, the Tory MP for Stoke-on-Trent North, who is usually

a happy flag-bearer for callous Tory asylum policy, said in response to Braverman's "values" comments that they made him feel "uncomfortable."

They are also not going unnoticed by the global community. Two separate arms of the UN have intervened, with its refugee agency and human rights agency both expressing "concern" at the UK government's plan to deport all "illegal" asylum seekers. Earlier in the year, following a wave of legislation that targeted asylum seekers, the right to protest and restricted voting, Human Rights Watch warned that the UK could be listed alongside countries that abuse rather than protect human rights. These high-profile criticisms of UK government policy only solidify the idea that we are increasingly governed by a small-minded, out-of-touch and harsh cadre of politicians, who seem to be successful at very little except accelerating our global retreat. You would think these interventions would perhaps make Braverman pause and rethink her rhetoric. After all, most politicians are keen observers of their

own public brand.

However, within the politics of performative cruelty that seems to be dictating Tory government policy, there is the belief that the cheers only grow louder the more callous you are. Let us not forget that this inflammatory rhetoric against asylum seekers has a very real and dangerous impact. Last November, an immigration center in Dover was attacked with a firebomb by an Islamophobic extremist. And, in February, anti-refugee protesters clashed with police outside an asylum hotel in Knowsley, injuring officers and setting fire to a police vehicle. With the coronation of King Charles taking place this weekend, the world's media will be focused on the UK - and the world will assuredly be asking what kind of country we will be. An occasion for pride and pageantry should also celebrate the democratic journey our nation has been on. We embrace those who seek shelter. We play a positive role in the world. We are not a nation of Suella Bravermans. And it is as simple as that.

Arab News

# Lebanese dreams of a new political system are futile for now

Khaled Abou Zahr

MORE and more voices across the political spectrum in Lebanon are expressing the need for a new political system. There is a growing consensus, even among political foes, that the confessional system no longer works - or, to be precise, never worked. However, this might all be "philosopher" talk in the pejorative Arabic sense. These voices - mine included - have no impact on realpolitik. It is just theory, while others are holding AK-47s and controlling the gritty backstage political deal-making. But this should not stop people hoping for or dreaming of change.

Among the dreamers, there are now two main paths for a new Lebanon. To start with, both aim to put an end to confessionalism. The two paths are the centralized executive and the federation. In the centralized executive version, the call is for a universal direct election of the presi-

dent and the cancellation of all confessional laws, or the existing pro rata system, through the establishment of a civil state. In the federal system, it is about recognizing the various confessions and giving them autonomy and decision-making power at the local level. And so, we quickly notice that, in Lebanon, even in dreams there is confrontation.

I will be a cynic and say that the vision of a centralized executive power is in fact the continuation of the nightmare Lebanon is living. And those who dream of it are either manipulated or are the unwilling accomplices of those holding the power and the AK-47s today. Nevertheless, the transition to either system carries major risks. In the presidential system, the risks are bigger, as it will ostracize entire smaller minority communities. This could lead to violent clashes. In the transition to a federation, the risks of secession are real, as well as the delimitation of zones,

which could lead to clashes.

The centralized civil system is not the right solution for Lebanon because, although you can easily cancel confessions in identity documents, you cannot cancel them in people's blood. This is the reality. This system would lead to continuous tensions and eventually would bring back the pro rata system. This is simply because the executive will seek a consensus and aim to balance decision-making between all confessions. In the worst scenario of this system, one confession will take full power and oppress, to differing degrees, all the others. In fact, despite its claims of canceling confessionalism and making all citizens equal, this system would solidify that system.

A federation would be a much better solution for Lebanon. It would recognize each community and celebrate them. It would give each community its own authority and autono-

my. This would avoid the pro rata balancing act that invites corruption. It would make each political leader accountable in front of their constituents. They would no longer be able to hide mismanagement by exploiting the fear of the other. A federation would allow each community to govern itself on what matters the most to them: education, healthcare, security and much more. More importantly, it would have the power to shift the country from confrontation to positive competition.

The main point here is that the presidential system would keep Lebanon as a victim of external geopolitical shifts. The fight between communities to be the leading group would never stop. And each community would seek or even beg for foreign support to protect its interests. Nothing would change and Lebanon would never reach stability, just as was the case during the various

occupations of the country. Once again, a federation would cancel all of this. There would be no need for any community to seek protection from the others as they would all live peacefully side by side. In a federation, they would all unite in the face of outside threats to protect federal strategic interests.

Ultimately, little government is good government for Lebanon. The current crises have shown that the Lebanese can self-manage and do better when the government is not involved. Moreover, despite the depth of the crisis and the geopolitical tensions, until now, security events have been limited. This is not due to the actions of the government or the political leaders, it is because of the actions of the people.

A Lebanese confederation would hence be a perfect embodiment of what the Lebanese are. Moreover, the versatility of federations allows for each state or region to vote on laws and move faster on

what matters the most to them, while the others have a chance to witness this and decide whether or not to follow suit. It would definitely bring greater protection to each community and dissipate intra-confessional friction. Let each group have their own councils and vote on the laws that impact their everyday lives.

However, in the end, whether a strong executive or a federation, this is only the form and is meaningless without a vision, leadership and strategy, all of which are missing in Lebanon today. Short of this formulation, both systems are just useless dreams that will be crushed by those holding the AK-47s. The Lebanese urgently need to decide what they want their future to be like and encourage the formulation of a vision that is at the level of the ingenuity of the people. A good start might be to state what we stand for and not just what we stand against. Only then will the transition to a new political system be possible.



# Aim for ‘marathon economy’ in long run

THE marathon industry in China has been one of the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. But with the country emerging from the pandemic, the revival of marathons seems to be gathering momentum, too. The past month has witnessed a significant surge in organizing marathons across the country. Marathon running started gaining popularity in China only in recent years, but it has turned from a niche sport into one of the favorite pastimes in China within a relatively short period of time. The number of marathons hit an all-time high of 1,828 before the pandemic in 2019, a more than 30-fold increase from 51 in 2014.

What's behind this marathon boom? What are the costs and benefits of hosting a marathon? And where does the money to host a marathon come from? You could be forgiven for thinking that hosting marathons is a profitable business because of the sheer number of marathons held across the country. But, as a matter of fact, apart from a few premium events such as the Beijing Marathon and the Shanghai Marathon, loss-making is the rule rather than the exception when it comes to organizing marathons in China. Unlike in developed countries, where major marathons could receive significant amount of money from broadcasting rights, even the most premium ones cannot generate profit from broadcasting rights in China. Quite the opposite, they have to pay to get aired on national TV channels. As a result, entry participation

fee and sponsorship are often the major sources of revenue for marathon organizers in China. But since the participation fee for marathons in China is very minimal, and sponsorship income covers only 50-60 percent of the total cost, most of the events have to rely on public money to break even. A Chinese Athletics Association report says on average the operational cost of an A1-class full marathon is close to 12 million yuan (\$1.73 million) with a shortfall of some 5 million yuan to be covered by government funding. In short, marathon hosting is largely a money-losing business. Then why do so many cities still rush to host marathons? Is it worth it? First, the economic impact is commonly claimed to be the most compelling rationale for hosting a marathon. Marathons are typical sports tourism events as they often attract participants and spectators from outside the host region, too. Spending by these tourists on accommodation, transportation, food and beverage, sports equipment, event merchandising and entertainment, as well as general shopping represent new money injected into the host community, which likely stimulates the local economy, creating new jobs and incomes and increasing the tax revenue.

For instance, an economic impact study showed that the 2019 Xiamen Marathon, with more than 80 percent of the 35,000 runners coming from outside the host city, directly contributed more than 171 million

yuan to the local economy. But as the size and influence of marathons could vary drastically, the economic impact of a marathon depends on the number of visitors it attracts.

Second, marathons also have the potential to produce long-term effects in terms of, for example, visibility and image impact on the host community. A marathon often features some of the best routes and iconic landmarks of a city, and could generate significant publicity about the host city. This image impact could be further expanded through media exposure, both traditional media and now increasingly social media. An annual premium sports event could become a strong brand in itself and enhance the host city's image by serving as a symbol of strength and vitality. Destination image is essential for a city's competitiveness and long-term success because it is a key factor influencing the choice of important stakeholders of a place, including inward investors, multinational companies, as well as tourists, both actual and potential.

That's why many believe that image impact may in the long run be greater than the immediate economic impact generated by the spending by visitors attracted to a place because of the event. And third, marathons have non-market values for the host community. The marathon boom in China is first and foremost driven and sustained by a growing social demand for quality leisure products. International experi-

ence shows there is a strong link between sports consumption (including consumption of sports gear) and economic development.

The growing popularity of marathons mirrors the rise of living standards and consumption upgrading in China. While running may be a low-bar sport, the annual expenditure of an average marathon runner could easily exceed \$1,000 with expenses on running gear, training, and for traveling to events. The burgeoning number of marathons not only satisfies the needs and wants of a growing middle-income group with rising disposable income, but also helps to promote a healthy lifestyle and attract more people to take part in sports, leading to reduction in medical costs and improvement in life quality. Other potential non-market values of a marathon include psychological satisfaction such as the feel-good effect and promotion of volunteerism and social cohesion in the host community.

Calculating the economic importance of a marathon is not a straightforward job. While public money has to be used to fund marathons in most cases, the potential economic and social benefits could be very wide-ranging. With the marathon boom expected to continue and competition intensify, quality and branding remain the key to success for marathon hosting. But effective operation and active leveraging are essential to maximize the potential benefits and justify the use of public money.

China Daily

Liu Dongfeng



## The border surge is Biden’s problem to solve

Patrick T. Brown

There's a line from conservative columnist and CNN political commentator Jonah Goldberg that gets at many Americans' views toward the border: "My preferred immigration policy is that we have one." We don't. Polls show conflicting, even contradictory, emotions when it comes to immigration. Americans take pride in being a nation of immigrants, but also tell pollsters they fear an "invasion" and want clear rules for those coming to our borders to follow.

In a Gallup poll last summer, 69% of Americans said they wanted the level of immigration to stay the same or be lowered, while 70% also agreed with the idea that immigration was a good thing for the country. Yet researchers have found migrant surges at the southern border can lead to a rise in public concern around the topic. That's why the upcoming expiration of pandemic-era border closures looms so large for the White House. Trying to balance the desire for a humanitarian solution at the border with the need for structure and security is difficult in the best of times. And the impending crisis on the southern border is far from the best of times.

The pandemic-era policy known as Title 42 gave immigration authorities emergency powers to turn back border crossers without giving them a chance to apply for asylum. It was admittedly a blunt-force instrument, but one that gave the US Customs and Border Patrol and other immigration enforcement a quick and easy way of keeping the system from being overloaded. When Title 42 expires on May 11, US officials are bracing for a renewed surge of immigration to border facilities. Border personnel are already experiencing an increased number of crossings. Data from US Customs and Border Protection shows apprehensions and expulsions rising in a familiar seasonal pattern, with 2023 crossings above even last year's elevated levels. According to reporting by the Wall Street Journal, an estimated 35,000 migrants are believed to be in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, waiting to cross into the US after the restrictions are lifted. Border personnel will likely be faced with either operating the kinds of overcrowded facilities that the Trump administration was repeatedly criticized for, or potentially releasing migrants into the country with no court date and no guarantee they'll be found again. Either option spells political trouble.

There is plenty of blame to go around when it comes to the issue of immigration, and Republicans will certainly never be ones to let a crisis, real or perceived, on the US-Mexico border go to waste. But Democrats will be left holding the hot potato if they do not treat the end of Title 42 as a substantive policy problem to be solved rather than a political optics challenge to be managed. Doing so will require them to stand up to their left-most flank. On Tuesday, the Biden administration took an initial step toward recognizing the severity of the situation by assigning 1,500 active-duty troops to provide logistical support to border enforce-

ment. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas has made a rhetorical push as well. "Let me be clear," he said last week. "Our border is not open and will not be open after May 11." Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona has also been a leading Democratic voice backing aggressive border enforcement in the wake of Title 42. The Biden administration clearly hope this quells some of the rising tensions both at the border and in Washington, DC. Many of the White House's allies, who were quick to

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denounce a similar approach when it was undertaken by the Trump White House, have held their fire, though Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey released a statement saying the "militarization of the border is unacceptable."

The Biden administration knows it must walk a careful line. Many progressives' approach to immigration focuses on the needs and rights of migrants and asylees, and tends to look skeptically toward increased enforcement, as Menendez's statement indicates. Some centrist Democrats have found political success advocating for more border enforcement, but many still find themselves trapped between public opinion and their more restive progressive base. Democrats may be tempted to respond to the end of Title 42 by turning to a familiar page in their political playbooks. They may blame the border on the foibles of the Trump administration, focus on the amorphous need for "hemispheric solutions" or try to focus on other policy fights. But part of the downside of winning political elections is being held accountable for what happens under your watch. And if Democrats are seen

as responding to a massive wave of pressure on the southern border predominantly by blaming Trump's missteps or complaining about media coverage, they'll be rightly pilloried. Border enforcement can be done humanely, but it must be done.

As evidenced by the troop deployment, the Biden administration has at least some of the tools to mitigate some of the blowback. It can ramp up border enforcement, speed up deportation proceedings and consider reviving policies like the "Remain in Mexico" approach. If undertaken seriously,

## Close ties with the GCC should be a priority for Biden

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

At a time when America's military presence in the Middle East appears to be shrinking and other forces may be looking to fill the vacuum, it is more essential than ever for the Biden administration to work in lockstep with the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council. At this critical time, the Biden administration ought to reconfirm the US' commitment to Middle Eastern security and aim to strengthen the ties between Washington and the members of the GCC - Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman - on several fronts, such as the security, geopolitical and environmental landscapes.

President Joe Biden last year pledged that the US is committed to building "political, economic and security connections between the United States - between the US partners wherever possible, while respecting each country's sovereignty and independent choices ... Let me state clearly that the United States is going to remain an active, engaged partner in the Middle East." Biden added that the US' objectives "are focused, realistic and achievable, so that we can target our resources, rebuild trust and deliver real results. And we will operate in the context of the Middle East as it is today: a region more united than it has been in years. The GCC is a prime example of that. Former rivals have reestablished diplomatic and economic ties. New memberships are being forged. And increasingly, the world is seeing the Middle East

through the lens of opening and opportunity."

The GCC - which was established with the purpose of strengthening relations between its members, safeguarding their sovereignty and addressing general concerns about their affairs and interests - has become a key international player that is capable of ushering in significant and positive changes, not only in the region but also beyond. Other objectives of the GCC include formulating regulations in various fields, including commerce, customs and communications, education and culture, social and health affairs, information and tourism, and legislative and administrative affairs.

There are many opportunities for increased cooperation between the US and the GCC. One of the critical points of cooperation is security. This not only serves the region, but it also advances US national security interests. As Iowa Republican Sen. Joni Ernst wrote in a letter to National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan last October: "The United States must continue to convene partners, reinforce security dialogue, and develop defense concepts to counter these growing threats ... Integrated air and missile defense in the region has been a consistent initiative by US Central Command, with bipartisan support." She added: "Our roadmap is clear: The United States must continue to engage regional partners to counter common threats ... As the security partner of choice, the

United States should reliably implement defense efforts and proceed with the US-GCC integrated air and missile defense working group without delay."

In addition, leaders in the Gulf, as well as the Biden administration, will be keen to find common ground on which they can build positive partnerships in other areas, including climate change. President Biden has frequently made much of his environmental intentions. If we recall, in his initial flurry of executive orders on taking office, a return to the Paris Agreement on climate change was one of the most prominent decisions. The president clearly sees placing climate change high on the agenda as a vote winner, especially among younger, more liberal-minded voters. It is important to point out that some Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, are leading the way on this issue. As exemplified by the latest developments, climate change is an obvious choice for an interest that is shared by the US and the GCC states. Although some scholars, policy analysts and politicians might think a region that is the oil hub of the world is not an obvious place to look for innovation in green technologies, the region has in fact experienced a shift in its understanding and recognition of the fact that avoiding action on climate change is no longer possible.

For example, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have pledged to improve the proportion of their energy

mixes that come from renewable sources, while the UAE has committed to a 23.5 percent reduction in its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. However, there also appears to be a growing understanding that technologies such as carbon capture and storage need to be developed to keep the oil industry viable in the long term. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has announced hugely ambitious plans to build NEOM, the world's first city without roads - a clear signal of its intent to adjust course in a more environmentally friendly direction. And Sultan Al-Jaber, the chairman of Masdar, has pointed out that the UAE "aims to play a central role in the emerging green hydrogen economy." If the Biden administration is searching for another common cause between Washington and the GCC, green issues could provide the answer. Solar power, for example, is an area in which there is obvious common ground. The US is the world's second-largest producer of solar energy, while the Middle East is an obvious candidate for the mass deployment of solar panels as a source of renewable energy. Furthermore, countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE have invested, or are planning to invest, billions of dollars in developing high-tech innovation hubs that could prove attractive to American companies that are interested in developing advanced clean technology. In a nutshell, the Biden administration has opportunities for positive and expanded cooperation with the GCC on several fronts.

## Keir Starmer is right to U-turn on tuition fees. The funds will be better spent elsewhere

Polly Toynbee

THERE'S been a lot less hoo-ha about Labour's retreat on abolishing tuition fees than some expected. Large numbers, even among students themselves, think paying for their own degrees is fair: YouGov yesterday found 50% of them pro-fee with only 30% wanting the public to pay through general taxation. Turkeys voting for Christmas? One higher education expert suggests to me, "Students tend to be progressive," and there is nothing very progressive in these hard times about spending billions on those already destined to be higher earners.

This U-turn has long been signalled, as Keir Starmer and others kept refusing to repeat the pledge he once made to abide by the Jeremy Corbyn manifesto on fees. But it was not intended to be announced days before the local elections, with irritation in the shadow cabinet and especially in the education team at whoever briefed the Times before they had finalised what system would replace it. Starmer said, in his rather lacklustre Today programme interview on Tuesday, that the system is unfair and needs reforming. They will announce an alternative before long. Those who object to him reneging on an early pledge warn of the fate of Nick Clegg. But that's precisely what he wants to avoid: Clegg never thought he'd be in power so he made a promise he knew was wildly extravagant and untargated. Labour does better to be straight about any impossible pledges before, not after a general election.

Is it wicked to over-promise to party members in order to get selected? It seems they all have to do it: consider Sunak pledging vast EU deregulation he now resiles from, swearing eternal animosity to all things European then settling with them, and his pledge to cut the basic rate of income tax from 20p to 16p. But even then, the Conservative membership chose Liz Truss, not him, and that didn't work out so well. Party members (less than 1% of the population) are by nature more extreme than the voters parties need to win, often wanting the impossible. Few think Labour would be where it is now under Rebecca Long-Bailey, who came second to Starmer in the 2020 leadership election. But if it was her, or anyone else cleaving to the Corbyn manifesto, they would be promising to spend a fortune on abolishing fees, some £13bn and £15bn with maintenance grants restored, according to Nick Hillman, head of the Higher Education Policy Institute. If you were given that sort of cash to spend on our bare bones education system, what would you do? First, look at what drags us down the international tables and the reason the country lacks vital skills. It's not our very successful university education. It's the long tail of failure among the 40% who don't get good enough GCSEs needed for most good training or jobs: just 60% get the grade 5 and above by which schools are judged in league tables. Although more go to university and more take

A levels than in the past, you would challenge why so many fail: some 10% of school-leavers stay stubbornly Neet (not in employment, education or training), a barren time that scars their earning ability for the rest of their lives. The overarching reason is Britain's high rate of inequality compared with similar countries: more equal countries, regardless of national wealth, do best in their overall results. But even within that dismal context, an education budget can channel its resources to lift the chances of children almost born to fail.

You would want to spend any penny of extra education funds on where it makes a difference to most lives and to the future economy. That's early years, from birth to five, where destinies are fixed that rarely change thereafter, where Labour's Sure Start was brilliantly targeted, but demolished and vandalised post-2010. For every year in school the gap widens accord to social class. Half of the pupils failing at GCSE had already fallen well behind at the age of five. Every penny spent at the youngest age yields far more change in social trajectory than ever again. The rest is remedial. Yet nursery education is stricken, nurseries closing, many with only low-qualified staff not the skilled teachers who make the difference. Next, you would use any extra for education on FE colleges, those gardens of second and third chances for students failed at school but picked up with myriad courses to set them on their way. They were

rebuilt and revalued under Labour, but neglected and downgraded ever since, their teachers paid even less than school teachers.

What else? You would look at the deserts in many hard-pressed schools, as headteachers struggling to provide the bare minimum mourn the loss of all the things that enrich school life and leave everlasting memories - music, dance, drama, sports, arts and school trips, all vanishing. Looking grimly at all that, Labour should plainly not spend billions abolishing student fees to benefit the lucky students who already made it over the bar. However, there are still serious issues about university funding to address. Institutions hire staff on insecure contracts and in order to subsidise the education of domestic students universities have become reliant on recruiting higher fee paying foreign students and expanding the range of courses on offer. Universities should be expanding, but not for reasons of income alone. The UK needs as many highly skilled workers as possible. One reason the Tories want to cap numbers is their fear of graduates: as today's elections will confirm, wherever there are more graduates there are fewer Conservative voters. Researching this Tory-scaring phenomenon, the rightwing thinktank, Policy Exchange, found an even more alarming fact: school students at 16 and 17 studying for A-levels and university are already strongly anti-conservative. Trying to cap university numbers will not prevent the threatened demographic death of conservatism.

The Guardian

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CNN





## ‘US committed to provide business-friendly environment’

WASHINGTON (APP): The United States is committed to provide a conducive environment to the Pakistani business community, a senior Commerce Department official said Thursday. Aileen Crowe Nandi, Executive Director for Asia at the US Department of Commerce, was speaking at an event hosted by Pakistan's Ambassador to the U.S., Masood Khan, for a group of 19 Pakistani business leaders and entrepreneurs who attended the 'Select USA Investment Summit' held in Washington D.C.

She thanked the delegation for their participation in the Summit, which is aimed at providing business leaders, from across the globe, an opportunity to explore investment opportunities, expand their businesses and forge robust networks. This year the event

was attended by over four thousand delegates from different parts of the world.

Nathan Seifert, Senior Commercial Officer (SCO), Foreign Commercial Services, was also present at the event.

Acknowledging the huge potential of Pakistani female entrepreneurs, Ms. Nandi expressed the hope that businesswomen and entrepreneurs from Pakistan would also visit the United States to explore business opportunities and expand their networks.

The largest-ever Pakistani delegation attending this year's summit represented a range of businesses including clean energy, telecommunications, IT, security, chemicals, packages, fabrics, constructions, agriculture, manufacturing, food & restaurants, pigments, logistics, education, rubber

industry, automobiles and others. In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Masood Khan appreciated the contributions of the Pak-American community who were investing in Pakistan and were playing a critical role towards building bridges and connecting the people of the two countries.

The United States, he pointed out, was the largest trade partner and export destination for Pakistani products. Noting the increasing Pakistani exports to the United States, especially in the IT and services sector, the Ambassador also said that 80 US enterprises were undertaking profitable business ventures in Pakistan, employing 150,000 people and providing livelihood to nearly one million households. He said that a number of US com-

panies had front and back offices in Pakistan and were keen to expand their businesses in oil and gas, renewable and green energy, agriculture and manufacturing sectors.

The Ambassador expressed the hope that Pakistani entrepreneurs attending the Select USA Summit would also take the initiative to launch 'Select Pakistan' for enhanced investments in the country.

Masood Khan said that Pakistan was emerging as a huge regional business ecosystem acting as a hub for Central & West Asia, Turkey, the Middle East and North Africa and therefore should be an attractive destination for investment and business activities. "To make Pakistan's economy and businesses inclusive, the government was investing in women's entrepreneurship," he added.

## No respite as inflation continues upward trend

KARACHI (PPI): The weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 1.05 pc to jump to a record high of 48.35pc on a year-on-year basis for the week ending on May 4.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 254.84 points as compared to 252.2 points during the past week, according to the PBS data.

Out of the 51 monitored items, the

average price of 30 items increased, 9 items decreased whereas 12 items registered no change during the week.

The items, which recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW), Chicken (8.91%), Potatoes (3.99%), Powdered Milk (3.81%), Pulse Gram (1.96%), Pulse Masoor (1.83%), Eggs (1.81%), Mutton (1.71%), Pulse Mash (1.58%), Cooked Daal (1.36%), and Bread

(1.13%), non-food items, Gents Sponge Chappal (58.05%), Gents Sandal (33.36%), Ladies Sandal (14.31%) and Washing Soap (1.27%).

Meanwhile, a decline was witnessed in the prices of Onions (16.69%), Garlic (3.44%), Tomatoes (3.41%), Diesel (1.70%), Mustard Oil (0.99%), LPG (0.96%), Cooking Oil 5 litre (0.40%) and vegetable ghee 2.5kg & 1kg (0.10%) each.

## Job creation in United States rises despite banking crisis

UNITED STATES (Internews): Job creation in the United States remained robust last month, despite turmoil in the banking sector and the impact of higher borrowing costs.

Employers added 253,000 jobs, which was better than many analysts had expected. The unemployment rate fell to 3.4%, returning to a multi-decade low. The gains were a reminder of the resilience of the US labour market, which has held up in the face of aggressive efforts by the US central bank to cool the economy.

The Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest rate from near zero to between 5% and 5.25% in little over a year, an abrupt shift aimed at curbing prices that were soaring last year at the fastest pace in decades. These increases have sharply increased the cost of buying a

home or car, as well as making it more expensive to borrow to expand a business or take on other debt. In theory, that should reduce demand, leading the economy to slow and easing the pressures pushing up prices.

But while job gains have moderated since last year, they continue to outpace the numbers that economists estimate is needed to keep up with population growth.

In its Friday report, the Labor Department said hiring had been weaker than previously estimated in February and March.

But last month, job creation picked up again, while wages were up 4.4% from a year ago.

"Today's report clearly suggests weakening labour markets - most obviously in the downward revisions of prior months data - but from a very

strong starting point," said Ronald Temple, chief market strategist at Lazard. Many economists expect the US economy to fall into recession later this year, noting big slowdowns in key sectors such as housing.

Recent weeks have seen a flurry of job cut announcements by big companies such as Facebook-owner Meta, Amazon, entertainment giant Disney, banks and other firms.

The rate rises also contributed to turmoil in the banking sector, which has been rocked by the most serious string of failures since the 2008 financial crisis. But the head of the US central bank, Jerome Powell, said this week that the continuing strength of the labour market made him hopeful that this time would be "different" and the US could avoid a downturn that would throw millions of people out of work.

## Traders' leaders hail business friendly decisions of Chairman CDA

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The trade leaders of federal capital on Friday hailed the historic business-friendly decisions announced by the Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Captain (Retd) Noor ul Amin Mengal.

The announcement was made by Chairman CDA during his address to the business community at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), a press statement said here today.

The trade leaders in a joint statement stated that these decisions have created a new ray of hope in the business community.

The trade leaders include: Abpara Market President Ajmal Baloch, G-9 Markaz President Raja Javed Iqbal, F-8 Markaz

President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, F-10 Markaz President Ahmed Khan, F-7 Jinnah Supermarket President Asad Aziz, F-6 Markaz Super Market President Shahzad Shabbir Abbasi, Blue Area President Raja Hasan Akhtar, G-8 Markaz President Muhammad Abid Abbasi, I-8 Markaz President Raja Fayyaz Gul, G-8/1 Market President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, Tarnool Traders Association President Wajid Ayub, Goods Transport Association President Muhammad Shabbir, Fruit & Vegetable Market Committee Chairman Sajid Abbasi, G-11 Markaz President Chaudhry Aftab Guljar, G-7 Markaz President Syed Altaf Hussain Shah, G-10

Markaz President Zafar Iqbal Guljar, E-11 Markaz President Zahir Abbasi, G-7/1 Market President Raja Safer Ahmed, D-12 Markaz President Muhammad Nauman, Gulberg Green President Najeeb Elahi Malik, Melody Market President Azhar Iqbal, G-8 Markaz President Raja Khurram Niazi, Traders Action Committee Secretary Khalid Chaudhry, Muslim League Traders Wing Islamabad President Jamshed Akhtar Sheikh, PWD Traders Association President Chaudhry Riasat Ali, Bara Kahu President Raja Zahid Mahmood Dhaniyal, G-10/4 Market President Zafar Iqbal Guljar and Presidents of other markets.

They welcomed the

announcement of Chairman CDA to include President ICCI in the CDA Board as it will help solve the long-standing issues of the business community and facilitate them to promote business activities.

They said that Chairman CDA announced to upgrade all the markets of Islamabad which is very encouraging as Islamabad is the face of Pakistan and better development of markets of the Capital will improve the image of the country and facilitate better growth of business activities.

They lauded Chairman CDA for announcing to replace the old sewerage system in the markets and the city with new one and to solve the parking issue by constructing new parking plazas in cooperation with the private sector.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor is displaying sparrow nets to attract customers in the Federal Capital.

## IMF Conditions: Pakistan between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mian Zahid

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain has said that Pakistan is between the devil and the deep blue sea over stringent IMF conditions.

In a statement issued here on Friday, he said, "One reason for delay is release of loan tranche by IMF is lack of confidence, which will hit the budget making exercise."

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the ninth review of the IMF and the staff level agreement should have been completed last year, but the previous regime violated the agreement with the international organization due to which the ninth review was stalled.

The people are constantly being told that all the new conditions of the IMF have been fulfilled, and that the agreement will be concluded in a few days, but the IMF is changing the goalposts very frequently, he added.

The business leader said that the IMF was adding new demands to its list and asking Pakistan continuously to do more.

Among the reasons for the unnecessary harshness on the part of the IMF was the fear of this institution that after receiving the loan, affairs in Pakistan will continue to be run irresponsibly and the expenditure will not be controlled, which will result in the country's bankruptcy, he observed. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that the IMF is also worried that billions of rupees will be wasted to please the voters

before the elections, which will further weaken the country's faltering economy and it will result in disrepute of the lender if Pakistan defaults.

The business leader said that China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have assured loans to Pakistan.

Moreover, the government was discouraging imports, resulting in a fall of 68 percent in the current account deficit in the last eight months and was expected to further decline in the next four months. Import contraction was also reducing the revenue of FBR. Inflation has crossed 36 percent, the highest level in Asia, due to which the IMF is demanding a two percent increase in the interest rates. Mian Zahid Hussain said that economic instability is increasing rapidly

due to continuous delay in payment of loan installments by the IMF. The current agreement with the IMF was signed in 2019 and expires next month.

According to the agreement, Pakistan was supposed to get a loan of six and a half billion dollars, but so far only 3.9 billion dollars have been received. The government has already accepted all IMF conditions on exchange rate, tax rate, energy price, subsidy reduction and interest rate hike but could not convince IMF to release funds.

In this most difficult economic situation, if the nation unites and implements the emergency program of import substitution and privatization of failed government institutions, then this vortex can be exited, he said.

## Organisations urged to improve risk culture following unique global research

LAHORE (NNI): As corporate collapses make headlines this year the need for strong risk management is clear. This is why the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), The Association of Insurance and Risk Managers (Airmic), and the Professional Risk Managers' International Association (PRMIA) have collaborated on a new study that gauges how risk and financial leaders are dealing with risk culture and to what extent they understand its effect on the organisation's broader strategy.

The research is based on an online global survey complemented by a mix of interactive engagements with the three professional bodies' respective members, gathering views from thousands of risk and financial professionals around the world. The findings are published in a new report, Risk Culture: Building Resilience and Seizing Opportunities.

This first of its kind study found that while 'box ticking' is prevalent there is growing interest in risk culture to cope with disconnected organisational cultures and hard-to-detect breadth of risks.

Key risk priorities for risk and finance professionals across all regions were 'regulatory, compliance and risk' followed by 'technology, data, cybersecurity' and 'economic inflation and recession'.

Sector-specific results showed respondents in financial services were more likely to raise 'technology, data and cybersecurity' and 'regulatory,

compliance and legal' as their two highest risk priorities, whereas those in the corporate sector ranked 'logistics and supply chain' issues as one of their top three risk concerns. Interestingly, despite a rise in corporate fraud cases, the corporate sector ranked 'misconduct, fraud and reputational damage' lower than any other sector. Some of the overarching concerns coming out of the report are that risk conversations continue to happen in a vacuum at the top of organisations, and that engagement not only between boards and senior management – but also across functions and roles – needs significant improving.

'Recent corporate collapses remind us of how inadequate and siloed risk governance can be, regardless of what is said in their financial statements,' said Rachael Johnson, head of risk management and corporate governance at ACCA and author of the report. 'As our research shows, it is not only the regulators who are asking questions. In today's highly interconnected, digital world, even a weak risk culture is better than none.'

'In an increasingly high velocity, complex and connected world, tensions can be created between managing performance, innovation, controls, and assurance.'

Julia Graham, CEO of Airmic, a partner said: 'This report addresses how risk culture can contribute towards managing these tensions as part of good governance and concludes that managing risk dynamically and building resilience collabora-

tively are changing risk culture for the better.'

'Recent events, such as FTX and Silicon Valley Bank, show us that risk culture, more than ever, needs to be front and center for risk and accounting professionals,' said Justin McCarthy, CEO of PRMIA. 'This report shows how we need to help our respective members work and learn together more.'

The report incorporates insights from over 2,000 risk and financial professionals around the world. The online survey took place in October 2022 and attracted 1,823 individual responses from risk and financial professionals globally, across a range of industries. The majority of these individuals have accountancy backgrounds (93% being ACCA members). Additional forums, roundtables and one-on-one interviews with more ACCA members contributed further qualitative data. A supplementary document to the report – Risk Culture Conversations – digs into the two open-ended questions from the survey as well as these discussions and input from our online community pop-up platform, which took place in November 2022.

To complement the findings, the report also includes ten calls to action: Empower risk leaders to drive risk culture and influence behaviours. Resist the danger of tunnel vision when faced with a multitude of risks. Understand the behaviours driving both good and bad outcomes.

## Asian stocks mixed after slide on Wall Street

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian stocks were mixed on Friday following a slide on Wall Street driven by renewed fears of banking sector turmoil.

All three major US indices ended the day in the red, while regional bank shares nosedived following another quarter-point hike from the US Federal Reserve. PacWest plunged 50.6 percent, First Horizon slumped 33.6 percent and Western Alliance lost 38.5 percent. "The acute phase of bank turmoil may not be over, and policymakers need urgently to recognise that," Krishna Guha, vice chairman at Evercore ISI, told Bloomberg.

US equities futures were making a cautious rebound on Friday morning.

Futures for markets in

Europe, which also fell Thursday after the European Central Bank joined the Fed in increasing its main interest rate, were also making an uneven comeback. Asia, meanwhile, got off to a similarly uneven start on Friday, with Hong Kong up more than one percent at one point, but Shanghai down. Sydney and Taipei were also up, while Wellington, Jakarta, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Manila were down. Tokyo and Seoul were closed for holidays.

The sell-off in PacWest shares was exacerbated by media reports saying that the bank was considering the possibility of a sale or other capital-raising measures in the wake of the recent collapses of other midsized lenders.

The bank sought to assure investors that it had not "experienced out-of-the-ordinary deposit flows", and that its "cash and available liquidity remains solid", but its shares still tanked.

In addition to PacWest, First Horizon and Western Alliance, other US regional banks to suffer significant drops included KeyCorp, Comerica and Zions. SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes described the dynamic as "a highly coordinated and predatory short sellers landscape... with short sellers in battalion fashion moving from one weak link in the daisy chain to the next".

And the trend is likely to stick around, Oanda's Edward Moya said in a note. "Financial stability

concerns are not going away anytime soon and that will continue to fuel calls that we are headed towards a recession that will be much more hard hitting than the mild one some are expecting," he wrote. "Selling financials is an easy trade as interest rates are too high and will probably remain there thanks to the Fed, which will also continue to drive financial stability concerns," he continued, adding that "more banks are at risk".

Oil prices, meanwhile, appear to have stabilised but are still in a hole after falling sharply in recent days on expectations of weaker demand owing to an economic slowdown.

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: UP 0.3 percent at 20,014.91

Shanghai - Composite: DOWN 0.7 percent at 3,326.50

Tokyo - Nikkei 225: Closed for holiday

Euro/dollar: UP at \$1.1032 from \$1.1017 on Thursday

Pound/dollar: UP at \$1.2588 from \$1.2572

Dollar/yen: DOWN at 134.12 yen from 134.28 yen

Euro/pound: UP at 87.65 pence from 87.59 pence

West Texas Intermediate: UP 0.3 percent at \$68.76 per barrel

Brent North Sea crude: UP 0.3 percent at \$72.68 per barrel

New York - Dow: DOWN 0.9 percent at 33,127.74 points (close)

London - FTSE 100: DOWN 1.1 percent at 7,702.64 (close)



HYDERABAD: Workers busy in refilling husk in frames of air coolers at his workplace.





## In brief

## Pakistan to feature in Davis Cup

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan 16 & Under will participate in the Davis Cup Juniors Asia Oceania final qualifying event, to be held from 8th to 13th May in Shymkent, Kazakhstan. The team comprises the following Noman ul Haq (captain), Nadir Reza Mirza (player), Hamza Roman (player) and Abubakar Talha (player), said a news release issued here. Senator Salim Saifullah Khan, President of Pakistan Tennis Federation has expressed his best wishes for the team. He also stated that hard work, dedication and passion for tennis are always rewarded. He emphasized that the development of juniors and their participation in international events was one of the priorities of PTF, despite financial constraints.

## KP Wrestling trials on May 6

PESHAWAR (APP): The trials of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wrestling team for the forthcoming 34th National Games will be held on May 6 at Zahid Wrestling Club Pir Bala, Warsak Road. After the team selection, a training camp would be held at the same venue, Secretary KP Wrestling Association Niamat Ullah Khan told media men on Friday. According to Provincial Wrestling Association Secretary Nimatullah, the best team of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be selected for the 34th National Games to be held in Quetta. He said, "Our effort will be to form a team consisting of the best players for the National Games." The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa team would get a prominent position in the National Games of Quetta, he added.

## Mahfooz XI wins final

KARACHI (APP): The final of the first All Karachi DMC Challenge Cup Floodlight Football Tournament 2023 organized, by Ansar Union Football Club, was played between Kohat sports and Mahfooz XI at Ansar Union Football Stadium, Korangi. Both teams performed extremely well and neither team could score a goal until the allotted time. However, Mahfooz XI won the match by 3-0 on the basis of penalty kicks, according to a communiqué issued here on Friday. Haji Muhammad Azam Khan, Sports In-charge of Pakistan WAPDA Hyderabad, was the chief guest of the final, who distributed trophies and special prizes among the winner and runner-up teams. Former international footballer Saleem Patni, Saifullah, Muhammad, Akif, Tawheed Khan Jadoon, Muhammad Siddique, Aslam Bhai, Waseem Raja, Abid Firdous, Naem Bhai, Raheel Jameel Adeel Jameel and others were present on this occasion.

## Rahul to have surgery

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Lucknow Super Giants skipper KL Rahul has been ruled out of the rest of the Indian Premier League (IPL) season and India's World Test Championship (WTC) final against Australia after he said on Friday he would undergo surgery on his thigh. The 31-year-old got injured in his last match against Royal Challengers Bangalore earlier this week, tearing a tendon in his right leg while fielding, and had to be helped off the ground. He could not open Lucknow's innings in the run-chase but came out to bat at number 11.

## Babar Azam breaks Hashim Amla's record twice in one ODI

KARACHI (PPI) Babar Azam after breaking the record of South Africa's legend Hashim Amla's record of fastest to reach 5000 ODI runs in the fourth One Day International against New Zealand in Karachi broke another record of Amla in the same match.

Babar became the fastest to 18 ODI hundreds breaking another Amla's record. Babar took 97 innings to reach the three figures mark for 18 times.

Previously, the record was with Amla who took 108 innings to reach the 18th ODI. India's Virat Kohli reached the feat in

119 innings while AB Devilliers took 159 innings to register 18 centuries while Saurav Ganguly is now in fifth spot taking 174 innings to reach the mark.

Last year Babar narrowly missed equaling Amla's record for the fastest 4,000 ODI runs in 81 innings.

Babar has been the number one batter on the International Cricket Council's rankings for ODIs for the last two years.

He is the 14th Pakistani to complete 5,000 or more runs in ODI cricket, with former captain Inzamam-ul-Haq at the top of the list with 11,701 runs.

The unassuming Babar made his ODI debut against Zimbabwe in his hometown of Lahore in May 2015.

He is also the only batter to twice score consecutive hundreds in three ODIs, having achieved the feat in 2016 and 2022.

Saeed Anwar leads the way for Pakistani batters with the most ODI hundreds as he reached the three figures mark 20 times in his career and is well within reach of the second-placed Babar Azam. Mohammad Yousuf is at third place with 15 tons, Mohammad Hafeez is fourth with 11 tons and Fakhar Zaman fifth with 10 tons.

## 24 players announced for 34th National Games football camp in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Names of 24 players of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for training camp in connection with the forthcoming 34th National Games were announced on Friday after the two-day trials held by the provincial committee.

The names were announced by the Normalization Committee working under the supervision of FIFA in Pakistan.

The two-day trials held under the supervision of the selection committee were attended by players from across the province, including Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan, Chitral, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Swat and Swabi.

After the trials, the names

of the players announced include Saqib Hanif from Bannu, Junaid Khan from Khyber, Salman from Tank, Khalid from Malakand, Shoaib from Tank, Ifikhar from Chitral, Rizwan from Bannu, Khaliq-Uz-Zaman from Chitral, Ifikhar from Chitral, Taseeb from Swabi, Izhar Lal from Swabi, Wasim from Swabi, Mir Muhammad from Hangu, Jameel Atesh from Tank, Hafiz Shoaib from Tank, Rehman Chashma from Miran Shah, Ghabdal Wahad from Khyber, Ghamar from Swabi, Hamza from Bannu, Shahidullah from Chitral, Usman of Mardan, Aamir Sohail of Chitral, Zaryab

and Khalid Khan of Peshawar.

A total of seven players were also short-listed as reserve players.

The training camp will continue at Tahamas Football Stadium from which the provincial team will be announced after the final trials. The manager of the team will be the former captain of the national team, Arshad Khan, while the coach will be Faisal Javed, whereas Anwar Khan and Adeel Ahmed will work as assistant coaches.

During the trials, Deputy Director sports Syed Jafar Shah, and famous personalities of Pakistan football Qazi Asif were also present.

## Nadal to miss Rome Masters as French Open fears grow

ROME (Agencies): Rafael Nadal on Friday withdrew from the Rome Masters tournament as he continues his recovery from injury, casting serious doubts over his fitness for the French Open.

The 22-time Grand Slam winner has not played since suffering a hip injury at the Australian Open in January.

The French Open, which the 36-year-old has won on a record 14 occasions, gets underway in Paris in three weeks' time. Nadal said his injury situation has improved in the past few days but not sufficiently to be able to compete next week in the Italian capital.

"I am very sorry to announce that I will not be able to be in Rome," Nadal wrote on his social media accounts. "You all know how much it hurts me to miss another of the tournaments that have marked my professional and personal career because of all the love and support of the Italian tifosi (fans).

"Although I have noticed an improvement in the last few days, it has been many months without being able to train at a high level and the process of readjustment takes a certain amount of time, and I have no choice but to accept that and continue working."

The 22-time Grand Slam champion -- he shares the men's record with Novak Djokovic -- had originally thought he would be out for up to two months. He pulled out of hard-court tournaments at Indian Wells and Miami, with his sights set on a return at the start of the clay-court season, but it did not come to fruition.

Nadal had to withdraw from events in Monte Carlo, Barcelona and Madrid, before eventually adding Rome, the final French Open warm-up event, to the list.

**Murray reaches quarter-finals in France:** Andy Murray earned a place in the quarter-finals of the ATP Challenger Tour 175

event in Aix-en-Provence with a three-set win over Laurent Lokoli.

Murray secured a 6-4 5-7 6-3 victory with his sixth match point at the Open Aix Provence Credit Agricole. The 35-year-old, who at 52nd is ranked 135 places higher than the Frenchman, made it back-to-back wins for the first time since Indian Wells in March.

He will face another Frenchman, Luca Van Assche, in Friday's quarter-final. Murray shaded the first set before breaking serve for a 5-2 lead in the second. But the three-time major winner failed to take two match points as Lokoli, heavily backed by the home support, recovered to 5-4.

Another two match points were lost and Lokoli took the second set before Murray converted a third break point to lead 5-3 in the decider. Lokoli saved a fifth match point but a relieved Murray eventually claimed victory at the sixth attempt.

## Messi and PSG will talk after suspension, Galtier says

PARIS (AP): Lionel Messi and Paris Saint-Germain will have discussions about the Argentine player's immediate future with the club when he returns from suspension, coach Christophe Galtier said Friday.

The World Cup champion was suspended by the club this week after he skipped practice to make a promotional trip to Saudi Arabia.

Messi is not expected to extend his contract, and there are only five games remaining this season.

Galtier was asked at a news conference if he'll be able to count on the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner returning to the field after the suspension.

"We'll see when Leo returns what will happen," Galtier said. "Obviously, there will be discussions with the entire club but also with Leo, who is the primary person involved."

The club hasn't confirmed the length of the Argentina great's suspension but French media has reported it to be two weeks,



which would mean he'd miss two games. PSG has a five-point lead over second-place Marseille.

Galtier said the club told him that Messi had been suspended, and he declined to say if he endorsed the decision.

"I did not have to make the decision," the coach said. "I was informed of the decision."

The 35-year-old Messi joined PSG in 2021 after winning every major honor with Barcelona. The Catalan club that Messi had called home from the age of 13 couldn't afford to keep him because of large debts and Spanish league financial regulations.

The French club and its fans had hoped that Messi's arrival would result in an

elusive Champions League title. Instead, the Qatari-backed club was eliminated in the round of 16 in consecutive seasons.

One of the game's all-time greats had been welcomed into Paris with a police escort. His departure is sure to be less glorious. Reports have linked Messi to Inter Miami in MLS, a return to Barcelona and a lucrative move to Saudi Arabia. Some PSG fans are also urging forward Neymar to leave the club.

For Galtier, though, fans crossed the line when they protested outside the Brazil international's residence this week.

"Private life must remain private," he said. "I can understand the anger, the disappointment of our fans. I can understand protesting here at our workplace, in front of PSG's headquarters, after a match at Parc des Princes."

But going to private homes is "out of control and dangerous," he said.

Neymar had season-ending surgery on his right ankle in March.



KARACHI: Babar Azam celebrates an 18th ODI hundred, Pakistan vs New Zealand, 4th ODI.

## Sciver-Brunt retires from int'l cricket

LONDON (Agencies): Katherine Sciver-Brunt has retired from international cricket, saying that playing for England "saved her life".

One of the greatest fast bowlers to play the game, Sciver-Brunt, 37, has taken 335 international wickets, more than any other woman for England.



In a 19-year career, she won the Ashes three times, the 50-over World Cup twice and T20 title once.

"I'm proud of the last 19 years and I'm proud of who I am now. It's been special," she said. Sciver-Brunt, who will play one more season in The Hundred with Trent Rockets, revealed she made the decision to end her England career at the Fairbreak T20 competition in Hong Kong in April.

Speaking to BBC Sport, Sciver-Brunt said: "It's definitely the right time and I'm definitely happy with the decision I've made."

"I feel like I've been thinking about it for ever, not so much from a love perspective, but from a body perspective and if I am still giving the best I can for England. "My mind has slipped in the past six to eight months, where I have felt I haven't been able to give 100% of myself."

Sciver-Brunt made her England debut in 2004 and a year later was part of the England team who beat Australia to win the Women's Ashes for the first time in 42 years. She is ending her international career just before another Ashes series, with England looking to regain the urn this summer.

"It was so, so hard, because I love Ashes series more than anything," she said. "You can't explain it and you can't replicate it. When you're right in the heat of it, it's great. Even when we're losing, it's great. "That little carrot was dangled and that was definitely so hard to let go."

A bowler of genuine pace in possession of an arcing out-swing, Sciver-Brunt has won 267 caps for England across the three formats. Her 170 wickets in one-day internationals and 114 in T20s are both England records. Overall, only India's Jhulan Goswami, with 355, has taken more wickets in women's internationals than Sciver-Brunt.

Good enough with the bat to score more than 1,800 international runs, it was legitimate to consider her as an all-rounder.

As well as the Ashes win of 2005, Sciver-Brunt was part of the England team who defeated Australia at home in 2013 and away in 2013-14. The T20 world title came in 2009, the same year as the first 50-over World Cup win, which was followed by victory over India at a sold-out Lord's in the 2017 final. "When you hear them listed off, you realise that you've done it all," said Sciver-Brunt.

## Pakistan U19 ready for one-day series challenge

C H A T T O G R A M (Monitoring Desk): Saad Baig-led Pakistan U19 will be aiming to continue the winning run when they take on Bangladesh U19 in the five-match one-day series starting tomorrow.

Pakistan U19 won the solitary four-day match against Bangladesh U19 by 10 wickets at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium from 30 April to 3 May. The star performers for the visiting team were Shahzaib Khan and Ali Asfand. Player of the match Shahzaib Khan scored 174 and 19 not out, while left-arm spinner and vice-captain Ali bagged six wickets in the match.

The first and second one-day match will be played on 6 and 8 May at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram, while the remaining three one-day matches will be held at the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi on 11, 13 and 15 May. The only T20 match of the series will also be played at the same venue on 17 May.

Head Coach Sabih Azhar said: "We are very pleased with the team's performance in the four-day match and we are looking forward to carrying that momentum into the one-day series. We know that Bangladesh will come out strong and we have to be at our best to compete against them."

"We have a talented group of players who are eager to showcase their skills and are confident that they will perform to the best of their abilities. We are excited about the challenge that lies ahead and are looking forward to the one-day series starting tomorrow."

Pakistan U19: Saad Baig (captain) (Karachi), Ali Asfand (vice-captain) (Faisalabad), Ahmed Hussain (Peshawar), Aimal Khan (Peshawar), Amir Hussain (Rawalpindi), Arafat Minhas (Multan), Azan Awais (Sialkot), Hamza Nawaz (Lahore), Mohammad Ibtisam (Sargodha), Mohammad Ismail (Sahiwal), Mohammad Tahir (Fata), Mohammad Tayyab Arif

(Sialkot), Obaid Shahid (Lahore), Sajjad Ali (Lahore), Shahzaib Khan (Mansehra), Shamiyl Hussain (Islamabad) and Wahaj Riaz (Karachi). Abidullah (Islamabad), Ikramullah Tareen (Quetta) and Muhammad Zulkifal (Charsadda) (all reserves)

Player Support Personnel – Tauseef Ahmed (manager), Sabih Azhar (coach), Umar Rashid (assistant coach), Hafiz Naem Ul Rasool (physiotherapist), Yasir Malik (trainer) and Shan Ullah (team analyst)

Tour Schedule: 30 April- 3 May – Four-day match; ZACS, Chattogram (Pakistan won by 10 wickets)

6 May – 1st 50-over match; ZACS, Chattogram

8 May – 2nd 50-over match; ZACS, Chattogram

11 May – 3rd 50-over match; SKS, Rajshahi

13 May – 4th 50-over match; SKS, Rajshahi

15 May – 5th 50-over match; SKS, Rajshahi

17 May – Only T20 match; SKS, Rajshahi.

## Napoli win Italian title for first time in 33 years



NAPLES (Agencies): Napoli won their first Serie A title for 33 years as they drew with Udinese at Dacia Arena to spark jubilant celebrations back in Naples.

They last won the league in 1990 with a Diego Maradona-inspired side adding to their first title three years earlier.

Victor Osimhen smashed in a 52nd-minute equaliser after Sandi Lovric had given Udinese a shock lead. And Napoli held on to the point they needed to win their third Serie A title with five games to spare.

"Seeing Neapolitans happy is enough to give you a sense of that joy they are feeling," Napoli boss Luciano Spalletti told DAZN.

"These people will look to this moment when life gets hard, they have every right to celebrate like this. "You feel a bit more relaxed knowing that you've given them this moment of happiness."

Napoli end three decades of hurt

Napoli's previous two titles came in the days of Argentina legend Maradona - who their sta-

dium is now named after - in 1987 and 1990. Following those glory days the club fell into financial decline, relegation and bankruptcy; playing in Serie C as recently as 2006. They have won the Coppa Italia three times in the past 11 seasons but it is the Scudetto the Napoli fans craved. They now have a new cast of superstars, with Nigeria forward Victor Osimhen scoring 21 goals in 26 league games and Georgia winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia contributing 12 goals and 10 assists.

At 64 boss Luciano Spalletti, who twice won the Coppa Italia with Roma, becomes the oldest manager to win Serie A.

His team had the chance to lift the title with six games to spare last weekend but could only draw with local rivals Salernitana. But with a 16-point advantage over second-placed Lazio their third Serie A title is now confirmed.

Osimhen leveller sparks wild celebrations

Their match with Udinese was almost an afterthought. Napoli fans

had been partying in Naples all day before filling the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona to watch a stream of the match.

Over 10,000 fans travelled north to see their side in Udine but they were stunned into silence after 13 minutes when Lovric was given acres of space in the box before curling the hosts in front. Napoli struggled in the first half but got the goal they needed after the restart with Osimhen finding the corner after Kvaratskhelia had forced a good save from Udinese keeper Marco Silvestri.

And after taking the lead Napoli managed the game superbly, keeping their opponents at arm's length.

On the full-time whistle Napoli fans raced onto the pitch, starting celebrations in both Udine and Naples.

"It is an amazing feeling, we have waited so many years for this moment," Osimhen told DAZN. "To be able to deliver the Scudetto to the Neapolitans is something that we will never forget in a hurry and will continue to live in our hearts for the rest of our lives."





## In brief

### Met Office predicts rain

ISLAMABAD (INP): Rain-wind, thunderstorm is expected at scattered places (with isolated hail storm) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, North East and South Punjab, North Balochistan, Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan, while dry weather is likely in other parts of the country during the next twenty-four hours. Temperature of some major cities recorded. Islamabad and Muzaffarabad fifteen degree centigrade, Lahore nineteen, Karachi twenty-six, Peshawar twenty, Quetta eighteen, Gilgit twelve, Murree seven degree centigrade. According to Met Office weather forecast for Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, partly cloudy weather and chances of rain with thunderstorm is expected in Srinagar, Shopian, Jammu, Leh, Pulwama, Anantnag, Shopian and Baramulla. Temperature recorded, Srinagar, Pulwama and Baramulla and ten degree centigrade, Jammu eighteen, Leh one, Anantnag and Shopian nine degree centigrade.

### IRSA releases 138,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 138,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 141,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1439.65 feet and was 41.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 38,000 cusecs while outflow as 40,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1122.50 feet, which was 72.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 44,600 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 54,800, 52,800, 44,400 and 9,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 32,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 17,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Railways upgrades 167 un-manned crossings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has upgraded as many as 167 vulnerable un-manned level crossings over the entire railway network last year. "The relevant provincial government provided the finances to Pakistan Railways for the upgradation of un-manned level crossings in the country," official sources in the Ministry of Railways told APP. They said the present government was taking several steps including the upgradation of unmanned and vulnerable railway level crossings across the country in collaboration with respective provincial governments. The sources said there were two types of level crossings over the Pakistan Railways network, un-manned and manned level crossings, adding that the un-manned level crossings were without gate leaves. "There are a total of 1,565 un-manned level crossings over the entire railway network and as per railway policy in vogue, the upgradation of any unmanned or manned level crossing is the responsibility of road owning authority," they added. The sources said that a joint survey of Pakistan Railways and the Provincial Government was also conducted in 2013-14 to identify accident-prone/vulnerable un-manned level crossings across the country.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Boys Scout Association Commissioner Sardar Waqar Shahzad meet with Ambassador of Switzerland to Pakistan Swiss Ambassador H.E. George Steiner while discuss issues of mutual interest.

## 823 students enrolled in Pakistani School Tripoli in 2022-23: Senate told

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for State for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan on Friday informed the Senate that there was a total of 823 students, including 227 from Pakistani community enrolled in the Pakistani School Tripoli (Libya) during 2022-23.

Replying to various questions during Question Hour, the minister said that there were two Pakistani Schools in Libya including Pakistan Embassy International School & College, Tripoli and Pakistan Embassy International School & College, Benghazi.

As many as 31 students appeared in Matric while 14 students in Higher Secondary School Certificate (F.Sc) during 2022-23, he added.

He said the schools and colleges were not only for

Pakistani students but also for students from other communities. The schools bore expenditure from their own resources and no funding was made from the government budget, he said.

The minister said the syllabus of the Federal Board of Education at SSC and HSC levels was being taught in the schools and students regularly appear in Federal Board Exams every year. Additionally, IGCSE, Edexcel and AS Level Syllabi were also taught, he said. To another question, the minister said there were 45 regular Lecturers (BS-17) and 18 daily wages staff working in evening shifts in Islamabad Model Colleges. It was a fact that lecturers teaching in the evening shift in Islamabad Model Colleges as Visiting Faculty Members were being paid remuneration

@Rs. 180/- per period and @240 per period for degree level with the approval of the Finance Division while lecturers working in evening shift in one ex-FG-College i.e. Islamabad Model Postgraduate College of Commerce, H-8/4, Islamabad were being paid remuneration @ Rs. 350/- Per Period, he said.

He said the case regarding enhancement in remuneration of Visiting Faculty Member (VFM) for teaching Secondary/ Intermediate or equivalent classes from Rs.180/-per period to Rs. 400/-per period and; visiting faculty member for teaching to BS/Associate Degree Programme or classes to Rs. 750/-per period was being examined in consultation with Federal Directorate of Education.

## ANF recovers over two kg drugs in three operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in three operations managed to recover over two kg drugs and arrested two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He said in an operation at Lahore International Airport, 59 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a Riyadh-bound passenger resident of Haripur.

In the second operation in Haripur Mansehra, one kg charras was recovered from the possession of an accused resident of Abbottabad. In the third operation conducted near Karachi Cantt Station, 1200 grams charras was recovered from the possession of a drug peddler resident of Karachi. He said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

## Police net nine drug peddlers, bootleggers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers and bootleggers conducted raids in different areas and rounded up nine accused on recovery of over 8820 grams charras and 50 bottles of liquor, said a police spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that Waris Khan police held a female drug smuggler namely Shamim Akhtar and recovered 1370 grams charras while Sadiqabad police rounded up Nawaz for having 1100 grams charras.

Pirwadhai police netted Umair with 1680 grams charras and Gungmandi police arrested Harris for possessing 1350 grams charras. New Town police in their operation managed to arrest Malik Shahid with 1420 grams charras while Westridge police held Muhammad Ali for possessing 1100 grams charras. Cantt police apprehended a bootlegger namely Ishaq and recovered 50 bottles of liquor from his possession. Other accused were sent behind the bars on recovery of drugs. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added.

## Envoy for all-possible efforts for release of Pakistani prisoners

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki here on Friday assured Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah of all-possible efforts for the release of Pakistanis languishing in Saudi jails.

During the meeting with the minister, the envoy also discussed matters of mutual interests including bilateral relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, said a news release.

The meeting also reviewed progress on an agreement between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia for "Road to Makkah project". Both the dignitaries agreed to finalize the agreement at the earliest possible time for facilitating Pakistanis in Hajj pilgrim.

According to the press release, the Pakistani pilgrims would be provided

easy and hassle-free immigration facility under the project which is being launched from Islamabad Airport. Forty thousand pilgrims will be benefited from the project this year.

The interior minister said that the project would be extended to other major cities soon to benefit more pilgrims.

He said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had historical, longstanding and brotherly relations. The people of Pakistan have special devotion and love for Khadim Al-Haramain Al-Sharifain (custodian of the two holy mosques), he said.

The interior minister lauded the efforts of the Saudi Ambassador for further strengthening bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries.

## Talha, Inbox CEO discuss 'Road to Makkah' project

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Inbox, a company working on the 'Road to Makkah' project in Pakistan, called on Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood said through 'Road to Makkah' project, customs and immigration of Pakistani pilgrims would be held at the Islamabad International Airport (IIA) and they would be exempted from the same process at the Saudi airports. Earlier, the minister held an important meeting with the designated bank coordinators and said they were key stakeholders of the ministry. He urged the designated

along with Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki and review the arrangements. Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood said through 'Road to Makkah' project, customs and immigration of Pakistani pilgrims would be held at the Islamabad International Airport (IIA) and they would be exempted from the same process at the Saudi airports. Earlier, the minister held an important meeting with the designated bank coordinators and said they were key stakeholders of the ministry. He urged the designated

banks to work in the best interest of pilgrims and provide the best facilities to the 'Guests of Allah' under social responsibility.

Meanwhile, Dr Fauzia Siddiqui met with Minister Talha. Senator Mushtaq Ahmed, Dr Aafia Siddiqui's American lawyer Clive Stafford Smith, Chairman of Pasban Democratic Party Altaf Shakoor and others were present on this occasion. They congratulated the Talha on assuming the portfolio of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony.

He was informed about the efforts regarding the release of Aafia Siddiqui. He assured all possible cooperation into the matter.

## COMSATS and Syndesis Health Inc. (USA) join hands for Genomic Sequencing Programs



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Syndesis Health Inc., USA, for "Genomic Sequencing Programs". The MoU will provide a broad framework for collaborative activities aimed at providing better healthcare to the citizens, supporting curative drugs development, and devising guidelines to help in managing pharmaceutical products.

Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, Executive Director COMSATS, and Mr. Kamil Mehmood, Co-Founder & Director Syndesis Health Inc., signed the MoU on behalf of their respective organizations. The signing ceremony held at COMSATS Secretariat in Islamabad was participated by Heads / Representatives of diplomatic missions of COMSATS' Member States in Islamabad, Secretary Incharge Ministry of Science & Technology - focal ministry of the host country for COMSATS, Mr. Usman

Akhtar Bajwa, senior officials of relevant ministries, as well as representatives from print and electronic media.

Addressing the participants, the Executive Director COMSATS threw light on the agreement and its prospects for research, impact on the industrial sector, and economy. The MoU was a manifestation of a mutual desire on both sides to support each other in the endeavours towards keeping pace with the rapid development in the field of S&T, particularly ensuring better healthcare for all through effective utilization of modern-day technologies. The Director of Syndesis Health Inc., Mr. Kamil, while highlighting the activities and achievements of his organization, assured full support to COMSATS in implementing the related programs.

Ambassador Zakaria and Mr. Mehmood briefed the media and the distinguished participants on how the collaboration would utilize the latest technological know-how for strengthening the healthcare sector, reducing healthcare costs, and contributing to the national economy.

## Ahsan Iqbal for promoting peace in society

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal Friday said hatred, extremism and intolerance were major challenges in way of peace, national unity and sustainable economic development in the country. He was addressing international Islamic peace conference on national accord for peace, inclusive education, social reconstruction and sustainable economic development organized by the Islamic Research Institute (IRI) of the International Islamic University (IIU).

The minister said that after escaping a terrorist attack, he decided to save the youth from hatred and terrorism. He said that hatred in the human

mind destroyed intelligence and its ability to think in positive way. Ahsan Iqbal said that the base of conflict and violence was prejudice and led to extremism. The minister said that the success of any nation depended on the utilization of collective capacity.

He further said that polarization was the biggest enemy of national unity.

He said investment must be continuously provided with a favorable environment. Referring to the terrorism's impact on the country, he said Pakistan had lost thousands of lives and billions of dollars due to extremism. Ahsan Iqbal said development and progress was impossible without peace and stability. "Eradicating hatred has become a social challenge" he

said. He advised youth to promote peaceful co-existence.

On the first day, the speakers and presenters attended various thematic sessions on Peace, Islam and Pakistan as well as they presented papers on role of women and media in peace building, importance of national accord for peace, peace and social reconstruction. Addressing the conference, MNA Shaista Pervaiz Malik said social cohesion with ample access to opportunities was imperative. She opined Pakistan had one of the most strategic and important geographic setting across the world, it had abundance of natural resources, adding all such opportunities must be used as we had all the potential to shine.

## Canada reduces visa processing time for Pakistani nationals to 60 days

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The government of Canada has decided to considerably reduce the duration of processing time for visas of Pakistani nationals.

Canada's Minister for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Sean Fraser has announced that the visa processing time for Pakistani nationals has now been reduced from 802 days to just 60 days.

The Canadian minister promised that visa processing time would be further reduced to one month. He said that now Pakistani citizens will be able to get a visa to Canada in 60 days instead of 802 days. "Currently, a complete TRV [Temporary Resident Visa] application from Pakistan will be processed in 60 days, and we expect to hit 30 days in the near future," Sean Fraser tweeted. Last year, Canada announced that it will boost its immigration targets, hoping to welcome a record number of newcomers in order to address a worker shortage in the country.

A large chunk of the population is heading into retirement, according to recently released census data, with one in seven people in Canada between the ages of 55 and 64 years old. The website shows 802 days because the Canadian immigration ministry was processing older applications from when borders were closed due to the pandemic. "We've reduced the backlog for Pakistani TRVs significantly, from 55K [fifty-five thousand] to less than 15K [fifteen thousand]," said Fraser. He added that the country was also investing in a new processing centre in Islamabad to boost "processing and interview capacity" in the

Indo-Pac region.

In 2021, Canada welcomed over 405,000 immigrants, the most ever in a single year.

By 2025, the goal is for more than 60 percent of the total admissions are to be economic migrants, Fraser said last year. Canada also aims to reunite more families with members abroad faster, but take in slightly fewer refugees.

It may be mentioned here that last month Canadian High Commissioner to Pakistan Leslie Scanlon had assured Commerce Minister Syed Naveed Qamar that the Canadian government is working for further facilitation and speeding up the visa process for the Pakistani business community.

The envoy had called on the commerce minister to discuss ways to strengthen the trade ties between the two countries where the minister urged for facilitation in the issuance of visas to the business community for participation in exhibitions and other business events, especially for upcoming exhibitions in Canada like SIAL Canada, the largest food innovation trade show in North America. The minister had also appreciated the upcoming Canadian General Preferential Tariff (GPT+) programme for developing countries and expressed hope that launching of GPT+ Program in Pakistan would be more beneficial to new proposed sectors such as apparel and footwear. He hoped that Canada will also consider including more sectors of textiles in the proposed scheme.



ISLAMABAD: Heavy machinery is being used in construction work of Islamabad Expressway during development work in the city.



Afghans evacuated to Saudia returned

KABUL (Agenices): Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Friday said the second batch of Afghan nationals, who were transferred to Saudi Arabia today arrived in Kabul in Ariana Afghan Airline flight. These Afghans were transferred from Sudan to Jeddah with the cooperation of the Saudi government a few days ago. Hafiz Zia Ahmad, Deputy Spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan on Twitter said that stranded Afghans in Sudan were initially evacuated.

Delawar meets Cihad

KABUL (Agenices): Shahabuddin Delawar, the acting minister of mines and petroleum, met with Cihad Erginay, the Turkish ambassador to Kabul, to discuss various issues, including investment opportunities. Both sides of the discussion talked about the Afghan-Tajik oil field projects previously contracted with the Turkish, said in a statement. The ministry said that several investment opportunities are available for national and international investors in the country due to the improvement of security in the country.

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

## Work suspension ends for Afghan UN employees

KABUL (TOLONews): From April 5 to May 5 the UN told its staff not to show up for work as a result of the restriction on female employees working in UN agencies in Afghanistan.

Farhan Haq, deputy spokesperson for the Secretary-General, told a press briefing that the results of the review of the suspension of the employees of this organization in Afghanistan will be made public once it is completed. "At this stage, we're waiting for the review to be

completed. And once that's happened, we'll be able to share what the results of that are. We'll try to provide the information as quick as we get it. I don't know honestly when that will be. We're waiting for the results just like you are. And once we have them, we'll share them," Farhan Haq said.

The United Nations has 23 offices in Afghanistan that operate in various sectors, including: The UN Assistant Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Food and Agriculture

Organization (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

"The United Nations is a bridge between Afghanistan and the rest of the world in addition to providing humanitarian aid," said Tariq Farhadi, a political analyst.

The Ministry of Economy noted that UN can play a significant role in reducing poverty in Afghanistan. "The United Nations

can play a significant role in reducing poverty through humanitarian aid, but provided it is not influenced by big powers in the internal affairs of Afghanistan," said Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy minister of economy. In a press conference on Tuesday, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres described the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan as "challenging" and noted that 6.4% of the assistance requested by the organization has been collected for Afghanistan.

## IEA denied gutterres' remarks on economic crisis in Afghanistan



KABUL (BNA) The Ministry of Finance of Islamic Emirate has strongly denied the statements of the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on the economic crisis in Afghanistan as groundless.

The ministry said that Afghanistan is in stable economic condition and it was able to fully fund its annual budget from domestic revenue for the first time in two decades. The Islamic Emirate of

Afghanistan urged UN to observe its neutrality about Afghanistan and work for the release of frozen assets of Afghanistan as well as removal of sanctions on the country's banking sector. Mr. Guterres, while

addressing a two-day meeting on Afghanistan in Doha last Tuesday, claimed that 90 percent of Afghans are suffering from poverty with around six million people are on the brink of famine.

## Systematic crackdown on Afghan women's and girls' rights, UN experts say



KABUL (Agenices): Following an eight-day visit, the UN experts—

including Richard Bennett, the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan—released their findings on the state of human rights and discrimination against Afghan women and girls.

The report said, "Since the collapse of the Republic, the de facto authorities have dismantled the legal and institutional framework and have been ruling through the most extreme forms of misogyny, destroying the relative progress towards gender equality achieved in the past two decades. The Taliban impose certain interpretations of religion that appear not to be shared by the vast majority of Afghans."

Despite the several challenges, several organizations continue to provide crucial humanitarian

assistance and protection to the most marginalized people in the country.

The de facto authorities said that the women were working in the health, and education sectors, stressing that women could work according to Sharia, separated from men, said that statement.

The Taliban authorities reiterated that women's rights are an internal affair and that the international community should not interfere.

"The de facto authorities reiterated their message that they were working on reopening schools, without providing a clear timeline and indicated that the international commu-

nity should not interfere in the country's internal affairs." Based on the UN report, women and girls' lives in the country are devastated by the crackdown on their human rights. "We are alive, but not living," said one of our woman interlocutors stated in the report.

The report concluded, "We urge the de facto authorities to comply with their obligations under international human rights instruments to which Afghanistan is a State party, especially CEDAW, and honour their commitments towards protecting and promoting all women's and girls' rights."

## US State Dept spokesperson's remarks on recognition of Islamic Emirate

KABUL (TOLONews): The US Department of State's deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said at a press briefing that there are several issues in Afghanistan that makes life challenging and difficult for the Afghan people and that need to be addressed before any kind of international engagement or recognition will take place with the current Afghan government.

"What Special Representative West was referring to was that there

continue to persist a number of issues in Afghanistan that make – that the Afghan people – that makes life for the Afghan people challenging and difficult that need to be addressed prior to any kind of international engagement or recognition to take place as it relates to the Taliban," Patel said.

Speaking at the press briefing, Patel said that some examples of these challenges are the "continued presence of terrorist organizations, the lack of

inclusivity, especially as it relates to human rights – specifically human rights and its impact on women and girls. Many of these areas have been undermined recently by decisions by the Taliban."

Meanwhile, the Germany in Afghanistan on Twitter said that the international community will not recognize the current Afghan government unless it moves on women's rights and create an inclusive government. "The International

community stands united in its stance towards the DFA. No recognition unless the DFA moves on women's rights, inclusive government, unhindered humanitarian access and other issues!" Germany in Afghanistan tweeted.

"One of the conditions for recognition of the present government of Afghanistan is that they respect human rights, address women's rights, and provide a framework for all activities for women," said Najibullah Shamal, a political analyst.

However, the head of the Islamic Emirate's Qatar-based political office, Suhail Shaheen, said that the Islamic Emirate wants to be recognized by the international community.

"Sadly, some nations use sanctions on Afghanistan as a way to put pressure on the country, from which the people suffer. On the other hand, they are promoting human rights, which contradicts one another," Shaheen noted. Previously, the US special envoy for Afghanistan, Thomas West, referring to the Doha meeting, said the solution of the current challenges in Afghanistan is in political dialogue between Afghans.



## Helmand education dept says 93 new schools to be built

HELMAN (Agenices): The department of education of Helmand province said that in this solar year, 93 schools will be built in this province.

The department's officials also noted that 32 schools in Helmand have undergone renovation since the Islamic Emirate came to power, and this work is still ongoing.

"Our plan for this year is to build schools in a fundamental way, build walls for 20 schools, and build student restrooms for another 20 schools," said Mohammad Ismail, director of general education of the Helmand Department of Education. Students asked the Islamic Emirate to rebuild their schools so that they can continue studying in a peaceful environment.

"The problem that we are facing is that our school is not built properly, we don't have any toilets, it is very cold in win-

ter," said Abdul Ali, a student.

"Our school does not have four walls; the office and our classrooms are old. There are many of us, there is no place to sit in the classroom," said Zameer, a student. Helmand residents urged

the current government to speed up the process of rebuilding schools.

"There are 350 to 400 students. We ask them to build a school here for us," said Pir Mohammad, a resident of Helmand.

"We ask the Islamic Emirate to build walls for

the school and specify its place because the school is close to the road," said Rahmatullah, a resident of Helmand. According to data from the Helmand Department of Education, the province now has 419 schools, 234 of which do not have buildings.



## Over 170 Retribution Verdicts Issued in Afghanistan: IEA Supreme Court

KABUL (Agenices): Taliban's supreme court officials said they have issued more than 170 retribution verdicts all over Afghanistan since the group's return to power in August 2021.

Abdul Malik Haqqani, the Administrative Deputy of the Islamic Emirate's supreme court, said on Thursday, May 4, via a video call that Taliban leadership is committed to carrying on the execution of the sentence of retribution in Afghanistan.

"Taliban courts have issued 175 retribution cases, 79 floggings, and 37 Stoning thus far throughout the country," the official in a video call said.

He further added, Taliban courts have implemented Sharia limits on 103 people and has considered punishment for 1562 other people allegedly accused of different crimes.

Certain verdicts have

already been implemented and others will be executed in the coming future, the court official stated.

Meanwhile, the sentence of retribution was implemented for the first time after the return of the

Islamic Emirate to Afghanistan last year on a person in Farah province.

Afghanistan's de facto authorities have implemented strict Islamic Sharia laws including public execution, flog-

ging, and stoning in different parts of the country.

The move prompted widespread condemnations from the international community and human rights groups.





# Senate passes SC Review of Judgments, Orders Bill

ISLAMABAD (INP): Senate on Friday passed the Supreme Court Review of Judgments and Orders Bill 2023. The bill is aimed at facilitating and strengthening the Supreme Court in the exercise of its powers to review its judgments and orders. It is pertinent to note that National Assembly already passed the same bill—moved by Shaza Fatima—on April 14.

The Session of Upper House held in Islamabad with Chairman Senate Mohammad Sadiq Sajranani in the chair. The bill moved by Irfan ul Haque Siddiqui and already passed by the National Assembly aims at facilitating and strengthening the Supreme Court in exercise of its powers to review its judgments and orders.

In his remarks on the occasion, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar alluded to Article 188 of the constitution saying it empowers the Supreme Court subject to the provision of any Act of Majlis-e-Shoora and any rules

made by the Supreme Court, to review any judgment pronounced or any order made by it. He said the latest legislation is procedural in nature. Taking the floor, Minister for Education Rana Tanveer Hussain said that the books of O-level carrying objectionable material have been confiscated.

He assured that in future A and O level books will be properly scrutinized. The Senate today passed The Private Power and Infrastructure Board Amendment Bill, 2023 and the Kalam Bibi International Women Institute, Bannu Bill 2023.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar presented a report of the parliamentary committee regarding examining the amendments proposed by the Election Commission of Pakistan in the Elections Act, 2017. The Senate today passed a resolution expressing deep grief and sorrow over the death of former Senator Enver Baig. The resolution moved by Minister of State

for Law Shahadat Awan noted that the late Senator was a champion of human rights, diversity and equality. It pointed out that Enver Baig was a strong supporter of immigration reforms and worked to create policies that make it easier for immigrants to settle abroad.

Extending condolences to the bereaved family, the resolution said that services rendered by the late senator would be long remembered. At the outset, the House offered feteiha for the departed soul of former Senator Enver Baig as well as those who recently martyred in recent acts of terrorism in the country. "I think India has to come out of this groove that we will not sit until and unless Pakistan gives up terrorism. Pakistan has fought terrorism, Pakistan is in the process of defeating extremism and terrorism. As I said, we have suffered. So let's not pick that as an excuse and let things simmer."



GOA: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari along with Minister of External Affairs of India, S. Jaishankar during the SCO CFM meetings, in India.

## Geopolitics must not affect SCO's collective action on climate change

GOA (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Friday stressed a collective action by the regional countries under Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to jointly address the common issues, particularly climate change, poverty and terrorism. He said geopolitics must not affect the commitment to address the challenges and learn lessons from the collective good.

"The solution to our collective challenges should be collective action, not a divided reaction... We must isolate these issues from hyper-partisan geopolitics if we are to succeed," he said in his address at the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers meeting, held in the resort city. Chairman of the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers, Dr. S. Jaishankar, the foreign ministers of SCO member states, the Secretary General of SCO, and Director, Executive Committee of SCO-RATS attended the meeting.

Bilawal said Pakistan considers the SCO a key regional platform comprising countries, which are bound together by longstanding historical, cultural, civilizational and geographical ties. "Our excuse cannot be we were too divided to put up a fight!," he said.

He highlighted Pakistan's vision of enhanced regional economic connectivity and win-win cooperation. The foreign minister said the climate crisis posed an existential threat to humanity and proposed the establishment of a Joint Working Group in SCO on Climate Change. He mentioned that Pakistan recently faced the greatest climate catastrophe and stressed that the planet could only be saved from the ravages of climate change if the international community worked in unison.

He emphasized holding the developed world up to their commitment to providing US \$ 100 billion annually for climate finance. On connectivity,

he said Pakistan looked forward to hosting the 'Conference on Transport Connectivity for Regional Prosperity' in September 2023. He said the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor could be a force multiplier for regional connectivity, adding that the route CPEC offered all countries to take the journey further and connect the dots towards full regional economic integration.

He congratulated Iran, which would soon become the newest member of the SCO family and welcomed the accession of Bahrain, Kuwait, Maldives, Myanmar and the United Arab Emirates as new Dialogue Partners. He said poverty still plagued this region and mentioned that Pakistan was proud of the internationally acclaimed Benazir Income Support Program which ushered in a silent revolution of poverty alleviation together with women's empowerment. He said the establishment of the Special Working Group on Poverty Alleviation proposed by Pakistan would be a step in that direction.

Bilawal termed the collective security of the region a joint responsibility and said terrorism continued to threaten global security. "Let's not get caught up in weaponizing terrorism for diplomatic point-scoring," he said, and recalled that he spoke as the son whose mother was assassinated at the hands of terrorists. "I feel the pain of this loss, empathize with victims across the world in a way most can't."

He said Pakistan was firmly committed to being part of regional and global efforts for eradicating this menace that required a comprehensive and collective approach to address the root cause as well as the threats posed by specific groups. "It requires that we let this challenge unite us to fight it rather than divide us to become its victim. Our success

requires us to isolate this issue from geo-political partisanship," he said.

He said given that many SCO members confront the menace of terrorism, often from the same terrorist groups, the SCO RATS needs to be further strengthened to effectively address the growing threats to peace and security. "We must stop conflating non-state actors with state actors. Condemn all forms of terrorism including state-sponsored terrorism," he pointed out. On Afghanistan, he called upon the international community to meaningfully engage with the Interim Afghan Government to better understand and influence the course of events, especially on girls' right to education and security.

He called on the Interim Afghan authorities to uphold their commitment to not allowing the use of Afghan soil for terrorism. "A peaceful and stable Afghanistan is a key not only to regional integration and economic cooperation but also to global peace and stability," he said. Bilawal said Pakistan remained committed to multilateralism and continues to play a leading role at all international forums, including the United Nations, for forging friendly relations among nations and supporting the peaceful settlement of longstanding international disputes.

He commended China's recent role in bridging differences between Saudi Arabia and Iran and said that "When great powers play the role of peacemakers, we can unlock the potential of peace while paving the way for greater cooperation, regional integration, and economic opportunities for our peoples." He expressed Pakistan's unwavering support and commitment to the SCO's goals and objectives, saying that SCO represented the future with 40 percent of the world's population and almost a quarter of the world's GDP.

## SC issues notice to PBC on SCBAP petition

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court on Friday issued notice to the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) on a petition filed by Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan's (SCBAP'S) secretary and additional secretary who were earlier de-seated by the PBC on account of misconduct.

A two-member SC bench comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Ayesha Malik heard the SCBA petition seeking setting aside Show Cause Notices Dated 12.4.2023 issued by PBC to Muqtedir Akhtar Shabbir, Secretary and Malik Shakeel ur Rehman, Additional Secretary, SCBAP.

According to a written order of today's hearing, this constitutional petition had been instituted under Article 184(3) of the Constitution for setting aside show cause notices dated 12.4.2023, issued by Pakistan Bar Council to Muqtedir Akhtar Shabbir, Secretary, Supreme Court Bar Association (petitioner No.2) and Malik Shakeel-ur-Rehman, Additional Secretary, Supreme Court Bar Association (petitioner No.3).

In the course of the hearing, Abid S. Zuberi filed an unnumbered Civil Miscellaneous Application, which showed that during the pendency of this petition, respondents No.2 and 3 have already de-seated the petitioner no. 2 and 3 and sent the matter to the disciplinary committee of the PBC for further proceedings. Abid Zuberi referred to Rule 118 of the Pakistan Legal Practitioner & Bar Council Rules, 1976 and argued that, under the niceties of this Rule, the only competent authority was the disciplinary committee where a complaint, if any, against petitioners No.2 and 3 should have been filed to take cognizance and decide the matter as per the Rules, which was applicable mutatis mutandis even in the cases where PBC starts suo moto disciplinary proceedings against an advocate under Rule 125. The counsel argued that no specific rule or any section of law had been cited in the show cause notices.

The court asked the counsel why the jurisdiction of this Court under Article 184(3) of the Constitution was directly invoked rather than filing a writ petition in the High Court under Article 199 of the Constitution? In response, the counsel argued that certain dictums have been laid down by this Court wherein the invoking of High Court jurisdiction was not approved. In support of his contention, he relied on the cases reported as Muhammad Shoaib Shaheen and others vs. Pakistan Bar Council and others (PLD 2017 SC 231) and Syed Iqbal Hussain Shah Gillani vs. Pakistan Bar Council through Secretary, Supreme Court Bar and others (2021 SCMR 425).

The court also asked the counsel to satisfy the bench on the maintainability of this petition under Article 184 (3) of the Constitution which predominantly related to the question of public importance with reference to the enforcement of any of the fundamental rights conferred by Chapter I of Part-II of the Constitution on which the counsel sought time to make submissions on the next date.

## Improvement in media freedom index hailed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Friday said that the improvement of Pakistan in global media freedom index was a manifestation of the fact that Pakistan's direction was correct and the government had intentions to improve it further. Expressing her gratitude over Pakistan's improvement of 7 ranks in the world ranking of press freedom, she said in a statement that the era of media-bashing, kidnapping, shooting, rib-breaking, accusing media persons of selling loyalties and dirty character assassination campaigns was slowly ending, which was also being acknowledged globally. "Efforts are being made to remove the stigma of 'media predator' on Pakistan's forehead", she said while referring to Imran's era.

The minister said that

that four-year mess of 'Imran Media Predator' was gradually being cleared with the grace of Allah Almighty. She congratulated the Pakistani nation and the media that Pakistan was improving in the media index at global level. "It is gratifying to see progress in media in one year under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif", she maintained. She thanked to Allah for bringing positive improvement in media freedom index after getting out of FATF's gray list.

Marriyum Aurangzeb saluted the journalists and media organizations who struggled for the freedom of expression and journalism, faced hardships and oppression. She vowed that this journey of improvement would continue in their cooperation. The minister opined that a seven-point improvement in the Media Freedom Index was the manifestation of toler-

ance of dissent.

The RSF report acknowledged that the current government was committed to a democratic attitude towards the media, she said and added, this report distinguishes between a democratic people's government and an undemocratic imposed regime. The minister said that the constitutional rights of media and expression of opinion would be further strengthened. Referring to 2022 report in which Imran Khan was declared a media predator, she said in the past years of this dark regime, Pakistan went down 12 places in the media freedom index. She lamented that during the four-year tenure of Imran Predator, Pakistan went down 18 ranks in the Press Freedom Index. In just one year under the leadership of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, Pakistan's index improved its rank by 7.

## KP Governor takes notice of irregularities in recruitments

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali while taking notice of the public complaints regarding irregularities and violation of merit in recruitments for the University of Buner has directed the Governor Inspection Team for conducting formal investigation into the matter.

According to a special dispatch issued here by the Governor's Secretariat here on Friday, the Inspection Team has been directed to furnish a transparent investigative report regarding violation of merit in recruitments in the University of Buner to the Governor as soon as possible.

The Governor Haji Ghulam Ali has said that the violation of merit in recruitments by the universities is unacceptable in any circumstances. He ruled out any compromise on unlawful recruitments, particularly of teaching staff in all

public sector universities including the University of Buner.

The Governor, who is also the Chancellor of all public sector universities of the province, said that 100% merit should be observed in the recruitment of teaching staff of the universities as parents enroll their children in the universities for imparting them quality higher education and also pay a fee for it. He said that the hiring of the teaching staff meeting required academic qualification and equipped with modern technology will prove beneficial for the students.

Meanwhile, Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali urged people to work in liaison with government to address economic problems and maintain peace in the province. He was talking to 60-members delegation of Hassan Khel sub Division here. The delegation comprising elders of the areas was led by Moulana Junaid Afridi. The delegation

informed governor about their problems relating to unavailability of drinking water, dilapidated conditions of schools, electricity transmission lines, establishment of Bank and post office.

They also demanded compiling a comprehensive report of their problems for initiating necessary action. Speaking on the occasion, KP Governor assured delegation of cooperation and said that their concerns would be conveyed to provincial and federal authorities for proper action. He said that funds would be ensured in next budget for uplift of Hassan Khel area including up-gradation of schools and Basic Health Units.

Later delegations of Bajaur tribal district, Jandola and Abbottabad called on governor and informed him about their problems. Governor listened to their problems and assured them to provided needed help.

## Pakistan bailout review to wrap up once financing in place: IMF

NEW YORK (Agencies): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is working with Pakistan to conclude a ninth review of a bailout programme, its mission chief said on Friday of the funding critical for the cash-strapped nation to avert an economic collapse.

Pakistan and the IMF have been discussing fiscal policy measures in the review since February, aiming to resume stalled funding of \$1.1 billion due in November from a \$6.5-billion programme agreed in 2019. The measures have fuelled highest ever inflation, posted at 36.4% in April.

The IMF funding is crucial for Pakistan to avert a default on its external payment obligations during a balance of payment crisis, in which foreign exchange reserves have shrunk to just four weeks of controlled imports. "The IMF continues to work with the Pakistani authorities to

bring the ninth review to conclusion once the necessary financing is in place and the agreement is finalised," mission chief Nathan Porter said in a statement to Reuters.

"The IMF supports the authorities in the implementation of policies in the period ahead." This included technical work to prepare the budget for the fiscal year 2024, set to be passed by the National Assembly before end-June, he added. As part of the conditions, Pakistan has given an assurance that its balance of payments gap this fiscal year, which ends in June, is fully funded.

Pakistan has announced pledges worth \$3 billion in financing support from Saudi Arabia and UAE, but the funds have yet to come through. Longtime ally China has rolled over and refinanced its loans. Islamabad and the IMF have had differences over the gap. It was not clear if the Saudi, UAE and

Chinese financing would be sufficient, or if more external support would be needed.

It was also not immediately clear why the lender wanted to work on the technical preparation of the budget, which is not covered by the programme. The step could be linked to a possible new IMF lending plan, said Yousuf Nazar, an economist and former head of equities and investments at Citigroup.

"I think it is unavoidable that they would like to ensure the government will meet its commitments particularly when it is in no position to repay the debt, which will inevitably need a new programme," he told Reuters. Pakistan's finance ministry and the IMF did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The current IMF programme aims to disburse an additional \$1.4 billion for Pakistan before it concludes in June.

## Eight dead in Serbia's second mass shooting

BELGRADE (Agencies): Eight people were killed and 14 wounded in Serbia's second mass shooting in two days and a suspect was arrested, authorities said on Friday, causing horror in a nation that had just started three days of mourning for victims of the first shootings.

The latest incident occurred late on Thursday in the village of Dubona, 42km (26 miles) south of Belgrade, authorities said. State broadcaster RTS said the suspect, a young man, had been involved in an altercation in a schoolyard. He left and then returned with an assault rifle and a handgun, opened fire and continued to shoot at people at random from a moving car. "The suspect U.B., born in 2002, has been apprehended in the vicinity of the city of Kragujevac, he is suspected of killing eight people and wounding 14 overnight," Serbia's Interior Ministry said in a statement. An investigation was ongoing. An off-duty policeman and his sister were among those killed, RTS reported.

"This is sad, the young policeman is my daughter's age, born in 1998," said Danijela, a middle-aged woman in Dubona. "My daughter is taking sedatives, we could not sleep all night. They grew up together." Police used a helicopter, drones and multiple police patrols to hunt down the suspect. "This is terrible for our country, this is a huge defeat. In two days so many ... killed," said Ivan, a Dubona resident. Serbs were still reeling from a mass shooting on Wednesday when a 13-year-old boy shot dead nine and injured seven at a school in Belgrade before turning himself in. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic was scheduled to address the nation around 10:30am (0830 GMT) on Friday.



BELGRADE: School children gathered to light candles for the victims near the Vladislav Ribnikar school in Serbia.

## SC won't hesitate

(Continued from Page 1)

the Constitution gave a time period of six months for the budget. He also expressed concern that the issue was wasting a lot of the court's time. CJP remarked court is not interested in the PTI-government dialogue, however, court has left the matter on the political parties. Farooq H Naik assured apex court that problems would be solved, on which, CJ replied, he only made tall claims.

In a petition submitted by a citizen named Sardar Kashif Khan, the federal government, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), and key political parties have been named as respondents. The petition argues that holding the general elections of the National Assembly and all four provincial assemblies together would be in the interests of justice, equity, and fulfilling constitutional imperatives.

The petition further contends that holding simultaneous elections would

ensure that they are carried out honestly, justly, fairly, and in accordance with the law. The caretaker setups that would be put in place for the elections would help to achieve this. According to the petition, having political governments in power in the provinces while general elections are being held for the National Assembly has the potential to adversely affect the National Assembly election more than in the inverse situation. This is because provincial governments have operational control of all day-to-day affairs in the respective National Assembly constituencies (other than those in Islamabad Capital Territory).

Moreover, holding elections simultaneously would save billions of rupees and the expenses could be included in the budget for the upcoming year. It would also require the armed forces and police only once instead of multiple times, allowing them to devote more time to their principal

duties. This would free up law enforcement agencies to focus on improving the country's law and order situation instead.

The petition also highlights that elections to the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) assemblies would be held based on the results of the 2017 census while those to the National, Sindh, and Balochistan assemblies would be conducted on the latest census figures. The petition urges that such a situation should preferably be avoided as it could lead to unforeseen complications. In addition, the petition notes that the difference in the date previously ordered by the apex court for holding polls in Punjab and the one suggested by the government in October was "only a few months so there was no significant harm or delay." It further suggests that the parliament could address the issues of delaying the Punjab and KP polls by passing a constitutional amendment.