

Girl dies in landmine blast

KASHMORE (INP): A young girl died while two others were injured in landmine explosion in district Kashmore of Sindh on Saturday. Rescue sources said that a young girl while passing through the location mistaken stepped over landmine in suburban village Qaisar Khan Jakhrani of Bakhapura. The girl died on the spot while two people were injured in the explosion.

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# 3.5% GDP growth target easily achievable: Dar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Saturday expressed confidence that the federal government would easily achieve the 3.5 per cent growth target of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) set for the upcoming fiscal year with effective and transparent utilization of massive development funds it allocated for the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2023-24).

"I believe if we rightly implemented the PSDP and invested with complete transparency, the GDP growth from 0.29% to 3.5% will be easily achievable. We have set a very modest target and I am very much sure if PSDP funds are invested judiciously, you will find perhaps the 3.5% growth at the lower side," he said while addressing the post-budget news conference. He said the government allocated a historic size of Rs1150 billion in development funds under the PSDP, which was almost double the funds of Rs567 billion utilized in 2022-23.

In 2017-18, Ishaq Dar said he had presented over Rs1 trillion PSDP budget that was a record-high at that time, while for the year 2023-24 a 'new-high' size of the development funds amounting to Rs1150 billion had been earmarked to achieve the required goals of national development and put the economy on a consistent growth trajectory. He said the GDP growth target was not 'unrealistic,' adding the international financial and rating institutions always remained conservative as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank (WB) projected the growth at 2 per cent. International Monetary Fund (IMF) itself announced the target of 3.5 per cent, Bloomberg and

Fitch rated at 4 per cent while Standard and Poor (S&P) calculated at 2-2.5 per cent.

"As per our professional calculation, it (3.5% GDP growth target) is doable by the grace of Allah Almighty," the finance minister said confidently. Talking about the drivers of growth, he said the budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 was somehow different from traditional budgets as it focused more on growth that would help create employment, get macro-economic indicators better, reduce inflation and bring down the policy rate.

He said there was a need to reverse the trend witnessed during the tenure of the past regime, adding the target should be to achieve macroeconomic indicators for the fiscal year 2017. "Once you get that then you have the second goal to achieve a position in G20," he added. The minister said, "I think being a nuclear power, if Pakistan establishes itself as an economic power that is what the nation expects from us and that is the target of this government, PML(N) in particular".

He said the country's economy had come out of the steep vulnerable stage and it was stable now, so further decline had been stopped. "We will try our best to put the economy on a growth path. This should be our national goal," he added. For achieving this objective, he said special focus had been put on certain areas to promote growth on a fast-track basis.

Among these areas, the government had prioritized the agriculture sector as it could provide quick dividends, he added. Ishaq Dar said the Prime Minister's agriculture package helped in producing bumper wheat crops which meant this sector had the potential to give quick dividends, and accordingly, the government

enhanced agriculture loans up to Rs 2250 billion. He said the government would strictly monitor loans and ensure their fast-track disbursement adding Rs 30 billion had also been allocated to solarize around 50,000 tube wells.

Special focus would also be given to developing seeds and promoting research to enhance per acre yield, the minister said, adding "We want to bring about an agriculture revolution, and it can happen as we have the potential." He said seed imports had been exempted from duties whereas the government also withdrew duties on the import of combined harvesters.

In addition, the agro-based Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) would be provided concessional loans under a scheme for which required funds had been kept in the upcoming budget, he added. The minister said new agro-based industry having up to Rs 800 million turnover had been given tax exemption whereas Rs 10 billion had been earmarked for youth business agriculture loans.

He said Rs 6 billion were set aside for providing subsidy on urea imports if needed. Likewise, the minister said, Pakistan had a great scope in Information Technology and enhanced its exports manifold. He said measures were taken to promote the IT sector, adding the government had fulfilled the demands of the sector. For encouraging new start-up programmes, the minister said the government would give them exemption on sales tax up to \$ 24000 per annum and \$ 200 per month.

He said the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) were another important sector being focused by the government as the sector was considered the backbone of the economy in various countries. The minister said Pakistan had had a weak SMEs



sector and arrangements were being made to facilitate the sector with bank loans, adding the government had also reviewed Aasan Financing and Export Finance Scheme for the SMEs that was also under consideration. The minister said the government had allocated Rs10 billion to provide laptops on merit adding that huge funds were allocated for education, women empowerment and the construction sector.

Repeating the main budget targets, he said the outlay of the federal budget 2023-24 was estimated at Rs 14,460 billion whereas the revenue collection by the Federal Board of Revenue would be Rs 9,200 billion out of which Rs 5,276 billion would be shared by provinces. The federal non-tax revenues would be Rs 2,963 billion while the total income of the federal government would be Rs 6,887 billion and Rs 7,303 billion would be spent on interest payments, he added. The GDP growth rate has been estimated at 3.5 per cent whereas as inflation would

remain at around 21 per cent approximately. The budget deficit had been calculated at 6.54 per cent whereas the primary surplus would be 0.4 per cent of GDP. The minister said the government had set up two committees to resolve issues related to businesses and remove technical anomalies. Both committees would be effective from Monday and would work constantly till the winding down of the budget to address genuine issues.

Dar said he seriously considered the proposals given by the parliamentary committees and take decisions on them realistically. To a question on does Pakistan has any Plan-B, if International Monetary Fund (IMF) deal was not finalized, the minister said that self-reliance and standing on their own feet would be the way. He said, "I have categorically said that Pakistan will not default". Those who are constantly parroting the default mantra actually were responsible for making serious mistakes in the system and were the partners in the

crime, he added.

Replying to a question on privatization, he said the government was in the advanced stage of outsourcing the airports to improve facilities, adding companies from 12 countries have shown interest to participate in the bidding process, expected to commence in July. Ishaq Dar said efforts were being made for getting an extension in the GSP-Plus status and hoped it would be done. To another question, he said population growth was alarming and needed to be addressed; otherwise, it could spoil the development efforts. He said the agenda related to population growth was also pending with the Council of Common Interests (CCI) for consideration.

Answering a question, he said the defence budget of Rs1804 billion was 1.7 per cent of the GDP adding it was not an ambitious one compared to neighbouring countries but a realistic one keeping in view the budget size. To a question about external debt, the minister said the government had no plans for the Paris club rescheduling. "We will not go for rescheduling of the multilateral debt. We will make the payments on time when they become due," he said. However, the minister said, as far as bilateral debts were concerned there was always room to negotiate but not for haircuts or write-offs.

He said bilateral loans could be negotiated for a long term and this was not unusual because of the Covid-19, flood catastrophe and other confronting challenges. "We will consider and talk to our bilateral partners but have no plan to go to multilateral development institutions requesting them to reschedule our debt. The government will also not reschedule the domestic loans," the finance minister remarked.

## CM Murad unveils Rs2.2tr Sindh budget for FY24

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, who also holds the portfolio of Finance Minister, on Saturday presented the budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 in the Sindh Assembly. Addressing the budget session of



the Sindh Assembly, CM Murad Ali Shah said that the total outlay of the budget for the province is estimated at Rs2244 billion.

The chief minister began his speech with a couplet from Sindhi poetry while no lawmaker from the opposition PTI was in attendance. Taking a jibe at the opposition party, Sindh chief minister said that some parties had been scattered like "houses of sand." Presenting the budget, the chief minister announced a salary hike of 35pc for the Sindh government employees between grades 1 and 16 and 30pc for the employees between grades 17 and 22.

Shah said the government has fixed a sum of Rs410 billion for development schemes. The government has allocated Rs380 billion for the annual development program while the

total development budget is estimated at Rs689 billion, Shah said. "In addition to regular ADP, Government of Sindh's Development portfolio under Public Private Partnership mode stands at Rs. 487 billion whereby Projects of Rs. 60 billion have already been executed, Projects of Rs.

2.79 billion have been allocated for fighting dacoits and Rs 130 million for forensic laboratory in Sindh budget 2023-24. On recent floods, Murad Ali Shah said that Rs160 billion has been proposed for rain and flood victims, Rs12 billion for mega projects in Karachi, and Rs90 billion for the works services department. Rs 353 billion has been allocated for the Education Department. About, 1500 lecturers will be appointed through the Sindh Public Service Commission (SPSC).

Rs 403.3 billion has been allocated in the budget for the construction of 23 new colleges in different districts of the province. Rs25 billion grant for public universities, and Rs 3 billion has been fixed for the construction of flood-damaged schools. It is proposed to set aside Rs20 billion for the development budget of the health department.

The sales tax collection during 2023-24 will amount to Rs235 billion while Rs143 billion will be collected on account of excise and taxation, CM Murad Ali Shah added. The non-tax revenue will stand at Rs32 billion while Rs21.9 billion will be received on account of Public Sector Development Programme, he said.

Earlier, the Sindh Cabinet on Saturday approved Rs2,24 trillion budget for the next financial year 2023-24 in its pre-budget meeting here at the Chief Minister House. The Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah discussed a five-year performance of the provincial government.

144 billion are presently at different stages of construction and Projects amounting to Rs. 283 billion are at the bidding stage."

Shah said the government has allocated Rs380 billion for the annual development program while the total development budget is estimated at Rs689 billion. The chief minister said that the government has set aside Rs13.4 billion for the transport sector in budget 2023-24, a 92pc increase from the amount fixed in the last budget.

"Rs6.1 billion has been allocated for Peoples Bus Service (PBS) project while Rs10bn has been assigned for the purchase of 500 hybrid buses in FY2023-24. He said that PPP-led Sindh government has decided to pay special attention to law and order in the budget and proposed to allocate Rs160 billion for the purpose. Rs

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## Court stops police from arresting Qureshi

ISLAMABAD (INP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Islamabad on Saturday approved Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi's interim bail till June 27 in three different violence cases. Accepting Qureshi's bail pleas against surety bonds worth Rs100,000 each, the court stopped police action against the PTI leader till June 27.

PTI Vice Chairman and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi was released from Adiala Jail Rawalpindi on June 6. Addressing media outside Adiala Jail Shah Mehmood Qureshi had said that the 'flag of justice' is in his hands and he would meet the PTI chief tomorrow and discuss the current political situation of the country with him.

He said that the party is facing hardships "But don't lose hope as the sun of justice will rise again". It is pertinent to mention here that former foreign minister Qureshi was taken into custody by police in Islamabad following May 9 protests. Shah Mehmood was arrested from Gilgit Baltistan House in Islamabad, soon after the riots erupted across Pakistan following the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan in the Al-Qadir Trust case. The PTI leader was re-arrested on May 23 moments after he was released from Adiala Jail. Shah Mahmood was released from Adiala jail on court orders but was taken into custody right after his release.

## 31 die, many injured as rain wreaks havoc in KP, Punjab

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR / LAHORE: Provisional Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Saturday reported 25 killed and 145 injured and 69 houses were partially damaged due to heavy wind, rain and storm in Bannu, Lakki Marwat and Karak districts.

Secretary Relief Abdul Basit said that Rescue 1122 and district administrations search and rescue operations are ongoing as all the injured are being shifted to the hospital before providing medical aid on the spot.

He said that Rs40 million has been released for Bannu district on priority basis. He said that all the affectees will be treated under government policy. Giving much updated details, Director General Rescue 1122, disclosed that the number of dead due to heavy rain, strong wind and storm in Lakki Marwat, Karak and Bannu was reported with 12 people were killed in Bannu, three in Lakki Marwat and 2 in Karak, Director General Rescue 1122 said.

He said, more than 60 people were injured due to wind and storm and most of the accidents occurred due to collapsed roofs and walls. The number of injured has increased to more than 60, Director General Rescue 1122 said. There were unconfirmed reports that more than 85 were injured.

He said the victims including children and women with relief operations of Rescue 1122 are ongoing in Karak, Bannu and Lakki Marwat. Roofs and walls of houses collapsed in various incidents, said Director General Rescue 1122.

He said, earlier, two children and a woman of the same family died in Lakki Marwat and more than 60 others were injured. The official of Rescue 1122 said that all stations of Rescue 1122 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are on alert. Dr. Khateer Ahmed, Director General Rescue 1122, directed the official to keep a vigilant eye on any untoward incident. He said relief activities continued as due to heavy rain, roof collapses occurred

at many places in Lakki Marwat, Karak and Bannu. He disclosed that Rescue 1122's search and rescue operations are ongoing as all the injured are being shifted to the hospital before providing medical aid on the spot.

In Punjab, three sisters died in a rain-related incident in the Khushab area while a man was killed in Wazirabad. The deceased are identified as 13-year-old Sattaran Bibi, 10-year-old Manzhar Batul and seven-year-old Kashf Bibi.

The tragedy took place in a Noorpur Thal village where the girls took refuge from heavy rain beside a wall that collapsed. Separately, heavy rains coupled with strong winds battered several parts of Punjab including Sargodha, Gujranwala, Faisalabad and other districts.

In Dera Ghazi Khan, thunderstorm injured one person and injured 15 who were being shifted to the district headquarters hospital and emergency was imposed in all hospitals of the area. Rescue 1122 DG said relief operations were underway in the affected areas and injured were being shifted to the hospitals. At least 10 people were injured in rain-related incidents in Gujranwala district.

Reportedly, Nowshera Virkan, Wazirabad and adjacent areas too received heavy rain. Earlier in the ongoing week, rain-related incidents claimed three lives in Lahore and parts of Punjab. Two PIA flights could not land due to bad weather in Lahore PK 760 coming from Jeddah was diverted to Multan while PK186 coming from Sharjah was diverted to Faisalabad.

Earlier, at least nine people were killed as heavy rains lashed Hyderabad and other Sindh areas in the past 48 hours, with gusts of winds, hailstorms and lightning piling misery on people. The twin cities of Hyderabad and Kotri received heavy showers and hailstorms the size of golf balls damaging several vehicles and windows in Hyderabad's SITE area. Gusty winds uprooted

trees and damaged vehicles.

In Kotri City, the heavy rainfall killed three children and seven other people injured. Police said the children were playing when the wall came crashing down, leaving them dead on the spot.

Meanwhile, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for information, Auqaf, Hajji, religious and minority affairs Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhil expressed regret over the loss of life and property caused by the heavy rain and storm in various districts of the province on Saturday evening.

The minister expressed condolences and heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved families. He said that rescue and relief activities are going on rapidly in the affected districts while the damage is being assessed. Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhil said that Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan analyzing the situation arising from the recent storm and rain from time to time.

On the direction of Caretaker Chief Minister the provincial government and concerned departments are busy in relief activities. District administrations of Bannu, Lakki Marwat and Karak are in touch with the people of rain-hit areas. Emergency has been implemented in the hospitals of these districts so that the injured can be provided timely medical assistance.

The caretaker provincial minister said that PDMA, Rescue 1122 and other organizations have immediately started relief activities in these districts while the damage caused by the heavy wind and torrential rain is being assessed. The provincial government stands with the victims in this hour of difficulty and will provide them with all possible help he added. Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhil expressed regret for the loss of life and property due to wind and rain and condoled with the families of the deceased and prayed for their forgiveness and speedy recovery of the injured.

## Economy direly needs reforms: Shehbaz

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the country's economy direly needed reforms, which in turn, could be undertaken in a stable political environment as the economic development was intrinsically linked to political stability.

On his Twitter handle, the prime minister stressed "It is here that the Charter of Economy appears to be the only way forward for our political parties to achieve prosperity for our people." The prime minister in a lengthy tweet referred to the laying of the fiscal budget 2023-24 said that it represented the beginning of the process to fix the economy's long-term ailments. The coalition government had prioritized the right areas that have the potential to spur eco-

nomic growth, attract investment and make the economy self-sufficient, he added.

The prime minister said the making of budget (FY2023-24) was particularly a difficult task in view of the persistent challenges arising out of the floods-related relief and rehabilitation, global supply chain disruptions and geostrategic upheavals. "Never-ending headwinds of political instability created by Imran Niazi damaged the economy and created uncertainty, as the country remained on the boil for well over a year," he regretted.

Mindful of the impact of inflation, the prime minister said the government provided relief to the public sector employees and pensioners in the form of pay raise of up to 35% and 17.5% respectively, and increased minimum wage to Rs32000. He said a more bal-

anced budget that levied no new tax could not have been possible within the existing constraints.

The prime minister also commended all those who remained part of this exercise and played their role in the budget-making exercise.

**Pakistan highly values its bilateral ties with Kazakhstan:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif underscored that Pakistan deeply valued its bilateral relations with Kazakhstan.

The prime minister held a telephonic conversation with President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan. Highlighting the importance of increasing tourism and enhancing people to people contacts, the prime minister expressed satisfaction that flight operations between two countries would commence soon, PM Office

Media Wing said in a press release. The two leaders agreed on the need to further expand bilateral cooperation in the fields of energy, agriculture, IT, textiles, and energy. Characterizing Pakistan as an important country in the region, the Kazakh president expressed his country's desire to further strengthen their long standing bilateral ties. The prime minister also invited the Kazakh president to pay an official visit to Pakistan at his earliest convenience.

Meanwhile, Former MPAs, Mian Marghoob Ahmad and Mian Mujtaba Shuja ur Rehman also called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. During the meeting, they discussed the current political situation, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The political leaders also

called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and discussed the current political situation in the country. The leaders who held separate meetings with the prime minister included former members National Assembly Sardar Ghulam Abbas, Abdul Ghaffar Dogar and former provincial assembly member Mehwish Sultana.

**PM briefed about LESCO solarization projects:** Chairman Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) Hafiz Nauman called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Saturday.

Hafiz Nauman briefed the prime minister about the power supply and demand situation and steps taken by LESCO to stop theft of electricity. He also informed the PM about the projects of solarization in the jurisdiction of LESCO especially the solarization of grid stations.

## Inmates approached PHC for pardon

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Several inmates behind the bars in the drug cases approached Peshawar High Court (PHC) seeking apology/pardon granted on different occasion by state to prisoners.

The petition filed by Bakhtawar Shah along with others while Fawad Afzal Safi Advocate will represent applicants before court. The petition stated that the applicants are convicted but deprived from apology/pardon granted by state's officials on different occasion after completion of their convictions.

The terrorist and anti-state element didn't liable

for apology/pardon because these crimes are great offenses but drug didn't lie within the definition of crimes and argued that applicants are able for relief. The petitioner requested for producing record before court while provincial government and Department of Prisons

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are made respondents in the case.

Meanwhile, District and Session Judge (D&SJ) Ishaq Taj has declared unmaintainable 22A petition seeking registration of First Information Report (FIR) against Tik Tok Star Hareem Shah filed by another Tik Tok star belonging to Karak district Sandal Khattak at session courts Peshawar.



**اطلاع عام / خاص**

**بنگم جناب ڈپٹی کمشنر صاحب ضلع ڈیرہ اسماعیل خان**

مراسلہ نمبر: **AL-SHAH HOUSING SCHEME** برہاس وعام کو مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ ڈیولپمنٹ محمد ہارون موئین کلاہی والد تحصیل پورہ ضلع ڈیرہ اسماعیل خان میں اپنی ہاؤسنگ سکیم **AL-SHAH HOUSING SCHEME** کے نام سے بنانا چاہتے ہیں۔ کھاتہ جات کے نمبرات درج ذیل ہیں۔

موضع کلاہی والد الاکاتہ نمبر: 139، عمر خضرہ نمبر: 141، رقبہ: 49 کنال 17 مارلہ

مسئلہ میں کمی بھی پرستانی اور قانونی گپیں سے بچنے کیلئے مندرجہ ذیل، بالا ہاؤسنگ سوسائٹی کے بارے میں کمی شخص / ادارہ / کاروبار یا تریبونٹ / ایجنسیز / میٹروپولیٹن کوکونٹری / اعتراض / اعذرہ سے یا کوئی مثبت تجویز دیا جائے تو ذریعہ پیشگی کے ضمن میں 15 اپریل 2023ء کو اطلاع دیا جاتا ہے کہ وہ اس کے بعد کوئی اعذرہ / اعتراض دے۔ تاکہ آپ کے اعتراضات / اخذات / تجاویز کو دور کیا جاسکے۔ اس کے بعد کوئی اعذرہ / اعتراض نہیں کیا جائے گا۔

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# Governor lauds role of ESEF to educate deserving children

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali here Saturday appreciated the efforts of Elementary and Secondary School Foundation (ESEF) to eliminate ignorance from the society and said that we should educate needy children enabling them to play a role in development of the country.

He was the Chief Guest in Graduation ceremony of ESEF held in IM Science Hayatabad.

The ceremony among others was attended by CM

aide on Education, Rehmat Salam Khattak, Chief Secretary, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary, Managing Director ESEF, Zarif Maani and Director IM Sciences, Usman Ghani besides students and their parents.

Addressing the ceremony, KP Governor lauded the efforts of teachers and community schools of ESEF to educate needy and deserving children.

He said that ESEF is also endeavoring to educate children that are residing in far flung and backward

areas of the province adding their accomplishments are commendable.

He said that dream to establish justice and equality could not be materialized until and unless needy children are not given equal chances of education and growth. He also urged provincial government to allocate appropriate funds for ESEF.

Later, he distributed prizes and certificates among children that are studying in community schools of ESEF.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister Adnan Jalil addressing 2-day Pakistan Gems & Mineral Festival.

# CCPO directs efficient, effective crackdown

PESHAWAR (APP): The Capital City Police Officer directed an efficient and effective crackdown on street crime by arresting six dangerous gangs involved in snatching, robbery and other serious crimes with the limits of different Police Stations.

According to details, given by an official of the Police control, the Police overall arrested 17 suspects of dangerous gangs during operations.

Special operations were conducted in the limits of Khazana Police Station, Phandu Police Station, Sharqi Police Station, Pishta

khara Police Station and Hayatabad Police Station.

During the operation, a huge amount of cash, 14 valuable mobile phones, 6 pistols and 6 motorcycles used in various incidents were also recovered, police said.

**District administration mobilized, 88 people arrested:** The district administration is conducting raids at various places in Peshawar and a total of 88 people were arrested for high prices, non-existence of official markh nama (price list), low weight of bread and poor sanitation.

The officials of the dis-

trict administration conducted raids at different localities including Charsadda Road, Dilla Zak, Hayatabad, Matni, Kohat Road, Karkhano, Regi, Nasir Bagh Road, University Road and other areas.

While inspecting 213 shops, 88 shopkeepers were arrested and 38 shopkeepers will be warned while the arrested shopkeepers include vegetable sellers, bakers, general store owners, said the officials of the district administration. The official said that strict action is being taken against shopkeepers by arresting them.

# UET hold seminar on Clean Campus drive

PESHAWAR (APP): A seminar on Clean Campus Drive was held at UET Peshawar, organized by the Directorate of Clubs and Societies, UET Peshawar in collaboration with WSSP.

The chief guest of the seminar was Prof. Dr. Sahar Noor, Dean Mechanical, Chemical and Industrial Engineering, UET Peshawar.

In his address, he said, WSSP's services are commendable which has been proved by their commitment UET Peshawar being the first ever University in Peshawar that had signed the MoU with WSSP a few years ago have seen a positive response from WSSP and their team members.

He assured cooperation with WSSP on conducting joint research and development in the fields of "plastic and packaging," Solid

Waste Management and Water Resource Management, he added.

Hafiz Muhammad Ismail, Manager Community Liaison Cell (CLC) WSSP said, Clean Campus Drive is aimed to sensitize the students and teaching community on their role in helping WSSP to improve the environment through cleaning efforts and scientific solid waste management.

He said, at present we have 63 union councils where WSSP is offering its services while enabling 42 model streets, 251 wash clubs that are active in 43 union councils. He said that pet plastic bottle recycling is a big challenge and urged support of faculty and researchers for handling this issue on a technical basis.

Dr. Imad Ullah Khan, Chief Proctor UET Peshawar gave a presentation on "Coal Briquettes" highlighting the importance of coal biomass briquetting technology developed by UET Peshawar contributing to the SDGs goal 6. Dr. Samad Baseer Director Clubs presented the vote of thanks.

Later, an awareness walk was arranged on Campus in which the students and WSSP team participated in large numbers. Farman Ali, Zonal Manager Zone D WSSP presented shields to Dr. Sahar Noor, Dr. Imad Ullah Khan and Dr. Samad Baseer Director Clubs. Dr. Sahar Noor later on, gave away UET certificates to the community development officers of WSSP including Abdullah, Community Development Officer WSSP, Taimur Ali, Field Officer WSSP and others.

## KPBC okays Rs16.3m budget legal fraternity welfare

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council (KPBC) approved Rs16.3 Million budget for financial assistance of family deceased, elder and ill lawyers, on Saturday.

The meeting was chaired by KPBC vice chairman Zar Badshah while chairman Executive Committee Syed Mubashir Shah along with other bar council members participated in the session. KPBC requested Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) to amend High Court Rules to granted right of intra court appeal to petitioner to ensure provision of justice.

KPBC also stressed upon establishment of lawyers training facility, hostels, Bar Council Law College and Housing Society for legal fraternity. KPBC also made discussion regarding reforms and amendments in Pakistan Army Act 1952.

KPBC also decided to call All Pakistan Lawyers Convention to evoked similar narrative for supremacy of constitution, law and human rights in the country.

## PPC holds training workshop

PESHAWAR (APP): The Digitalization Committee of Peshawar Press Club on Saturday conducted a highly beneficial training workshop for esteemed members.

The workshop featured lectures by local and international experts on the subjects of digital production and marketing, adhering to international standards.

This workshop marked the first of its kind, with nearly a hundred participants in attendance. Given the current critical circumstances, this event provided valuable guidance to esteemed members regarding alternative opportunities.

Trainer Kiran Butt, present at workshop were President PPC Arshad Aziz Malik, VP Rizwan Sheikh, GS Irfan Musazai, Finance Secretary Imad Waheed, and other senior journalists.

The commendable and informative program was organized under the supervision of Iftikhar Firdos, Chairman of the Digitalization Committee of the Press Club. Other members involved in the workshop's success were Fakhar Kakakhel, Nasir Dawar, Kashifuddin Syed, Safiullah Gul, Imran Bokhari, Irfan Khan, Muhammad Fahim, Shabir Hussain Imam and Ijaz.

## All schools holidays announced

PESHAWAR (APP): Elementary and Secondary Education Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Saturday announced summer holidays from June 12 to August 31 in summer areas.

It is worth mentioning here that middle and high schools of summer areas holidays were earlier announced from June 15 to August 31 but due to excessive heat the department announced holidays.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali addressing 2nd Convocation of Bacha Khan Medical College.

# PPP has role in 35% increase in salaries, pension & wages

PESHAWAR (APP): The Pakistan People's Party has played a role in the 35% increase in the salaries of the employees, pension and maximum wages of the workers while former FATA-PATA was given tax exemption due to the efforts of the PPP, Provincial President PPP Minister of State Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha told APP here on Saturday.

Pakistan People's Party Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President and Minister of State Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha said that Pakistan People's Party has tried to make the budget people-friendly despite the current bad financial situation.

He said PPP has played a key role in the 35% increase in salaries of the employees, pension and maximum wages of the workers. It is hoped that good results will come out of this budget despite the difficult conditions, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha said.

Reacting to the federal budget, he said that Pakistan People's Party is the people's party, People's Party is well aware of the financial conditions and difficulties being faced by the common man.

He said that the People's Party had proposed to increase the salaries of government employees in proportion to inflation, and the People's Party has played a role in increasing the salaries of the employees by 35%, 17 percent increase in the pension and increasing maximum wages from 25000 to 32000.

Similarly, the party has also tried to increase the pension. He said that the

People's Party has always increased the wages of the workers and the salaries of the employees. No other government has ever done such an increase in the salaries of employees which had been made by the Pakistan People's Party. He said that PPP is the people's party and well aware of the difficulties being faced by the salary class, pensioners and daily wage workers.

He said that Pakistan People's Party demanded tax exemption for former FATA and PATA, and we congratulate the people of these areas that these areas have been exempted from tax for the next year due to the efforts of the PPP.

When contacted, Secretary PPP Amjad Khan Afridi, he said, increase in salary and pension of employees is the result of PPP's

struggle. Former MPA and Secretary Information PP KP Amjad Khan Afridi said that the PPP has succeeded in getting a 35% increase in the salaries of government employees from the coalition government.

Amjad Khan Afridi, while reacting to the federal budget for the fiscal year 2023-24, said that the PPP government increased the salaries and pensions of government employees by 157 percent during its 5-year tenure, while the change government increased the total by 20 percent during its 3-year tenure.

He said that the People's Party will continue to protect the rights of the workers. The Pakistan People's Party government has proved to be a mercy for the government employees, Amjad Afridi said.

# Qaumi Watan Party declares budget 2022-23 dire straits

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Commenting on the federal budget, Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao said the country's economy was still in dire straits, hoping that the International Monetary Fund's program would soon be restored on Saturday.

Speaking at a meeting of party office-bearers of Union Council Mandani and Harichand at Sherpao village, he maintained that the IMF programme's restoration was vital for the country as it was grappling with rising debt and other economic challenges. The QWP leader lauded the government for announcing the increase in the salary of its employees in the face of skyrocketing inflation, adding that this would give them some relief to cope with the backbreaking inflation.

QWP chairman said the government had allocated

insufficient funds for the merged districts in the budget. He asked the federal government to give the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa its due shares and release the arrears of the net hydel profit and the oil and gas royalty. He demanded that the federal government should announce the new National Finance Commission award as soon as possible and increase the shares of the smaller provinces.

Aftab Sherpao said the May 9 mayhem had shaken the security foundation of the country, calling for the strict punishment for the perpetrators of violence in accordance with the law. He demanded that the masterminds and the facilitators of the May 9 vandalism and arson attacks on the state buildings and military installations should be put in the dock.

"The May 9 attacks were not an isolated occurrence rather the causes of the

recent happenings could be traced back to the events that happened in 2014 wherein Imran Khan instigated his supporters to torch the electricity bills and send money from abroad through hundi and hawala business instead of using the banking channels," the QWP leader recalled, adding that the PTI leader had provoked his followers to attack the Parliament House and the Pakistan Television Headquarters in Islamabad.

"Had strict action been taken against the PTI people back then, they would not have dared to stage the civilian coup this time," he noted with concern. He said the PTI trained its workers at the Imran Khan's Zaman Park residence in the use of the petrol bombs and other sabotage activities to attack the government and army installations. "The May 9 vandalism was the continuation of the 2014 attacks on the state

buildings," he believed.

Aftab Sherpao said the country was passing through a critical phase of its history as political instability and anarchy had ruined the economy. He said that political stability was a prerequisite for economic stability. He said PTI leader Imran Khan had now launched a sinister campaign against the country by asking the world to provide aid to Pakistan with strings attached.

The QWP leader expressed concern over the worsening law and order and rising attacks on the police force in KP, asking the provincial government to take steps to beef up security and bring the situation under control. He asked the government to activate the price control mechanism in order to control inflation and bring down the rates of the daily use items. He said that the government could provide relief to the people by taking actions against the hoarders and profiteers.

## Samina defends PhD

PESHAWAR, JUNE 10 (APP): Dr Samina dended her PhD in Education from Gomal University Dera Ismail Khan.

She defended her thesis under the supervision of Dr Allah Noor Khan Director Institute of Education and Research Gomal university.

Professor Dr M. Naseer ud Din Department of Education and psychology KUST Kohat was her external examiner.



PESHAWAR: President Pakistan Central Muslim League Khalid Masood addressing a press conference. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

# Budget 2023-24: A true reflection of people, govt employees' aspirations

PESHAWAR (APP): Inspite of tough economic, financial and climate change challenges, the federal government has presented a historic budget for financial year 2023-24 by providing maximum relief to all segments of the society including the government employees, pensioners, labourers and industries, thus laid a strong foundation to quickly turn around the national economy and achieve economic prosperity.

Following massive losses to agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and forestry sectors by the last year devastated floods in Pakistan, the federal government came up with the people and farmers' expectations by announcing a mega development and relief package for uplift of agriculture related industries, which is being widely appreciated in KP.

Shah Zaman, General Secretary, KP Beekeepers

Association, on Saturday welcomed abolishment of all taxes on imports of agricultural machinery, custom duties and taxes on import of quality seeds and Rs30 billion allocation for shifting 50,000 tubewells on the solar energy that would help bring green and white revolution in Pakistan.

"The beekeepers were adversely affected by the last year catastrophic flooding in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where many bees boxes and precious ber and palosa honey were wasted by the gushing water," he recalled.

Shah Zaman suggested plantation of "ber and palosa" plants and complete ban on cutting of these trees to promote beekeeping and increase honey production in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Welcoming an increase in agricultural loans to Rs2250 billion, he said that allocation of Rs5 billion

loans for agro-based industries besides abolishment of customs duties on inventor solars pensals would help increase wheat, sugarcane, rice and edible oil production in Pakistan.

Zahid Shinwari, former President, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) said that there are many good measures were announced in the budget 2023-24 focusing on uplift of agriculture, seeds and mechanisation, IT-enabled exports, providing the much needed financial relief to the price hike-stricken employees and pensioners besides women SMEs.

He said the reduction in minimum tax on listed companies is a right step, adding our economic challenges' call for a bold action to address the country's inherited economic problems.

Shinwari underlined the need for expanding the tax net, investing in education

and human development, managing the mounting fiscal deficit, foreign loans burdens and creating an enabling business environment imperative for economic revitalization.

He said Pakistan can prosper only if we generate higher exports and equitable tax revenues from real estate, agriculture, IT, textile and retail sectors.

He said KP was located relatively in disadvantage location because of long distance from seaport and businessmen of KP will derive confidence by reducing gas and electricity bills on industries besides relief in taxation.

He said that economic growth target fixed at 3.5% for fiscal year 2023-24 was a achievable subject to broadening of tax base, incentives to expatriates Pakistanis and increasing of exports.

Riazul Haq, former Vice President, All Primary

Teachers Association KP, welcomed an increase in salaries of the government employees up to 35% and pension by 17.5% and declared it a big relief in the budget 2023-24.

The enhancement of salaries of federal government employees of grades 1-16 by 35% and 30% for those above grade 17 would help combat price hike and inflation.

The Pay and Pension Commission had recommended the government consider a 100% increase in medical and conveyance allowances for employees along with a 10% increase in ad hoc allowances.

He said an increase of minimum pension to Rs12,000 while EOBI pension to Rs10,000 has sparked widespread jubilation among employees of the Workers Welfare Fund.

The payment of debts of widows up to Rs1 million through House Building

Finance Corporation (HBFC) and an increase of deposit limit in national savings accounts for martyrs from Rs 5 million to Rs7.5 million was historic. The limit for Behbud Savings Certificate has also been increased from Rs 5 million to Rs7.5 million.

Ikhtair Wali Khan, former MPA and spokesman of PMLN KP told APP that the Government has presented a historic budget which encompassed a complete economic programme and road-map for national progress and development.

He said the incentives were given to Information Technology and agriculture sectors to create job opportunities for youth.

Wali said huge allocations were also announced for promotion of the education and health sectors for people's well being.

He said the PTI government budgets had lacked any vision for the progress

and development of the country, adding the sole purpose of previous PTI government was seemed to shatter the social cohesion and that no solid steps were taken for economic stabilisation in the previous Government.

He said PTI government had been exposed after it suspended the IMF programme following its flawed economic policies and has plunged the country's under huge loans burden.

Welcoming an increase of minimum wage to Rs32,000 in the budget 2023-24, contractor and property dealer, Wisal Khan and bricklin labourers Anjad Khan and Saif Ali termed an increase in minimum wage by 32,000 would help financially hundreds of thousands labourers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The journalists bodies bearers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also welcomed allocation of Rs 1

billion in the budget 2023-24 for health insurance of working journalists and media workers.

Riaz Khan, former President Peshawar Press Club said that health insurance was the long awaited demand of the working journalists and media workers that was fulfilled in the budget by the Federal Government.

The civil society and people of all walks life praised the increase in allocation of Benazir Income Support Programme from Rs400 billion to Rs450 billion, Rs10 billion for provisions of 100,000 laptops for students and exemption of custom duty on import of raw material for batteries, solar panels and inverters were widely hailed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

They also hailed Federal Government decision to exempt erstwhile Fata and Pata from taxes for fiscal year 2023-24.





## In brief

### ATC releases 115 PTI activists F.P. Report

MARDAN: Anti-terrorism Court (ATC) Judge Syed Ubaidullah Shah on Saturday granted bail to 115 PTI activists except four workers whose bail applications were rejected by the learned court. As per the FIR no. 833 dated May 9 of the last month, hundreds of PTI party workers were booked under different sections of laws in connection to May 9 violent incidents and riots occurred in Mardan district like other parts of the country. However, 119 PTI activists were presented in the anti-terrorism court Mardan for getting their bail from the court. The defense Council Riaz Khan Pinda Khail along with other lawyers presented on behalf of PTI activists and argued the case in their favour so that to get their bail. On the other hand, public prosecutor argued in case against the arrested PTI workers. However, the ATC judge Syed Ubaidullah Shah granted bail to 115 PTI arrested workers while the bail applications for the four party activists were rejected. Those who bail application was dismissed, identified as Ismail Khan, Sadiq Akbar, Mudasar Bacha and Zahid.

### DC inspects facilities F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Umar Farooq Warriach visited sports gymnasium and Sagar Rest House and reviewed sports facilities available to players and other arrangements. ADCR Intiaz Ali Baig and District Sports Officer Hafizabad Nabila Cheema were also accompanied by him. During the visit of gymnasium, DC directed the District Sports Officer to launch repair work of gymnasium immediately and improve sports facilities in the gymnasium. While visiting Sagar Rest House, DC Umar Farooq Warriach reviewed feasibility to establish gymkhanas at Rest House. Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warriach took notice of illegal medical stores running in the district. On the directions of the DC, Chief Executive Officer Hafizabad Dr. Fareha Malik Akram inspected Sukheki Mandi and Vaneki Tarar along with Drug Inspector Pindi Bhattian and sealed 5 medical stores working without permit and sealed the medical stores.

### Student batons brutally F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: A 10-year-old student was brutally tortured by the teacher of Takhtbhai religious seminary. There is a fear that the child will lose his eyesight due to the violence. According to the details, Zakir Hussain told the police in his application at Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Takhtbhai that his son Inamullah is a student of Nazra Quran Majeed in Madrasa Jawaharul Quran Pati Khurd. According to him, a madrasa teacher Qari Inam, son of unknown, subjected his 10-year-old son to violence. According to the father of the victim student, his son was tortured so violently that there is fear of losing the sight in one eye. Police Station Takhtbhai has filed a report on Zakir Hussain's request and started investigation. On the other hand, the affected child was shifted to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Takhtbhai and later to Mardan Medical Complex for further treatment.

# Governor awards 450 degrees to BKMC graduates



### F.P. Report

MARDAN: Around 450 Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) and Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) students were awarded degrees and gold medals in the 2nd Convocation of Bacha Khan Medical College (BKMC) held here in Mardan.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali was the chief guest in the award distribution ceremony held in the newly constructed Auditorium here on Saturday. Special Assistant to caretaker chief minister on Health Professor Dr Riaz Anwar, Vice Chancellor Khyber Medical University (KMU) Prof Dr Ziaul Haq and Registrar KMU Mr. Inamullah Khan Wazir were the guests of honour.

Members Board of Governors (BoG) Mr Arshad Khan, Mr. Fazle Qadir, Dean Medical Teaching Institution BKMC/MMC Prof Dr Amjad Ali, Medical Director Prof Dr Imad Hameed, Hospital Director Dr Tariq Mahmood, Secretary to BoG Mr. Azhar Khan, Director Finance Muhammad Sheraz, ex-Dean BKMC Dr Ziaul Islam, ex-Dean BKMC Prof Dr Muhammad Fazil, ex-Medical Director MMC Dr

Mukhtiar Ali, Medical Superintendent District Headquarter's Hospital (DHQ) Dr Javed Iqbal, Prof Dr Mutasim Billah, Manager Human Resource Mr. Altaf Ahmad, students, their parents, faculty members etc attended the event.

The Convocation was arranged for five batches each of MBBS and BDS students. As many as 53 students received gold medals for their good academic performance in MBBS and BDS studies, during the BKMC's second Convocation. Dean BKMC Prof Dr Amjad Ali administered the oath to the graduates.

Governor, who also the Chancellor of all universities, congratulated the graduates and their parents for successfully completing their studies. The Governor said that the ratio of school going girls was constantly increasing which was a good for the country's future as women makes half of any country and can play a pivotal role in a country's development.

He said that BKMC is named after the great freedom fighter Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan commonly known as Bacha Khan who believed in the philosophy of nonviolence and struggled for the rights of his native people in peaceful manner all his life. "You studied in an educational

institution named after Bacha Khan. I will ask you to read the history of this great freedom fighter and other leaders like that of Mufti Mehmood to know about the sacrifices and services they rendered to the dwellers of this soil and promoted the cause of non-violence as we need it more than ever before because intolerance is on the rise in the society", the Governor elaborated.

Governor said that causing damages to public property and institutions was wrong and cannot be justified. "This country and its institutions are ours and it's everyone responsibility to take its ownership and join hands to work for the country's development and prosperity and strengthening of state institutions", he added.

The Governor said that to promote education was the priority of the incumbent government and all resources on government disposal will be utilized for this purpose. On the request of Dean/ CEO MTI Mardan Prof Dr Amjad Ali and recommendation of VC KMU Prof Dr Ziaul Haq, the Governor announced recognition to BKCD. He also announced free medical education services to special persons. Later, degrees and medicals were awarded to the graduates.

# Jeep rally concludes at Kumrat valley

### F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: A jeep rally was organized with the support of off-road club in Dir Upper in beautiful valley Kumrat. Fifty expert drivers from different cities of the country including Karachi, Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore participated in the jeep rally to watch the jeep rally.

A large number of tourists have visited the Kumrat Valley for the Jeep Rally. Off Road Club Pakistan Chairman Saifullah Niazi Executive Member Shahzad Khan Manoor Captain Shah Baba said that the purpose of organizing jeep rally in Kamrat was to promote tourism and show the beauty of Kamrat to the world.

He said that Kumrat is a very beautiful place. And like a paradise valley and the beauty of Kumrat enchants the tourists. First position in Jeep Rally Dr. Sami Swat Javed Khan Karachi second while Zaheeruddin Babar Charsada won the third position. Certificates and shields were also distributed by Special Assistant Commissioner Bilal Naseer.

**Petroleum association elects new cabinet:** Ikram Petroleum Association was elected as the President of Tehsil Maidan. Voting was held for the presidency of Tehsil Maidan Petroleum Association, in which Muhammad Ikram was unanimously elected as the president for Tehsil Maidan, the meeting was held by president of petroleum association Lower Dir Mian Ali Jan, Tehsil President Balambat Muhammad Kamran, Ikram, Nasir Jamal and others addressed the meeting. While saying that the main objective of the association is to eliminate the problems and difficulties faced by the

petrol stations, he said that they are all one.

**Facility for youth to be establish:** We have to play our role along with the government to build sports fields, the young generation is our future, these views were expressed by the leader of Jamiat Ulema Islam Dir Lower and prominent personality Malak Muhammad Sher held in Manzare Tange.

On the occasion of the final match of the cricket tournament, he spoke as the chief guest at the closing ceremony. Malik Muhammad Sher, speaking at the event, said that where there are sports fields, the hospitals are deserted. He said that thanks to the positive activities of sports, the young generation is saved from bad company, drugs and crimes. At the end of the ceremony, he will distribute prizes and trophies to the best performing players.

**Secretary visits hatchery:** Secretary Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperative Department Dr. Anbar Ali Khan made a detailed visit to Mahashir Hatchery Thana Malakand. Deputy Director Sajjad Khan observed different parts of the hatchery, brooder pond, fish pond, hatching room and feed and seed.

During the briefing to the secretary, Muhammad Ilyas Khan and Sajjad Khan discussed the overall performance of the hatchery, including the production and requirements of Mahashir fish. Informed about the importance at the regional level.

Later, the secretary released thousands of baby Mahashir fish in the Swat river at the Aman Dara head work. Dir Lower staff should play a role in protecting fish in Swat River and Pangkora River from natural and anthropogenic environmental pollution and take strict legal action against poaching.

## Two cops dismissed

PATTOKI (INP): District Police Officer (DPO) Kasur, Tariq Aziz Sindhu on Saturday dismissed two constables from service for demanding bribe from complainants.

According to details, citizens lodged complaints against Constable Hakim Ali and Ijaz Sarwar deployed in Saddar police station Pattoki that they demand huge sum of money if they visit police station for lodging complaint against anyone. DPO Tariq Aziz Sindhu taking notice dismissed both constables after they were proved guilty during investigation. The DPO also warned other cops of be careful if public issues and strict action will be taken if anyone was found involved in illegal activity.

Meanwhile, Unidentified armed men ungunned down owner of a private plywood factory inside the factory shed in Sheikham Hala road Pattoki, police said on Saturday. According to details, Malik Amanat Awan, the brother of deceased inform said that his brother Sahib Din did not return from his factory the other night and despite all out efforts contact could not be made with him. He said that on Saturday, he along with wife of brother visited the factory and found body of Sahib Din lying in pool of blood inside the factory's shed.

# IGP inaugurates CTD station at Bannu region

### F.P. Report

BANNU: Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Akhtar Hayat Khan, inaugurated Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Police Station at Regional Police Office Bannu while RPO Qasim Ali Khan, District Police Officer Ifukhar Shah, SP Operations Sanaullah Khan, along with other district police officials were present at the inaugural ceremony.

Inspector General of Police was given a detailed briefing regarding the newly constructed building. IGP assessed the internal and external security of the police station. Detailed inspections were carried out for each department, including offices, residential quarters, lockups, and investigations.

IGP stated that similar buildings are being constructed throughout the province. He mentioned that the C.T.D police will be equipped with modern facilities, equipment, and weapons. The objective of establishing the C.T.D is to eliminate terrorism and various crimes completely. The effective operations of the C.T.D are helping achieve the desired goals of peace and security in the province.

Additionally, efforts are being made to modernize the district police to effectively combat minor crimes. The IGP emphasized that no one is above the law, and everyone must act in accordance with it. The sacrifice of martyrs will not be allowed to disrupt the established peace and security in the province.

Subsequently, the IGP chaired a high-level meeting with police officials. A detailed briefing was given on peace and security, crime rates, the competency of the police force, and measures taken to prevent and combat crimes in the Bannu Region. The steps taken regarding the counter-terrorism measures, professional performance, and significant operations of the Counter-Terrorism Department in various cities of the region were discussed.

The IGP expressed satisfaction and stated that the battle-tested Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police is now a guarantee of peace. Further measures are being taken for the welfare of the police force, and the infrastructure and financial support of the police force, including the C.T.D, are being provided according to the required needs. The IGP assured that all means will be utilized to maintain peace and



security in the province. The IGP also visited injured C.T.D personnel, Irfanullah, who was wounded in a terrorist attack, and provided financial assistance and pledged further financial support.

IGP instructed that the officer should be provided with the best medical facilities and should not be deprived of any treatment. The Inspector General of Police praised various officers of Bannu Police for their exemplary performance and rewarded them with commendation certificates and appreciation. Finally, the IGP was presented with tokens of appreciation by the Regional Police Officer Bannu and District Police Officer.

**BMC held symposium on Breast Cancer & polycystic syndrome:** Under the Health of Bannu Program, health education and social welfare wing of Bannu Medical College (BMC) organized a seminar titled "Breast Cancer & Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)" for female students of the varsity, on Saturday.

The event, hosted by the Health Education & Social Welfare Wing, witnessed a significant turnout from the faculty of the University of Science and Technology Bannu, as well as students from Bannu Medical College. During the seminar, students from Bannu Medical College, including Mashal, Nayab, Arisha Qadeer, and others, delivered detailed presentations on breast cancer, raising awareness about its various aspects.

BMC Dean/Chief Executive

Officer Dr. Dost Muhammad along with Dr. Rauf, Director of BINOR Hospital, and Dr. Yusra addressed the participants and emphasized the importance of early detection and prevention of breast cancer. They urged women to undergo regular screenings or, at the very least, conduct self-examinations to ensure they are not at risk of breast cancer.

Dr. Yusra stated in her address that the rate of breast cancer diagnosis at the first stage in Pakistan is less than four percent. This alarming statistic means that one in nine women in Pakistan is still at risk of breast cancer. The seminar was also attended by Zakiya Tanzila, the coordinator of Bannu University women campus, and several faculty members.

Dr. Dost Muhammad, Dean of Bannu Medical College, conveyed a special message to the participants, highlighting that while breast cancer was commonly associated with women aged 50 to 60, it is now affecting younger women as well. He emphasized that if individuals feel any lump or notice any abnormality in their breasts, it could potentially be a sign of cancer and immediate medical attention should be sought.

Additionally, the presence of a lump or hardness in one or both breasts, as well as any discharge other than milk, could also be potential signs of cancer, requiring immediate testing at a hospital for confirmation. In the question and answer session, Dr. Yusra and Zakiya Tanzila provided reassuring answers to students' queries.

## ILF provides legal assistance to 80 PTI's activists in bails

### F.P. Report

BUNER: Insaf Lawyers Forum (ILF) Buner claimed that the legal fraternity within Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) has provided legal assistance to 80 workers to get bails from different courts including Peshawar High Court Mingora Bench whose were arrested for vandalism on 9th & 10th May after arrest Imran Khan by National Accountability Bureau (NAB) as well as for leadership detained under Maintenance of Public Order (MPO).

This was claimed by ILF Buner chapter general secretary Irshad Khan, Inam and Amir Mukhlis Advocates and added that it include district president of the PTI Riaz Khan, general secretary Fakhar Jihan the four teshil Nazims and others total 25 leaders were charged under 3MPO while other more than 55 tigers were charged under different sections.

ILF General Secretary added that the 25 leaders were charged under 3MPO were got bail from high court Mingora Swat bench and others tigers got bail from session court Buner. He proudly claimed there was no single leader or tiger in prison right now. He was shared during these crises only 3 tigers were sent to judicial lockup under 3MPO who were later on got bail when the ILF legal team knocked court's door.

He attributed the credit to the ILF team under senior councils Shahsan Advocate Inayatullah Advocate and Sultanzeb Advocate. He extended thanks to all of ILF team members who were fought legal battle here at district courts and the high court bench Mingora Swat.

## One killed

D I KHAN (INP): A man was shot dead over women dispute in Basti Lakhra, Saddar police station jurisdiction in Dera Ismail Khan on Saturday. Police said that armed men of rival group gunned down Ramzan Betnai s/o Noor Din hailing from Korana Tank and escaped.

# Contractors demand funds for ongoing uplift projects

### F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The government contractors on Saturday complained that they would go bankrupt if the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government failed to allocate funds for the ongoing development projects in Lower Dir district.

Talking to local journalists at Timergara the contractors' association divisional president engineer Ikramullah, general secretary Imran Takur and district secretary information Zubairullah said that construction work on almost all development projects including the Kalpani Talash bypass road, Soghalay Qaziabad link road, Timergara Khwar beautification project etc had been stopped due to unavailability of funds.

They said the contractors had spent their hard-earned money on those projects while the government seemed displeased to release funds. The contractors said the government had to pay them millions for their work. They said the situation had forced the government contractors to seek alternate jobs as they were near to bankruptcy. They demanded the government to allocate funds for the ongoing development projects in the next year's budget to be

announced this June. They said the projects would be left incomplete if adequate funds were not released for them.

Meanwhile the Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl district chief Ameer Sirajud Din expressed his pleasure on the construction of a bridge over a stream in Talash and said that all the credit went to the federal minister Mufti Asa'ad Mehmood. Talking to local journalists during his visit to the site he said that successive governments had badly failed to start work on that project.

He said that traffic always remained blocked for hours whenever the stream flooded during torrential rains. He said the construction of the bridge would help resolve a massive problem faced by motorists and the local community. The JUI-F leader said that a party delegation led by him had met the federal minister Asa'ad Mehmood in Islamabad during which the minister had promised to allocate Rs 120 million fund for this project.

**Killer's arrest:** The Chakdara police on Saturday claimed to have traced a blind murder case and arrested the alleged killer identified as Tariq Hussain, a resident of Shawa area in Adenzai

teshil. Briefing local journalists, DSP investigation Syed Zaman Shah said that a youth Qasim Khan s/o Aslam Khan was mysteriously killed in front of his house in Amirabad Chakdara a month ago.

He said the district police officer assigned the task to SP investigation Zahoore Ahmad and his team. The DSP said that police with the help of modern technology and circumstantial evidence traced the case and arrested the accused. He said the weapon used during the crime was also recovered from the accused possession. He said the incident was being investigated and more disclosures were expected.

**Bail granted:** An anti-terrorism court in Lower Dir on Saturday granted bail to 9 more Pakistan Tehreek Insaf workers including Amjad Khan, Tariq Bacha, Muhammad Asad, Muhammad Zaid, Ubaid Khan, Mehran Khan, Naseeb Gul, Adnan and Irfan Ali who were arrested after May 9th violent protests from various parts of the district. The ATC court III Swat at Timergara Riaz Ahmad accepted the bail petition and directed the accused to submit their furnishing bail bonds in the sum of Rs 100,000 each with two sureties.

# Dir Lower arrests 130 drug dealers

### F.P. Report

DIR LOWER: Dir Lower Police in a successful operation across the district have arrested 130 drug dealers this year and a total of 96kg hashish was recovered.

This was stated by DPO Dir Lower Ziauddin Ahmad while talking to media men here on Saturday. He said on the clear instructions of Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Gandapur and Regional Police Officer Malakand Range Nasir Mehmood the Dir Lower Police conducted various successful operation and succeeded in arrested 130 drug dealers and recovered a large number of drugs and registered cases during various operations.

The drug dealers have been arrested after finding 1 kg of hashish, 375 grams of heroin, 581 grams of ice and one liter of alcohol. Accelerate the crackdown and do not show any lenience with drug dealers. DPO Lower Dir Ziauddin Ahmed has warned the drug





## Sudan conflict: Children rescued from orphanage

KHARTOUM (BBC): Nearly 300 orphans caught in the crossfire in Sudan's capital have been rescued in a daring and dangerous evacuation by humanitarian workers. The evacuations were carried out following the deaths of 67 children at the Mygoma orphanage in Khartoum.

They died of starvation, dehydration and infections as fighting prevented staff from reaching the orphanage. Khartoum has been hit by daily air strikes and heavy clashes between rival forces since 15 April. The orphanage is in an area that has been at the heart of the fighting between the military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

In a risky operation, 297 children - about 200 of them below the age of two years - were taken by road to the relative safety of Wad Madani, in the south of Sudan. Another 95 children, both from the Mygoma orphanage and other smaller facilities across the capital, were evacuated over the weekend by a group of local activists. The state-run Mygoma orphanage was home to about 400 children when the war broke out in April.

It became too dangerous for many doctors and carers to reach the orphanage to look after the children. Power and water cuts made the sweltering temperatures, reaching as high as 43C, unbearable. Children, especially the youngest ones, started dying. "We are losing them so fast. In recent days, we lost three children," Sudanese activist Sadeia al-Rasheed Ali Hamid told me earlier this week.

The UN children's agency, Unicef, said that 67

orphans had died at Mygoma since 15 April. Local activists and international aid organisations were trying to get the children out of the war zone, but it was not easy. Ceasefire talks in the Saudi city of Jeddah had collapsed and full-scale fighting had resumed.

Poor communication along the chain of command of the warring sides meant that securing safe access to the orphanage, and out of Khartoum, was difficult. Transporting hundreds of children and babies was a huge logistical challenge. But Sadeia tells me there was no alternative. With a handful of local activists, she organised a private evacuation for the older children aged between four and 15 years. "We extracted them from certain death to a fate that I hope is better," says Heba Abdullah, a carer from the orphanage who travelled with them.

This first convoy of minibuses set off during the fighting, passing several checkpoints. On the front of the first minibus, a bedsheet was placed, with a message to the militias written on it: there are children on board. The group was welcomed in a school in the town of al-Hasaheisa, south of Khartoum. But beyond shelter and some food offered by the residents, there was very little assistance waiting for the children.

"We are working on the basis of a day's sustenance," Heba says. "A short while ago, one of the neighbours asked me what we needed. She said she did not have anything to offer, but she will help," she adds. The most arduous operation was getting the younger ones out. Local volunteers

and agencies including Unicef mobilised to get the children evacuated. Eventually, the Sudanese health ministry asked the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to organise a convoy of buses from Khartoum.

It was a gruelling four-hour drive, with the sound of fighting in the distance. After spending six weeks trapped in a conflict zone, most of the children were severely malnourished. "They were just so small in our arms when we were taking them," says Marina Fakhouri, an ICRC protection delegate who travelled on one of the buses. "They just need a lot of care." Upon arrival, some of them were immediately transferred to hospitals.

One child, who was too severely malnourished, died on Thursday morning. The hope now is to find families that can foster the children. "There's a list of foster families who have been prepared, who have been trained to stand ready to take them," says Mary Louise Eagleton, Unicef's deputy representative in Sudan. "That's what's so extraordinary, it's really about communities coming together to help in this crisis. Even though so many people have taken in relatives, there are still so many people ready and willing to take in these highly vulnerable children."

About 13 million children are estimated to have been affected by the conflict and, as fighting continues, hopes for a quick and peaceful resolution are fading. The evacuation of the orphans, says Ms Eagleton, was a much-needed glimmer of hope. "It brought a bright ray of light to all of us."

## UN peacekeeper killed in Mali

UNITED NATIONS (AP): Attackers killed one UN peacekeeper and seriously injured eight others in Mali's northern Timbuktu region, an area where extremists continue to operate, the United Nations said.

The peacekeepers, all from Burkina Faso, were part of a security patrol that was targeted first by an improvised explosive device and then by direct small arms fire seven kilometers (four miles) from their base in the town of Ber. UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. The United Nations joins the head of the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, El-Ghassim Wane, in strongly condemning the attack, Dujarric said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on Mali's transitional authorities to identify the perpetrators of the attack and bring them to justice swiftly, noting that "attacks targeting UN peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law," Dujarric said. Mali has been ruled by a military junta since a 2020 coup against an elected president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. It has faced destabilizing attacks by armed extremist groups linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group since 2013.

In 2021, France and its European partners engaged in the fight against extremists in Mali's north withdrew from the country after the junta brought in mercenaries from Russia's Wagner Group. The United States warned Mali's military government in April that it would be "irresponsible" for the United Nations to continue deploying its more than 15,000 peacekeepers unless the western African nation ends restrictions, including on operating reconnaissance drones, and carries out political commitments toward peace and elections in March 2024.

The warning came as the UN Security Council considers three options proposed by Secretary-General António Guterres for the peacekeeping mission's future: increase its size, reduce its footprint, or withdraw troops and police and turn it into a political mission. Its current mandate expires on June 30. Dujarric said the peacekeeper killed was the ninth to die in Mali this year. The secretary-general paid tribute to "the determination and courage" of peacekeepers in Mali who work "in extremely challenging circumstances," he said.

"This tragic loss is a stark reminder of the risks that peacekeepers in Mali and other places around the world face while tirelessly working to bring stability and peace to the people of Mali," he said.

## Iran detains cartoonist again

DUBAI (AP): Iranian authorities have summoned and arrested a cartoonist who has a history of being imprisoned for political posts on her Instagram account, her lawyer said.

Mohammad Moghimi said in a tweet said his client, Atena Farghadani, a painter, cartoonist and former political prisoner, was summoned to the Evvin courthouse in Tehran and arrested. He did not elaborate on why she was detained. In 2016, Farghadani was released after spending 18 months in jail for portraying lawmakers as animals to criticize a draft law restricting contraception and criminalizing voluntary sterilization.

On Wednesday, Farghadani posted one of her cartoons showing people with animal and satanic faces. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists said Thursday that Iranian authorities must release Farghadani and stop efforts to silence commentators and members of the press.

"This cycling of journalists and commentators through prison is a continuation of authorities' long-standing revolving door policy and a hallmark of Iran's failure to respect the rule of law," said Sherif Mansour, CPIJ's Middle East and North Africa program coordinator.

## Ukraine faces 'hugely worse' humanitarian situation: UN

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The humanitarian situation in Ukraine is "hugely worse" than before the Kakhovka dam collapsed, the UN's top aid official warned. Undersecretary-General Martin Griffiths said an "extraordinary" 700,000 people are in need of drinking water and warned that the ravages of flooding in one of the world's most important breadbaskets will almost inevitably lead to lower grain exports, higher food prices around the world, and less to eat for millions in need.

"This is a viral problem," he said in an interview with The Associated Press. "But the truth is this is only the beginning of seeing the consequences of this act." The rupture of the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam and emptying of its reservoir on the Dnieper River on Wednesday added to the misery in a region that has suffered for more than a year from artillery and missile attacks. Ukraine holds the Dnieper's western bank, while Russian troops control the low-lying eastern side, which is more vulnerable to flooding. The dam and reservoir, essential for fresh water and irrigation in southern Ukraine, lies in the Kherson region that Moscow illegally annexed in September and has occupied for the past year.

Griffiths said the United Nations, working mainly through Ukrainian aid groups, has reached 30,000 people in flooded areas under Ukrainian control. He said that so far Russia has not given access to areas it controls for the UN to help flood victims. Griffiths said he met with Russia's UN ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, on Wednesday to ask Russian authorities "for access for our teams in Ukraine to go across the front lines to give aid, to provide support for ... Ukrainians in those areas." "We're providing them with details as we speak, to enable Moscow to meet what we hope will be a positive decision on this," he said. "I hope that will come through."

The emergency response is essential to save lives, he said, "but behind that you've got a huge, looming problem of a lack of proper drinking water for those 700,000 people" on both the Ukrainian-controlled and Russian-controlled sides of the river. There is also the flooding of important agricultural land and a looming problem



of providing cooling water for the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe's largest, which had been supplied from the dam, he added.

In addition, Griffiths noted that waters also have rushed over areas with land mines from the war "and what we are bound to be seeing are those mines floating in places where people don't expect them," threatening adults and especially children. "So it's a cascade of problems, starting with allowing people to survive today, and then giving them some kind of prospects for tomorrow," he said.

Griffiths said that because of the wide-ranging consequences "it's almost inevitable" that the United Nations will launch a special appeal for more aid funds for Ukraine to deal with "a whole new order of magnitude" from the dam's rupture. But he said he wants to wait a few weeks to see the economic, health and environmental consequences before announcing the appeal. Griffiths said he and UN trade chief Rebecca Grynszpan are also working to ensure the extension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which Turkey and the UN brokered with Ukraine and Russia last July to open three Black Sea ports in Ukraine for its grain exports.

More than 30,000 metric tons of wheat and other foodstuff has been shipped under the deal, leading to a decline in global food prices that skyrocketed after Russia's Feb. 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine. It has been extended three times and is due to expire July 17. Part of the deal was a

memorandum signed by Russia and the UN aimed at overcoming obstacles to Russian food and fertilizer shipments that Moscow has repeatedly complained are not being fulfilled.

A key Russian demand has been the reopening of a pipeline between the Russian port of Togliatti on the Volga River and the Black Sea port of Odesa that has been shut down since Russia's attack on Ukraine. It carried ammonia, a key ingredient of fertilizer. "Opening that pipeline and delivering ammonia across the Black Sea to the global south is a priority for all of us," Griffiths said. "Ammonia is an essential ingredient for global food security."

A rupture in the pipeline was reported from shelling late Tuesday, but Griffiths said the UN couldn't confirm it because the pipeline is in the middle of a war zone. "We, of course, are very, very strongly of the view that we need that repaired as quickly as possible," he said. "So let's hope it's not too badly damaged." He said the Ukrainians have told the UN they will get to the pipeline, which is on their territory, "as soon as they can." Griffiths said the Ukrainians see opening the pipeline as part of a package that would also include Russian agreement to open a fourth Black Sea port at Mykolaiv to export more grain.

Negotiations have been taking place in recent weeks, including at a meeting in Geneva between UN trade chief Grynszpan and Russia's deputy foreign minister Sergey Vershinin. "We're not there yet," Griffiths said. "I hope that we'll make it."

## Myanmar has suspended aid deliveries to cyclone-hit areas

BANGKOK (AP): Myanmar's military government has rescinded its approval for international organizations to distribute food, shelter and medicines to thousands of residents of cyclone-hit areas in the country's west, a UN agency said.

Cyclone Mocha hit the coastline of Bangladesh and Myanmar in mid-May with winds of up to 209 kilometers (130 miles) per hour. The damage was worst around the coastal city of Sittwe, the capital of Myanmar's Rakhine state, but was also severe as the storm moved inland into Chin state. The military authorities also suspended travel authorizations for international humanitarian organizations, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in a situation report. It said the suspension of aid activities "could not have come at a worse time" because of the arrival of the annual monsoon season.

The report did not say why the military government's Disaster Management Committee suspended the travel authorizations. Myanmar's military has long kept access to many parts of the country under tight restrictions, especially areas seen as sensitive because of tensions with ethnic minorities, as is the case with Rakhine, where a brutal counterinsurgency campaign in 2017 drove more than 700,000 members of the Muslim Rohingya minority to flee to neighboring Bangladesh.

Despite a dire need for help, foreign aid and journalists were not allowed into Myanmar in the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in 2008, when more than 100,000 people were killed. Cyclone Mocha

killed at least 148 people in Rakhine. It brought flash floods and power outages, tore roofs off buildings and crumpled cellphone towers. Myanmar state media said more than 186,000 buildings were damaged.

UNOCHA said about 1.6 million people were heavily affected by the cyclone in Rakhine, Chin, and Kachin states, and in Sagaing and Magway regions. It said more than 113,200 people have received shelter and other relief from humanitarian organizations, while food assistance has reached more than 293,800 people in Rakhine alone. There has been concern that many people whose houses were damaged by the cyclone might be without adequate shelter during the monsoon. The Meteorological Department said Thursday that the monsoon has advanced into central Myanmar.

"Heavy rains and some flooding were observed in areas that were already heavily impacted, further hampering the recovery process for people whose coping capacities are already stretched to the limit," UNOCHA said. An official with an international humanitarian organization operating in Rakhine told The Associated Press that his group received a letter announcing the suspension of travel authorizations from a Rakhine state government office on Thursday. He said the restriction was issued just a day after the same office had issued the first travel authorization to international aid agencies since the cyclone to deliver aid. He asked that he and his organization not be identified to avoid pressure from officials.

"The letter refers to all international

organizations in Rakhine state. I don't know why they suspended travel authorization. At a time when emergency aid is urgently needed, this ban prevents aid from reaching everyone in need in a timely manner," the official said. The letter, seen by The Associated Press, was signed by Rakhine Security and Border Affairs Minister Col. Kyaw Thura.

Although international organizations are no longer allowed to travel, they say they will try to deliver supplies to affected areas with the help of local charity organizations that serve as their humanitarian partners and are still able to travel. The members of three local charity groups told The Associated Press by phone that they have not received new instructions from the authorities but believe they must be more careful in transporting aid when they pass military checkpoints. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they fear reprisals from the authorities.

In Rakhine, some local relief organizations have run into problems when delivering assistance. Five people including Wai Hun Aung, a writer who is directing relief work in seven townships in northern Rakhine, and two rescue workers from Yangon were arrested at a military checkpoint in Sittwe on May 23 while traveling to deliver aid. They were released after a few days. Myanmar navy and air force units, along with domestic charity groups, have delivered some rice and other assistance to victims, but only about 20% of the population in cyclone-hit areas has received full assistance, according to members of the charity organizations.

## Volunteers rush to save animals after Ukraine dam collapse

KHERSON, Ukraine (AP): The rescue volunteer holds out his hand, but the dog, stranded on a floating island of debris in a southern Ukrainian city inundated by flooding, is too traumatized to approach. Volodymyr Holubnichii offers the scared animal some food; the dog sniffs and relaxes. "Don't be scared," Holubnichii soothingly tells the animal, which eventually accepts a leash and being carried to safety. Holubnichii, a volunteer with Animal Rescue Kharkiv, spent days cruising the flooded streets of Kherson city after the Kakhovka dam collapsed on Tuesday and submerged entire towns. He is one among the organization's 70 volunteers determined to rescue as many animals as possible, plucking them from the rooftops and garages of flooded homes before they die of dehydration and hunger.

The flooding has killed civilians, ruined crops, displaced landmines, and caused widespread environmental damage. Kyiv accused Moscow of

blowing up the Dnieper River dam and its hydropower plant, which the Kremlin's forces controlled. Russia in turn blamed Ukraine for the catastrophe. Bisected by the river, southern Ukraine's Kherson province is an important fault line in the war that started with Russia's invasion of the neighboring country more than 15 months ago. Russian forces withdrew from the western bank, including the regional capital also named Kherson, but part of the eastern side remain under Russian occupation.

Ukrainian authorities scrambled to evacuate stranded residents officials on both sides said at least 14 people died in the flooding and thousands others were homeless, while tens of thousands were without drinking water. Upon hearing news of the flooding, Holubnichii immediately thought of the animals. "All life should be valued," he said. "It doesn't matter if it's an animal or a person or something else."

Animal Rescue Kharkiv's volun-

teers, based in northern Ukraine's Kharkiv province, began packing their gear. By Wednesday morning, they were in the Kherson region looking for animals. So far, they have saved 107 animals since the dam's collapse: 45 dogs, 36 cats, five kittens, 18 chickens and three goats that will go to shelters across Ukraine. Many were pets of evacuated civilians, according to Yaryna Vintoniuk, a spokesperson for the non-governmental organization.

From rescue boats, the team reached remote areas of Kherson and extract animals from rooftops, apartments and garages of submerged homes. On Thursday, the volunteers came under Russian shelling as they worked. The animals, unwillingly abandoned by their panicked owners, were terrified. Some barely had the strength to get up. Holubnichii picked up a small dog that was trapped under the floating rubble and nearly unconscious. He heard the barking of another dog and made his way to the animal, stuck on a rooftop of a flooded home.

## Tactical N-weapons to be deployed in Belarus: Putin

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia will start deploying tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus after special storage facilities are made ready on July 7-8, President Vladimir Putin said, Moscow's first move of such warheads outside Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Putin announced in March he had agreed to deploy such weapons in Belarus, pointing to U.S. deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in a host of European countries over many decades. "Everything is going according to plan," Putin told Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, discussing the planned nuclear deployment over a meal at the Russian leader's summer retreat in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

"Preparation of the relevant facilities ends on July 7-8, and we will immediately begin activities related to the deployment of appropriate types of weapons on your territory," Putin said, according to a Kremlin transcript of his remarks. Lukashenko said: "Thank you, Vladimir Vladimirovich."

More than 15 months into the biggest land war in Europe since World War Two, Putin says the United States and its Western allies are pumping arms into Ukraine as part of an expanding proxy war aimed at bringing Russia to its knees. Putin, 70, casts the war as a battle for Russia's

own survival in the face of what he says is an ever-expanding NATO. He has warned the West that Moscow will not back down. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says Ukraine will not rest until every last Russian soldier is ejected from his country, and wants it to join NATO as soon as possible.

Putin's nuclear move is being watched closely by both the United States and its NATO allies in Europe and by China, which has repeatedly cautioned against the use of nuclear weapons in the conflict. The United States has criticized Putin's nuclear deployment but has said it has no intention of altering its position on strategic nuclear weapons and also that it has not seen any signs Russia was preparing to use a nuclear weapon. The war in Ukraine has triggered what both Moscow and Washington says is the deepest crisis in relations since the depths of the Cold War, with major nuclear arms control treaties unravelling and both sides denouncing the other in public.

Putin's nuclear remarks have raised particular concern. Last September, he warned the West he was not bluffing when he said Russia would use "all available means to protect Russia and our people." It is still unclear where the Russian nuclear warheads - which will remain under Russian control - will be

kept in Belarus.

Putin, who is the ultimate decision maker on any nuclear launch, said Iskander mobile short-range ballistic missiles, which can deliver nuclear warheads, had already been handed over to Belarus. Russian sources say the Iskander has a range of 500 km (310 miles). Belarus said Su-25 aircraft had been adapted to carry the warheads. The Sukhoi-25 jet has a range of up to 1,000 km (620 miles), according to Russian sources.

If the weapons were launched from Belarus's main air base outside Minsk, those delivery vehicles could potentially reach almost all of eastern Europe - including a host of NATO members - as well as cities such as Berlin and Stockholm. After the Soviet collapsed in 1991, the United States went to enormous efforts to return the Soviet nuclear weapons stationed in Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan to Russia - which inherited the nuclear arsenal of the Soviet Union.

Until now, Russia has not announced any nuclear weapon deployments outside its borders. Putin has repeatedly raised the issue of US B61 tactical nuclear warheads deployed at bases in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Turkey. Moscow is also unhappy about a reported upgrade of the B61, which was first tested in Nevada shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

## Death toll in clashes in South Sudan now more than 20

JUBA, South Sudan (AP): The death toll from clashes between displaced people inside a UN site in South Sudan has risen to more than 20, with more than 50 others wounded, the medical charity MSF said.

The statement by the organization, which is also known as Doctors Without Borders, said that two of its staff were among those hurt. Some of the injured were being airlifted to the capital, Juba. "While the situation was relatively calm this morning, many women and

children who fled the camp are yet to return in fear of escalation," said Luz Linares, MSF's head of mission in the country.

Thursday's clashes in the Malakal camp occurred between members of the Shilluk and Nuer ethnic groups, a local representative of the displaced people told The Associated Press. The UN office in South Sudan said the fighting began with a stabbing, and that its mission had reinforced the military and police presence in the area

in "close collaboration" with South Sudan's military and authorities. Deadly violence between ethnic groups and communities still troubles South Sudan years after a 2018 peace deal to end a five-year civil war. During the conflict, thousands of people took shelter inside UN protection sites. More than 41,000 people are staying in the Malakal site, which is also a designated camp for people fleeing the violence in neighboring Sudan, MSF said.



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# Budget estimate, facts and fiction

MINISTER for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Friday unveiled the Rs14.46 trillion relief-oriented Federal Budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 with a real GDP growth target of 3.5 percent. While presenting the Federal Budget 2023-24 in the National Assembly, the finance minister declared that the incumbent government had set the direction of the economy on the right path, but it still faces challenges. Minister claimed that the government had set a modest growth target and presented a responsible and balanced budget instead of a popular one. As said, the total expense estimate was set at Rs 14.46 trillion, out of which Rs 7.3 trillion would be spent on interest payments. The budget deficit was expected to remain at 6.54 percent and the primary balance would be a surplus of 0.4 percent to the gross domestic product (GDP). The tax collection target for the next fiscal year had been fixed at Rs 9.2 trillion, including a provincial share of Rs 5.276 trillion. The budget was okayed by the parliament amid nominal protest by a friendly opposition, while Prime Minister Shehbaz congratulated Finance Minister Dar for presenting a balanced and public-friendly budget amid the worst economic challenges and the global energy crisis.

The annual budget had always been a statistical puzzle and a mystery for a layman and the common public who were often betrayed by its leaders through flashy announcements and insignificant measures that neither improved peoples' life nor strengthened the national economy. The recently tabled annual estimate 2023-24 was a traditional budget in customary situations and was another manifestation of leaders' hypocrisy and economists' incompetence that presumably raised expenses in each head by 15-20% and did not suggest measures to generate money except massive increase and a screen smoke alteration in taxation that only serve to create distraction and confusion in the masses.

Pakistan, a cash-strapped nation with empty national exchequer has tabled a so-called relief-oriented budget ahead of a crucial election in the country. The incumbent government failed to revive the \$ 6.5 billion IFF program with the international monetary fund (IMF) and announced trashing the previous package to negotiate a new loan with the global leader in the next fiscal year. This was another blunder with the IMF on the part of Pakistan for the consecutive third time that Pakistani authorities stepped back from their commitment to the IMF and resorted to poisonous politically motivated measures that hurt a healing economy. The government has announced unbelievable increases in the salary and pension of government employees, offered subsidies on oil and gas, announced a health cards scheme for journalists and artists, and introduced multiple other incentives for industry and agriculture that contradict the conditions imposed by the IMF and also do not correspond with the current economic conditions of the country that urgently needs to close \$6 billion gap through responsible economic functioning and fiscal management. According to the sources, the IMF is utterly annoyed with Dar's dogma particularly currency and Forex-related regulatory policies that cause negative impacts on the country's economic outlook. The government had missed all targets of revenue generation during the previous fiscal year while the current tax target is also unrealistic and unachievable for the government. Direct and indirect taxes had been increased on multiple accounts that would finally end up to the end users and will cause inflation. Several government departments faced fund shortages to pay salaries to their employees in recent months, thus how a cash-strapped nation would manage extra funds to feed its employees in the next year. The coalition government has allocated a bulk of funds under public sector development programs amid the worst economic condition that has no other use except political engineering and election management in the upcoming GE in the country.

There is a lot to deliberate on the economic estimate presented in the Parliament a day earlier. However, the majority of the decisions and actions proposed by the document are undoubtedly politically motivated and unrealistic aims at grabbing public support at the cost of the national economy. Currently, the country has to repay a total debt of \$ 21.95 during the next fiscal year which is a real challenge in the absence of an IMF program while such an imaginary budget will further complicate the economic situation in the country. Earlier, the coalition government was accusing the PTI leaders of laying economic bombs/mines for the coalition government but what they are doing with themselves or their successors by presenting such a flimsy budget? Although, the current budget has multiple pros and cons, however, its negative impact would come during the tenure of the next caretaker setup or thereafter.

THE global inflation shock of the last two years is over bar the shouting. Legacy effects will generate much noise for a few months but the one-off spike is reversing almost everywhere with an elegant symmetry. China is sliding into outright deflation as its post-Covid recovery peters out. Wage cuts are spreading in a surreal replay of what happened in Europe and America during the 1930s. Such is the Spartan ethos of Xi Jinping's 'common prosperity' campaign.

The Chinese producer price index has been negative for seven months, and the downward slide is accelerating. The headline CPI inflation rate has already dropped to 0.1pc and will soon be negative. The Shanghai region is at minus 1.1pc already. This has large implications. China remains the workshop of the world, with the scale to shift the global pricing structure. It needs to export its way out of an economic depression and will not hesitate to do so with a cheaper yuan, down 12pc since early 2022. A wave of disinflation is coming our way. Wei Yao from Societe Generale says the regime seems paralysed in the face of a deepening Japan-style trap. "The zero-COVID shock and the housing crash last year seem to have brought China's implicit government debt stress close to a breaking point. For China to escape a severe deflation scenario, the policy mindset requires a reset. We have seen little willingness so far," she said.

Land sales for developers underpinned local government budgets during the property bubble. The real estate crash has dried up the revenue, setting off a funding crisis. Forced belt-tightening has neutralised a key instrument used by Beijing

to inject stimulus into the economy. Caixin magazine reported last week that the local authorities are drowning under \$10 trillion of 'hidden debt' that they can no longer fully service. Some are having to cut medical benefits for the elderly. The orthodox (IMF) way out is to wipe the slate clean with root-and-branch restructuring of debts, which is what Japan failed to do in the 1990s, and China is now failing to do, because it is traumatic and runs into powerful

**Forced belt-tightening has neutralised a key instrument used by Beijing to inject stimulus into the economy. Caixin magazine reported last week that the local authorities are drowning under \$10 trillion of 'hidden debt' that they can no longer fully service. Some are having to cut medical benefits for the elderly. The orthodox (IMF) way out is to wipe the slate clean with root-and-branch restructuring of debts, which is what Japan failed to do in the 1990s, and China is now failing to do, because it is traumatic and runs into powerful vested interests. The central bank (PBOC) is trickling out support but to little avail. It is pushing on a string, to borrow from Keynes. The transmission mechanism is broken. Chinese economist Cheng Xiaonong says that a pervasive fear of the future has pushed the middle class into "survival" mode. There is a spontaneous "collective action" to withdraw from property, equities, and business investment, leading them to hoard savings and repay loans as fast as they can.**

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Chinese economist Cheng Xiaonong says that a pervasive fear of the future has pushed the middle class into "survival" mode. There is a spontaneous "collective action" to withdraw from property, equities, and business investment, leading them to hoard savings and repay loans as fast as they can. This is eroding the interest revenue of the

willingness to use credit across the entire economic system is rapidly collapsing. It is essentially a balance sheet recession," he said in a recent speech. Deleveraging is going to be "very bearish and painful." This is China in mid-2023. It is a country already beginning to export deflation, as you can see in the cut-throat price of electric vehicles arriving in Europe. Chinese firms can produce decent cars for 10,000 less than European rivals. Carlos Tavares from Stellantis says the Europeans are bracing for a

Ambrose Evans-Pritchard

"terrible fight". If you are worried about car inflation, you won't have to soon.

Chinese goods deflation is hitting a slowing world economy. JP Morgan's index of input prices for global manufacturing has fallen below the boom-bust line. We learned today that the eurozone has been in recession since the fourth quarter of last year, unlike the UK, which keeps confounding the OECD and the International Monetary

ECB executive board, says it is better to err on the side of being tough. It was that sort of thinking that led to the unforced error of the eurozone debt crisis from 2011-2014. The ECB's financial stability report last week reads like a Gothic horror story, which I will explore in our next Economic Intelligence newsletter. Suffice to say that broad M3 money has been contracting since September, demand for bank credit has collapsed at rates comparable to 2008,

demographic inflation is that the \$5 trillion fiscal blitz by Trump and Biden in an economy near full capacity was bound to end badly. They think this one-off "insanity" - to use Olivier Blanchard's term - has largely played out. Inflation will keep falling mechanically to 4pc without the need for scorched earth policies. Getting below that will be harder. The monetarist view is that war-time expansion of the money supply by the Fed caused the inflation blow-off, and that the process is now going into reverse too violently for safety. Broad M2 money growth has fallen at a record post-war rate of 4.6pc over the last year and this leads the real economy by a year or two. The pace of contraction is likely to quicken as the US Treasury rebuilds its account after the debt-ceiling deal, and the Fed runs down its balance sheet (QT). JP Morgan estimates that they will together drain \$1.1 trillion of liquidity from the financial system over the next four months. Most of this will come from bank reserves, risking fresh trouble among struggling regional lenders. Could there be an M2 melt-down by September? Yes, there could. Whatever happens, US inflation is coming down.

The UK may be one of the last inflationary outliers for a month or two, although it is not so different from Germany or Sweden. Global forces will bring it into alignment with the OECD median soon enough. We are not an economic island. Rishi Sunak will have no difficulty cutting inflation to 5pc by the end of the year. Unfortunately this happy development may come hand in hand with our old friend 'secular stagnation'. Will deflation be the greater worry in 2024 after all?

The Telegraph

# Cooperation between regional and global organizations important for addressing climate crisis

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

THE climate crisis has posed several critical threats and inflicted crippling losses across the world, particularly in the Middle East. One of the important issues with the climate crisis is that when a sector in society is negatively impacted by climate change, it affects other parts as well since the various sectors are interconnected. For example, long periods of drought in some regions have a negative impact on food production, which will subsequently affect people's health. This will likely put more pressure and strain on the healthcare system as well.

Climate change is not just linked to longer periods of droughts - it also causes more frequent and disastrous floods, as warmer air temperatures lead to more melting of glacier ice and warming of the oceans, along with rising sea levels. Additionally, it causes harm to animals, more wildfires, declining biodiversity, heatwaves, storms and tropical cyclones, and soil degradation, to name

only a few problems. In the long term, if some of the damage, such as water scarcity and lack of agricultural resources, continues to increase to the extent that freshwater resources are depleted in some countries, this will have an impact on national security and political stability.

Devastating impacts can lead to an increase in human morbidity as well, due to "increased heat and infectious diseases, inequality and poverty rates, risk to water and energy security due to drought and heat, and reduced economic output and growth." As the UN has pointed out, other harmful impacts of climate change are "unquantifiable losses and damages, particularly for many communities and countries in the developing world - loss of lives and livelihoods, as well as degradation of territory, farmland, cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge, societal and cultural identity, biodiversity, and ecosystem services." As a result, damages and losses caused by climate change are not solely limited to non-economic factors.

Economic losses include the cost of rebuilding communities and infrastructure, as well as the decreasing revenues in the agriculture industry. For instance, when it comes to the US, the total cost of weather/climate disaster events exceeds \$2.5 trillion, according to the National Centers for Environmental Information.

Unfortunately, developing countries as well as communities with lower socio-economic classes, older people, women and children disproportionately experience the impacts of losses and damages caused by climate change. According to a recent study at Dartmouth College, global warming caused by only five countries, including the US, has caused \$6 trillion in global economic losses, and those losses reportedly have not been "suffered equally - the burden has fallen disproportionately on low-income countries that have contributed the least to the problem." In other words, climate change does not

recognize borders and one country's policies and actions can affect not only its own sectors, but also other countries' as well.

It is also worth noting that the Middle East and North Africa is one of the most vulnerable regions when it comes to climate change. This is due to the dry or semi-dry environment of the region. The Middle East and North Africa have been particularly impacted by climate change since temperatures are rising almost twice as quickly as in other parts of the world, according to a report by the Cyprus Institute's Climate and Atmosphere Research Center and the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry. Countries such as Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Iran have witnessed significant desertification. Water scarcity is another critical factor for the Middle East because of its rising population growth. The MENA region is already characterized as the most water-scarce region of the world. It is critical to point out that

tackling the climate crisis requires that all countries, especially the developed ones, take action. This means that poorer countries need support in order to adapt and address the climate crisis.

Regional and global cooperation is extremely important. In the MENA, the Arab League can play a critical role through its work and collaboration with the UN, the EU and other regional or international organizations. There are already effective programs such as the Middle East Green initiative, which was launched in 2021 by Saudi Arabia. The initiative can amplify "impact in the global fight against climate change, while creating far-reaching economic opportunities for the region."

When it comes to tackling the climate crisis, some of the most critical steps to take are reducing greenhouse gas emissions, through investments in efficient infrastructure, which reduces emissions, and by conserving water. The world is increasingly facing water stress or scarcity, with demand frequently

being higher than supply in some areas. The UN estimated in 2016 that approximately two-thirds of the world's population could be facing water shortages by 2025. This will also negatively impact the ecosystem. And a 2022 report by the Council on Foreign Relations highlighted that water stress can "differ dramatically from one place to another, in some cases causing wide-reaching damage, including to public health, economic development, and global trade. It can also drive mass migrations and spark conflict. Now, pressure is mounting on countries to implement more sustainable and innovative practices and to improve international cooperation on water management."

In conclusion, to address climate change more effectively, regional and global organizations must collaborate more closely. Tackling the climate crisis is not only about protecting and preserving biodiversity and the planet, but it is also related to protecting our future and the coming generations.

# Is Middle East on the threshold of restructuring?

Yasar Yakis

THE political order that prevailed in the Middle East for centuries came to an end after the First World War. The victors of the war designed the region according to their own priorities. Two British authors, David Fromkin and James Barr, have published two different books that provide details on how the Middle East was shaped after the First World War. The title of David Fromkin's book is "A Peace to End All Peace," and argues that the Versailles peace treaty put an end to peace in the Middle East and that the region could not recover from the calamity. The title of James Barr's book is "A Line in the Sand."

Both books describe the little care with which the present borders were drawn in the Middle East after the First World War, irrespective of tribal, sectarian and geographic considerations. We are now suffering from the consequences of this hasty and careless work. After more than a century, we may expect that the borders

will be stabilized and neighboring countries will solve their problems in peaceful ways. The US arrival in the Middle East dates back to the aftermath of the Second World War, especially with the emergence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More than 70 years after its arrival, the US influence in the Middle East is now diminishing despite Washington's claims that it is not going to withdraw from the region any time soon. It hesitated at one stage about whether it should increase its presence in the Pacific Rim at the expense of its presence in the Middle East. However, international relations have gained importance in the region that it has become almost impossible for Washington to reduce its military presence. On the other hand, China is steadily increasing its economic and diplomatic weight in the region.

Is the Middle East on the threshold of a restructuring? China, which was almost absent in the region, has started to creep

in only recently. It is now playing concrete roles in the Middle East. Beijing has so far avoided stationing a military presence in the region. However, as China further establishes itself as an economic actor it will also increase its diplomatic weight, and ultimately it may need to station soldiers to protect its interests. China's initiative may also counterbalance America's role in the Middle East. US interference in Iraq has changed several paradigms in the region. On the other hand, the Iraq war caused enormous destruction of the infrastructure of the country. Estimates of the financial cost to the US vary between \$1.1 trillion and \$3 trillion.

The human cost is estimated to be 5 million orphans and 100,000 Iraqi lives. More than 7,000 US service members and more than 8,000 contractors have died. Iraq is practically divided into three, with Kurds in the north, Shiites in the south, and Sunnis in

the middle. Daesh became the worst headache for the region and for distant countries such as Mali and Nigeria, and the group is still far from being eliminated. During the last Iraq war, the author of this article was Turkiye's foreign minister when the Turkish parliament refused the movement of US troops through Turkish territory for the purpose of opening a new American front in the north of Iraq. This decision did not change the course of events in Iraq, but at least the Turkish parliament proved its maturity by challenging a country such as the US in the Middle East. At a later stage, Turkiye had again to yield to US pressure, but this pressure died away slowly.

China is making efforts to mediate between two important Middle Eastern countries - Saudi Arabia and Iran. Both will gain from an increase in stability. All sources of conflict will not of course be eliminated overnight, but they may fade away one after

the other as time goes by. For years, Riyadh and Tehran had fluctuating relations. China's present mediation has the potential to open a new era, because after the turmoil that the Middle East has been through, a restructuring of relations has become almost a must. Saudi-Iran relations suffered a breakdown in 2016 when rioters in Iran ransacked the Saudi Embassy in Tehran and the Saudi consulate in Mashhad.

China's efforts to reconcile the countries of the Gulf region date back to 2020. It submitted to the UN Security Council a proposal for security and stability in the Gulf region because it has important stakes in the countries of the region, both in trade volume and in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative. A more recent Chinese initiative took place on Dec. 7, 2022, when the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, visited Saudi Arabia and signed more than 20 agreements - worth \$29.3 billion in the energy, transport and housing sec-

tors. China has given both Saudi Arabia and Iran the status of "comprehensive strategic partners." There are no other Middle Eastern countries that enjoy such a status. In view of the biting economic embargo imposed by the US on Iran, this gesture by China will bring relative relief to Iran by increasing trade volume. In light of the Benjamin Netanyahu government's diminishing strength, the circumstances have also become ripe for Saudi Arabia to bring back to the agenda the late King Abdullah's Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 as a solution to the Palestinian issue.

China is also a country that remains equidistant between East and West, and gives a helping hand when it becomes necessary, thus avoiding staining its hands. The more the diplomatic and economic presence of China increases, the more US influence will be balanced by China. We may be on the threshold of a more stabilized Middle East but we are not yet there.



# The appointment of a non-presiding president in Lebanon

Eyad Abu Shakra

IN the past 48 hours, the Lebanese people have eagerly awaited the disclosure of the "appointment" file of a president who does not preside ... of a republic that is no longer existent ... on the land of a defunct "Lebanese state." In the last two weeks, the chances of financial expert and previous minister Dr. Jihad Azour have substantially risen within the pool of presidential candidates. Azour was one of the names circulated by supposedly influential political parties in the wake of the absolute refusal of Hezbollah and its affiliates of the candidacy of Michel Moawad, whom they considered a "challenge candidate."

It is worth mentioning that Hezbollah deliberately - and for quite some time - delayed announcing its expected candidate, former minister and MP Suleiman Frangieh, allegedly for two reasons. The first is that the "party" continues to blackmail the Aounist Free Patriotic Movement to remain silent on its projects. The second reason is that the "party" avoided the early provocation of the leader of the movement, former minister Gebran Bassil, so as not to move away from it before the full development of the required conditions, noting that relations were never good between Bassil and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, leader of the Amal Movement.

However, in contrast to Hezbollah's measured silence, its rivals and opposition groups, including parties and individuals, were floundering between confrontation and attempts at appeasement, and optimism about international changes in between that might resolve the

impasse in the midst of the worsening economic and living conditions. Here, the Lebanese people, of different backgrounds, continued to deceive themselves and deny the facts. They continued to convince themselves that Hezbollah and its public relations front - namely the Amal Movement - are mere "partisan cases" that have the right to maneuver, compete, ally with one and stand against another, in an open field with a leveled land governed by the democratic competition standards. They have forgotten or feigned to have forgotten what the essence of a party is.

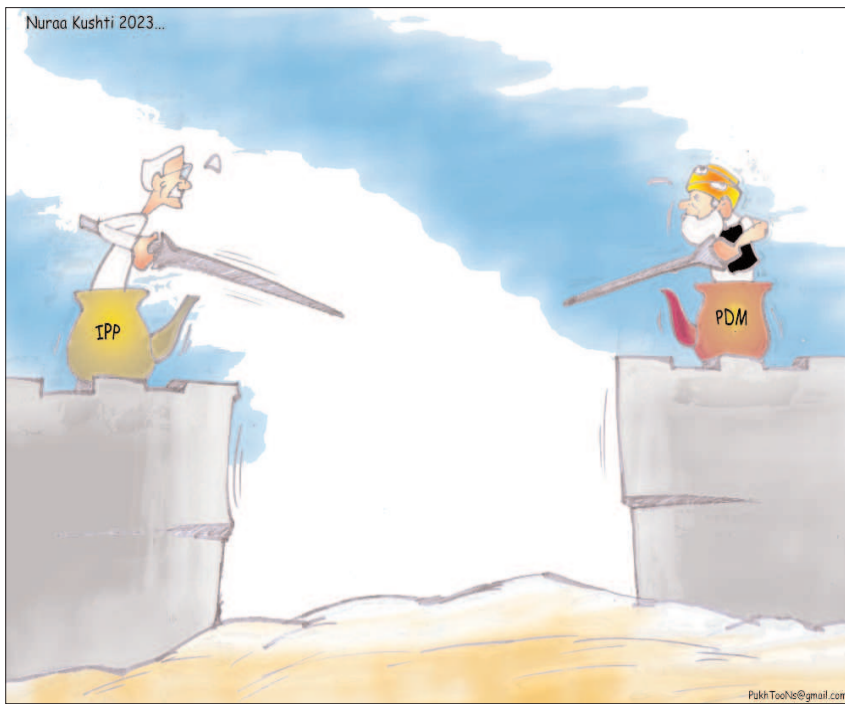
They have forgotten or feigned to have forgotten that Hezbollah has its own project that no one participates in, and through which it has - exclusively - its own political and security calculations, as well as its network of financial and military relations, without any acknowledgment of the role of the "state" or the existence of such a thing as national "sovereignty." This naively dangerous forgetfulness or pretense to forget has given way to a number of mistakes that have been repeated over the past two decades in dealing with Hezbollah. The point repeatedly ignored is that those opponents were not dealing with Hezbollah as a "base" and a "tool" in a regional "project" with a demographic sectarian depth. The "project" is integrated with eliminating the concept of national borders and furthering demographic change throughout Iraq and the Levant ... between the Zagros mountain range (to the east) and the Mediterranean Sea (to the west). The consequences of misreading the regional "sce-

nario" will be - I believe - disastrous, especially since the messages launched by the "mouth-pieces" of the regional project within all Arab states under its yoke have become very clear. The messages we hear today reek of domination, arrogance, and a tendency toward tyranny based on threatening others and showing them contempt. This is exactly what the Iraqis became accustomed to a few years ago, followed by the Lebanese presently living with this situation and surrendering to it. Going back to the subject of the appointment of the future Lebanese "president," the use of the word "appointment" accurately describes the reality of the situation. This is because Hezbollah, with Iran's regional backing, does not negotiate or bargain; rather, it imposes and commands. There is no other candidate than Hassan Nasrallah's, and there is no "patriotism" except by accepting his choice, and there is no understanding unless everyone understands that the word of the "Sayyed" is the end game. And why not?

To answer the above question, we have to keep in mind the two outstanding and intersecting developments that occurred within the past few days. The first was the disclosure of renewed US-Iranian contact through William Burns, director of the CIA and one of the "engineers" of the Iranian nuclear agreement. The second is the words of Gadi Eisenkot, the former Israeli Defense Forces chief of staff and current member of the Knesset, who is considered one of the most prominent symbols of the politically influential "military establishment." The

reports about renewed communication between Washington and Tehran raise serious questions about how true the "declared" American positions are on a number of regional issues. While many media outlets reported President Joe Biden's administration's "reservations" about some diplomatic openings in the region, specifically with both Tehran and the Assad regime in Syria, Eisenkot said during the past week that Tehran and Washington "never stopped discussing a renewed agreement." He added: "All the recent leaks about Iran being close to manufacturing seven nuclear bombs were only to spread fear in Europe and Israel, and speed up the procedure of reaching an agreement."

For those who are still under the illusion that the Israeli "military establishment" really stands against "coexistence" with the Iranian regime, Eisenkot said that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's pressure on Donald Trump's administration to exit the nuclear agreement "was a grave mistake ... which has brought Iran very close to the manufacturing of a nuclear bomb," before adding: "Iran has never crossed the red line and has no intention of doing so." These words are heavy in implications, especially when applied to the Lebanese reality. They confirm that Nasrallah's speeches and Hezbollah's pledges about liberating Jerusalem and other areas are just a "virtual" background. The truth, however, is evident in the maritime border demarcation deal that Lebanon recently concluded with Israel. This deal would not have been concluded without "Hezbollah's" approval - and behind it Iran's blessing - on the "Israeli" status of the Karish gas field off the shores of southern Lebanon.



## Rishi's White House jolly can't mask the fact

Rafael Behr

**THE Americans know how to make a prime minister feel special. It isn't hard. Saying "you are special" or words to that effect, usually does the trick. It helps to say it in the White House, within earshot of the British press corps. Westminster hacks and Downing Street aides, most of whom are unhealthily obsessed with US politics, love a Washington summit for the same reason that Harry Potter fans queue to visit the Warner Bros studio in Watford. Standing on the stage where the magic happens is its own reward.**

That makes Rishi Sunak a cheap date for Joe Biden at this week's summit. The US president can bestow the normal diplomatic courtesies, while conceding nothing of strategic substance. Downing Street then tells friendly journalists that the two men bonded over baseball, or some other shared cultural enthusiasm, or that their wives did. The prime minister flies home with burnished credentials as the leader of a very important country indeed. The bar for summit success has been set low. It helps that the prime minister isn't Boris Johnson or Liz Truss, whose bellicose Brexit methods sabotaged transatlantic relations. By negotiating the Windsor framework, easing frictions around Northern Ireland, Sunak atoned for the offence that Biden summarised crudely, but fairly, as "screwing around" with the Good Friday agreement. Sunak's mission to Washington is also mercifully free of unrealistic speculation about a US-UK free-trade deal. This was an obsession for Brexit enthusiasts. Opening new vistas of transatlantic commerce was meant to outweigh any downside to withdrawal from the European single market.

The economics of that proposition never added up, but it was a comfort to Eurosceptics, whose paranoia about London's submission to Brussels fed a delusion of parity with Washington. Donald Trump nurtured that fantasy. His successor has kiboshed it. Biden's economic strategy is based around lavish government support for domestic industries, tax breaks for investment and supply chains rerouted to assert US strategic primacy. That buries the model of globalisation that Brexit ideologues had in mind when mapping their buccaneering adventures on the high seas of international trade. Sunak is a disciple of the small-state, anti-intervention school of conservatism. He finds Bidenomics perplexing for that reason alone. But it also highlights the terrible error of quitting the continental bloc in which Britain, by pooling resources with European partners, had a chance of keeping pace with the Americans. If economic competition in the years ahead is going to be an arms race of industrial subsidy, the UK will be outgunned by Brussels and Washington. The counterclaim by keepers of the Brexit faith is that Britain's isolation is really an advantage, permitting agility and innovation where Europe is staid and sclerotic. A nimble sovereign nation might lead the way in new sectors.

Hence Downing Street has hyped Sunak's interest

This fiction was transmitted by various UK media outlets, as if all of Europe's leaders huddled round their British counterpart while he laid down the law on small boats crossing the Channel. Preposterously, GB News even reported it as a "migration meeting". At least Sunak was invited to Moldova. There had been no British representation the previous week at a meeting in Sweden of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council. This, too, is a relatively new institution. It was launched in June 2021 by Biden and Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission president, to coordinate policy on "global trade and

***The counterclaim by keepers of the Brexit faith is that Britain's isolation is really an advantage, permitting agility and innovation where Europe is staid and sclerotic. A nimbly sovereign nation might lead the way in new sectors. Hence Downing Street has hyped Sunak's interest in AI ahead of the Washington trip. The prime minister has been consulting tech bosses about awesome new computing powers coming on stream. He has been pondering how best to manage the development of machines that might, within years, rival nuclear weapons in their capacity to cause harm in the wrong hands. He has concluded that Britain can lead the world in this field, and that London should be the capital of global AI governance. He will raise all of this with President Biden, we are told.***

Energy Agency in Vienna - is perfectly sensible. London could make a respectable bid to host it. But so could other cities. Either way, it won't be decided over coffee on Wednesday night. Visiting leaders "raise" all sorts of things with their hosts. It is a diplomatic euphemism for questions brought to the table with no expectation of answers. Things are "raised" for the benefit of an audience back home, so the leader who doesn't really set the agenda can claim to have put some item on it. Under a friendly (or credulous) media lens, the prime minister is thus projected from the margins of international influence into the centre. Something similar happened last week, when Sunak attended a summit of the European Political Community (EPC) in Moldova. The EPC was first convened last year by the French president, Emmanuel Macron, in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It is envisaged as a forum where EU and non-EU heads of government can discuss pancontinental issues. That is no substitute for the seat (and the veto) that Britain used to have at European Council summits, but it is better than nothing. Ukraine was the focus of discussions in Moldova. Except, that is, when Sunak raised the topic of illegal migration. His unilateral digression was then spun by Downing Street as Britain "taking the lead" on a vital issue; putting it "at the top of the international agenda".

technology" between Washington and Brussels. The most recent gathering discussed a code of conduct for AI development. That is exactly the conversation Sunak thinks should be happening in London. But if Americans and Europeans are already having it somewhere else, why should they move it? What does Britain offer for just a seat in the room? To raise the question is not to deny that a UK prime minister has clout. There is left in the office of the leader of a G7 economy, with a nuclear arsenal and a permanent seat on the UN security council. Biden makes time for Sunak because the relationship between the two countries is important. When it comes to defence and security cooperation, it is one of the sturdiest alliances in the world. But friendship is not the same as influence. It is a bald strategic fact that Brexit makes a British prime minister less useful to Washington. Without leverage in Brussels, Sunak is not in a position to broker deals with Biden. Instead, he pays tribute. That can be spun into something special for the parochial Westminster audience that doesn't want to admit that Britain is smaller outside the EU. The message will get through eventually. There are only so many angles for making the margins look like the centre. There is only so long Britain can fake being a global power if it isn't a player in Europe.

The Guardian

## The promising new diplomatic trend in the Middle East

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

THE latest developments in the Middle East reveal a new trend: The region has been changing into a more stable and prosperous place due to the fact that diplomacy has taken a front seat. This significant shift ought to be supported by the major world powers and the wider international community.

Between 2000 and 2020, the Middle East witnessed several major conflicts, increased instability and widespread insecurity. The US invasion of Iraq triggered years of domestic war in Iraq between terror groups and sectarian militias. This caused tensions between other states and nonstate actors in the region. The civil war in Syria also turned many groups against each other. These events tipped the fragile balance of power between countries in the Middle East. In such a conflict-driven era, military options appeared to be the only path to winning the battles. But as the evidence of the last two decades shows, militarization, political polemics and support for proxy groups not only do not resolve tensions, but they also further destabilize the region and make it more insecure for everyone. But this trend began changing after the Gulf nations took a powerful leading role in attempting to stabilize the region and bring peace and security through diplomacy and dialogue. This diplomatic mission was firmly supported and advanced by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who prioritized bringing peace to the

Middle East, enhancing regional security and bringing about a peaceful environment in which everyone could prosper.

It is important to point out that diplomatic initiatives and de-escalation strategies tend to succeed when they are accompanied by strong incentives, which are offered to the involved parties. These incentives can be political and/or economic. One of the latest examples was the decision of the Gulf nations - particularly Saudi Arabia - to give diplomacy a chance when it comes to ties with the Iranian government. Although China brokered the recent Saudi-Iran agreement, the significant role that the Kingdom played should not be disregarded.

Jon Alterman, director of the Middle East Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, pointed to this fact when noting: "By paying so much attention to China, Americans risk missing the most important part of this agreement: the changing regional role of Saudi Arabia. A week of smoothly integrated diplomacy not only showed Saudi Arabia to be a skillful diplomatic actor, but also a creative one. The popular image of Saudi Arabia in the United States is that of a largely passive consumer of US-provided security. With the agreement, Saudi Arabia cast off the passivity of many decades, and demonstrated it is a diplomatic force to be reckoned with." Another diplomatic move was ini-

tiated toward Syria last month. The Arab League readmitted Damascus, ending its decade-plus suspension. According to the Saudi Foreign Ministry, the objectives of the move were laid out by the Arab League's foreign ministers, who "consulted and exchanged views on the efforts made to reach a political solution to the Syrian crisis that ends its repercussions and preserves Syria's unity, security, stability, and Arab identity; returns it to its Arab surroundings; to achieve the good of its brotherly people."

The international community has already witnessed some of the positive consequences of these latest diplomatic moves. According to The Wall Street Journal, the Iranian government has agreed to stop arming the Houthis. Security in the region has also been enhanced, as tensions between Tehran and the other Gulf states appear to have eased. Following the Saudi-Iran rapprochement, the Iranian government is improving its ties with states such as Bahrain. The Gulf nations' emphasis on diplomacy and conflict mitigation, along with de-escalation, has even been seen beyond the region. For example, Saudi Arabia and the UAE last year played a major intermediary role in facilitating an exchange of prisoners between the US and Russia. In a joint statement, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its UAE counterpart announced the success of efforts that led to the release and exchange of two pris-

oners, one of which was US basketball star Brittney Griner. A lack of dialogue and diplomatic relations between countries can have unintended consequences, such as exacerbating mistrust and causing misunderstandings, tensions, conflict or even wars. And some diplomatic attempts may work for a period of time and then fail. For diplomatic initiatives to last and be sustainable, they should help not only those on the state level who negotiated and made the deals, but also - and more importantly - ordinary people. When ordinary citizens witness the benefits of diplomacy, de-escalation and conflict mitigation, rapprochements are more likely to be sustained and successful.

This is why it is critical for the wealthier countries in the Middle East to invest in other countries in the region. The economic benefits of having good relationships and diplomatic ties with other countries, particularly neighbors, are countless. For example, stable nations can attract more investments and visitors, significantly contributing to their economic development and providing revenue for ordinary people, along with small, medium and large businesses alike. In a nutshell, diplomacy is the key to de-escalation, enhancing Middle Eastern stability and security and making the region safer and more prosperous for all nations. Economic and political incentives are the core pillars of successful, effective and sustainable diplomatic initiatives.

## Mission accomplished: What Saudi astronauts have achieved for Kingdom

Faisal J. Abbas

AS we bask in the brilliance of Saudi Arabia's recently concluded achievement in space science, a familiar chorus of social media cynics has attempted to belittle our momentous stride by insinuating that it was merely the result of our country's economic clout. They suggest that the feat of sending two Saudi astronauts, Rayyana Barnawi and Ali Alqarni, to the International Space Station was simply purchased rather than earned. Such narratives not only negate the hard work, innovation and pioneering spirit of our nation, but they also neglect to recognize the multifaceted ways in which our resources are used for collective progress and humanitarian causes.

Indeed, Saudi Arabia's financial muscle is an undeniable reality. Still, the key question to be asked is not about our capacity to spend, but how and where we choose to direct these resources. A country being wealthy is not always an indication of its success. There are many examples of countries in the region that, despite being incredibly wealthy, suffer from anarchy, instability and a lack of basic amenities. Saudi Arabia's answers are evidently positive, with the Kingdom utilizing its wealth for myriad transformative initiatives, both domestically and globally.

For starters, let us look at the commendable humanitarian efforts led by Saudi Arabia. Most recently, we spearheaded the evacuation of civilians caught up in the unrest

in Sudan, saving countless innocent lives. Our largesse extends beyond immediate crises, too. We remain one of the most generous donors in global aid, continually supporting the poorest nations to help elevate their living standards and fostering sustainable development through programs such as KSrelief and the Saudi Fund for Development.

Moreover, our economic interventions have saved numerous economies teetering on the brink of collapse. These actions reveal a commitment to global stability that transcends mere financial calculations and underscores our dedication to mutual progress and shared prosperity. Closer to home, the Kingdom's ambitious "giga-projects," from NEOM to Diriyah to the Red Sea Project, as well as both the Saudi and Middle East Green Initiatives, are radical illustrations of our commitment to economic diversification and sustainability. These ventures promise to revolutionize not only our local economy but also to contribute to global innovation and ecological balance.

Our critics conveniently overlook these aspects, while choosing to focus on our spending in space exploration. However, investing in science and discovery is hardly a folly to be frowned upon; rather, it is an endeavor to be commended. Our strides in space science mirror our broader aspiration to lead in technological innovation, contribute to humanity's shared under-

standing of the universe and inspire future generations. The cynics question the rationale behind our space ventures, arguing that they are mere displays of wealth. However, they miss the point that space exploration is as much about human progress as it is about national achievement. It encourages scientific curiosity, fosters technological innovation and bolsters global cooperation - elements crucial to addressing the pressing challenges of our times, from climate change to resource scarcity.

It is instructive to review the experience of other nations that have invested significantly in space exploration. In doing so, we can discern a clear pattern of broad-based returns that extend far beyond the monetary. Take, for instance, the US, whose National Aeronautics and Space Administration has been at the forefront of space exploration for decades. The investment in the Apollo moon missions, while initially deemed expensive, has reaped substantial rewards. The technological innovations stemming from these endeavors, such as solar panels, CAT scans and even freeze-dried food, have found their way into everyday life, benefiting humanity as a whole. This is the tangible, material return on investment that space exploration has yielded.

But the impact extends beyond financial metrics and physical products. The launch of Sputnik

by the Soviet Union and subsequent space race galvanized interest in science education across the US, leading to an unprecedented growth in interest in STEM - science, technology, engineering and math - fields. This surge helped fuel technological innovation and economic growth for decades to come. Moreover, the inspirational effect of space exploration should not be underestimated. The image of the first human setting foot on the moon, the awe-inspiring pictures of distant galaxies and nebulae from the Hubble Space Telescope, the audacious feats of the Mars rovers - all these have sparked the imaginations of countless young people, inspiring them to pursue careers in science and contributing to a culture of innovation and exploration.

In Saudi Arabia, we are already witnessing a similar groundswell of interest. Our investment in space exploration is fostering a newfound interest in STEM subjects among our youth, while our astronauts serve as role models, inspiring our young people to dream big and reach for the stars. The two Saudi astronauts' journey to the space station symbolizes more than an exciting milestone for our country; it is an embodiment of our broader objectives. It stands testament to the fact that Saudi Arabia is using its resources to not just better itself, but also to contribute positively to the world at large. Rather than belittling this achievement, it should be applauded.

Arab News

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# Balanced budget presented in prevailing economic situation: President ICCI

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari on Saturday said that the federal government has presented a balanced budget in difficult economic conditions and for presenting people-friendly budget, the Prime Minister, Finance Minister and the entire government deserve congratulations.

He said, "The increase in incentives for sectors like IT, agriculture, solar energy, construction is a positive step, relief has also been given to traders and business community in the budget, the steps taken for the energy sector are welcome, it is hoped that on the basis of this budget The next financial year will open more balanced and development paths for Pakistan. The government should focus on political stability for economic development, anarchy and unpredictable conditions are not good for business."

Addressing a press conference on budget proposals presented by the federal government, Ahsan Zafa Bakhtawari said that the government has made several important announcements for economic recovery in the budget. The decision to increase the salaries of government employees is welcome. He said, the policy regarding bringing dollars to Pakistan from abroad is also encouraging. Agriculture is the backbone of Pakistani economy. Appreciating the incentives given to agriculture, he said that last year was the most difficult year for the Pakistani economy, where on one hand the flood disaster caused a loss of 30 billion dollars to the economy, on the other hand the country suffered a lot due to political instability.

He said that the business community of the entire country, including the Islamabad Chamber, demands a Charter of Economy. If there is no continuity in the

policies, even the best policy cannot be beneficial. He said that the government has taken historic steps to reduce the trade deficit. Which has reduced the trade deficit from \$17 billion to \$4 billion, which is a major achievement of the government. The IT sector has been neglected in the past, the initiatives announced by the government for entrepreneurship in this sector will bear fruit in the coming years.

The ICCI President said that energy is a serious problem of Pakistan, we need to focus on other sources instead of generating expensive electricity. The government has announced the abolition of duty on solar panels and its raw materials, which will be welcomed. There is also a need to come up with a workable policy to switch all government buildings to solar immediately. He said that the coming year is the year of development, no tax has been imposed on all industries, we as business-

men value this budget.

Speaking on this occasion, Vice President Chamber Engineer Azhar Ul Islam Zafar said that the announcement of incentives for the service sector in the budget is welcome, the government needs to invest more in the youth. The government should announce sustainable measures for a permanent solution to the problem of LCs. President All Pakistan Anjuman Tajran Ajmal Baloch said that many concessions have been given in the budget. We expect more business friendly initiatives. The government should include the views of stakeholders in policy making regarding businesses.

Speaking on the occasion, Islamabad Chamber of Small Trade and Small Industries President Sajjad Sarwar, Islamabad Women Chamber President Rizwana Asif and Ilyas Qazi also described the budget as positive in difficult circumstances.



LARKANA: Laborers unloading seasonal vegetable from delivery truck at Vegetable Market.

## Macao's new residential mortgage loans dropped

MACAO (APP): The new approvals of Macao's residential mortgage loans (RMLs) and commercial real estate loans (CRELs) both decreased month on month in April, the special administrative region's monetary watchdog said.

According to statistics released by the Monetary Authority of Macao, the new RMLs approved by Macao banks in April dropped by 18.7 percent month on month to 1.55 billion patacas (192 million US dollars).

The new RMLs to residents, representing 98.5 percent of the total, fell by 18.8 percent to 1.53 billion patacas. The non-resident component decreased to 22.97 million patacas.

According to statistics released by the Monetary Authority of Macao, the new RMLs approved by Macao banks in April dropped by 18.7 percent month on month to 1.55 billion patacas (192 million US dollars).

The new CRELs fell by 6.0 percent monthly to 2.37 billion patacas. Within this total, new CRELs to residents occupied 94.8%.

At the end of April, the outstanding value of RMLs dropped by 0.3 percent from the previous month, or 2.6% from a year earlier, to 235.4 billion patacas.

The delinquency ratio for RMLs stood at 0.7 percent, which went up by 0.1 percentage point from a month ago, or 0.3 percentage points over a year earlier.

The delinquency ratio for CRELs was 1.5 percent, up by 0.4 percentage points from a month ago, or 0.7 percentage points from the end of April 2022.

# Pak handicrafts shine at int'l cultural industries fair

SHENZHEN (INP): The dazzle of Made-in-Pakistan handicrafts - including wood carving, bronze carving, carpets - won the hearts of visitors by its beautiful and artsy look and the deeply rooted tradition behind it at the 19th China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair (ICIF) this week.

Kicked off in Shenzhen, Guangdong, China on June 7, the 5-day national-level fair is expected to inject new impetus into the development of the country's

cultural industry, China Economic Net (CEN) reported Saturday.

Made-in-Pakistan handicrafts are internationally popular because of their striking appearance, alluring hues and magnetizing textures.

In addition, these unique works of craft add to Pakistan's name worldwide.

A visitor told the reporter that the handicraft industry of a country deeply reflects its culture. "Like other forms of arts, Pakistani handicrafts are

the expression of the thoughts and feelings of artisans influenced by their environment, culture and social patterns," he said, adding that he and his friends are quite into such exotic handicrafts.

Since its founding in 2004, the cultural fair has seen a continuous expansion in its exhibition scale, visitor number and internationalization. It has become an important platform to promote the development and opening up of China's cultural industries.

# FCCI welcomes budget focus on agriculture and IT sectors

FAISALABAD (APP): The government has focused on agriculture and IT to give a quick start to the economy by doling out substantial incentives to the sectors despite critical and trying times. This was stated by Dr Sajjad Arshad, senior vice president Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), while giving reaction on the federal budget 2023-24 during a press conference here.

He said that agriculture was an important sector of the national economy and it could immediately produce positive results if incentivised through positive steps. He further said that the incentives would not only increase the overall agriculture production but also create much-needed jobs

for the unemployed youth.

He said that incentives had also been given to the IT sector that would pave the way to earn precious foreign exchange. However, no tangible facilities had been given to the textile sector to fully exploit its inherent potential as it was also a mainstay of the economy. "We are critically analysing this situation and will inform the government about our genuine reservations which will help the government make necessary adjustments in the budget document before its approval," he added.

Responding to a question, Dr. Sajjad said the FCCI was an apolitical entity. However, they intended that in line with the 'Charter of Dem-

ocracy', the political parties should also ink a 'Charter of Economy', which would help the business community to initiate and undertake long-term strategies to revive the national economy on a sustained basis.

He expressed concern over different tariffs for gas for different provinces and said that uniform rates might be introduced across the country. About the increase in the salaries of the workers, he supported it and said that in view of inflation and skyrocketing prices, the increase in salaries was justified.

Vice President FCCI Haji Muhammad Aslam Bhalli appreciated the federal budget speech but said that small traders had been ignored in it.

He said that during a meeting with the Federal Finance Minister, he had assured to introduce a fixed tax regime for the traders, but he had uttered not even a single word about it.

Former presidents FCCI Rana Sikandar Azam and Chaudhary Muhammad Nawaz, Executive Members Mian Muhammad Tayyab, Maqsood Akhtar Butt, Hajji Abdul Rauf and former executive member Kashif Zia also responded to the questions of the journalists regarding the budget speech of the Federal Finance Minister.

## Netflix sign-ups jumped

NEW YORK (Reuters): Daily US sign-ups for Netflix have jumped in the first few days after the streaming giant's password-sharing crackdown came into effect on May 23, data from research firm Antenna showed.

The news sent shares of the company up 2.3% to \$418.92 in early trading.

Looking for new ways to make money in a saturating market and a tough economy, Netflix moved to regulate the sharing of account passwords with friends and family - a drastic turnaround for a company that had once tweeted "Love is sharing a password".

Netflix had estimated that more than a 100 million households had supplied their log-in credentials to people outside their homes.

Under the new rules, US users can add a member outside of their homes for an additional fee of \$8 per month.

Its calculations seem to have paid off as the company recorded nearly 100,000 daily sign-ups on both May 26 and May 27, according to Antenna.

Netflix, which has expanded its crackdown to more than 100 other countries, did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

# Budget of FY2023-24: Nothing pleasing for industrial sector: IIA

ISLAMABAD (INP): President of Islamabad Industrial Association (IIA) Muhammad Ahmed said on Saturday that there is nothing pleasing for industrialists in the budget of FY2023-24.

Addressing the post-budget press conference here, he lauding the budget said that IT, SME, solar, agro-based industry, will take a boost after getting tax holidays as well as reduced tax tariffs, and minimum compliance of documentation.

Muhammad Ahmed said that Super Tax has been imposed across the board on income above Rs150 million, which was previously Rs300 million and only applicable on ten sectors including banking which is against the claim that no new tax has been imposed.

He said that energy tariff for the industrial sector is very high resulting in enhanced cost of doing business compelling this sector to use energy efficient devices but duties and taxes have been increased which is disappointing.

He added that investors

of erstwhile FATA and PATA will be able to get their investments recovered because of extensions of income tax and sales tax exemptions for one year.

An extension of income tax exemption for one year was granted for the ongoing REIT projects, enabling them to complete the halted real-estate sector, he noted.

The business leader said that youth entrepreneurship has been encouraged by three-year income tax exemption up to the age of 30 years, enabling them to improve their businesses.

Every taxpayer has been allowed to bring one hundred thousand dollars under section 111(4) of Income Tax Ordinance without giving a source of income which will help government to overcome shortage of forex reserves. Previously, this limit was only five million rupees.

The IIA President questioned the figures presented in the budget as the total budget is almost Rs14500 billion whereas tax collection for the year 2023-24

has been set at Rs9200 billion. There would be a budget deficit of 5300 billion but no source was identified to bridge the deficit.

The budget document has failed to address the core issue of expansion of taxpayers base as it is feared that the existing taxpayers would be further burdened to meet the new tax target, he said, adding that charging twice the amount of tax from non-filers is counterproductive unless they are brought into the tax net. The Finance Minister said that prices have been decreased but also announced to increase the petroleum levy by Rs10 which will result in immediate increase.

Leaders of Islamabad Industrial Association Usman Shaukat, Khalid Jaweed, Mian Akram Farid, Atif Ikram Sheikh, Tariq Sadiq, Mian Waqas Masood, Zakria A Zia, Aamir Waheed, Mirza Muhammad Ali, Malik Sohail Hussain, Naeem Paracha and others were also present at the occasion.

# KKR strengthens lead in Telecom Italia race by raising its bid

MILAN (Reuters): US fund KKR (KKR.N) strengthened its lead in the race to secure the landline grid of Telecom Italia (TIM) (TLIT.MI) when it offered to raise its bid by up to over 2 billion euros (\$2.2 billion), two people with knowledge of the matter said.

The value of KKR's offer could top 23 billion euros overall, widening the gap with a rival proposal by a consortium comprising Italian state lender CDP and Australian fund Macquarie (MQG.AX).

The improved offer would still be short of a valuation of more than 30 billion euros for the grid sought by TIM's top

shareholder Vivendi (VIV.PA). But it remains TIM CEO Pietro Labriola's best option to pull off plans to rescue the debt-laden firm via a sale of the network.

Sources had previously told Reuters that both Labriola and some leading Italian officials already saw KKR as the strongest bidder prior to Friday's proposal.

TIM said late on Friday it had received two new offers for its grid, without providing details. It had sought improved offers for its most valuable asset after having assessed as not yet adequate the proposals received in May.

Labriola plans to focus TIM's efforts on its

ServCo services business and sell its NetCo unit comprising the domestic fixed-access network and international submarine cable unit Sparkle to cut debt.

The overall value of KKR's bid hinges on the terms of the contracts linking ServCo to NetCo, the sources said, adding that the fund had asked for four weeks to carry out due diligence to discuss such conditions.

KKR declined to comment.

The source said KKR was also offering to leave TIM a stake in NetCo, having previously indicated it would also welcome a state entity as a shareholder in the grid, which is

Italy's main telecoms infrastructure.

CDP and Macquarie have kept the economic value of their proposal little changed, suggesting a number of measures to address antitrust issues, another two people close to the matter said.

The antitrust problems are linked to the fact that CDP and Macquarie also own fibre-optic wholesale provider Open Fiber. One remedy could involve parts of Open Fiber being sold off.

CDP is also TIM's second-largest shareholder with a 10% stake.

TIM's board meets to review the proposals on June 19 and is expected to take a decision on June 22.

# BMP declares budget short-term, ad-hoc, expansionary in prevailing economic crisis

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Businessmen Panel (BMP) has declared the federal budget 2023-24 as a short-term, ad-hoc and an expansionary budget in testing time of economic crisis, looking like an interim budget, with short-term policies, lacking solid measures to stabilize the economy, having no focus on changing economic priorities.

This was stated by the newly-elected Vice President of SAARC Chambers of Commerce and Industries (SCCI) and Chairman FPCCI's Businessmen Panel (BMP) Mian Anjum Nisar while giving his reaction over the new budget.

The Chairman BMP said that the present budget lacks major objective of giving a long-term direc-

tion to economy, as no visible reduction in cost of doing business or cut in taxes in budget has been announced to speed up the growth or create new jobs in the country. He said that Pakistan needed millions of jobs annually but the government had not taken any concrete step in federal budget for job creations for the unemployed youth. Although details are still to come out, the budget vibes seem positive, he said.

Mian Anjum Nisar stated that the businessmen had demanded of the government to take concrete steps in the upcoming Federal Budget 2023-24 to keep industrial wheel running especially of SMEs, saving the livelihood of millions of workers associated with the

small industries. The major focus should have been on greater relief to the documented and registered SMEs. In this budget too, the government attempted to squeeze the neck of old taxpayers instead of taking efforts to bring new taxpayers into tax net. Budget FY24 is an attempt to satisfy IMF on key matters relating to revenue collection, subsidy reductions, and attainment of fiscal discipline, he stated.

He said Rs. 1,150 total outlay of public sector development program (PSDP) is appreciable. He said government has announced some good steps towards agriculture sector. Agriculture is the backbone of the country for food security. The announce-

ment of conversion of 50,000 tube-wells into solar, duty reduction on the import of raw material of solar panels, batteries, and inverters are right steps towards energy mix in the country. Announcements related to education and youth skill development program, etc., are the goods steps the government is taking.

However, the FPCCI's former president said that it was not an export-oriented budget. The finance minister did not announce any concrete steps towards exports enhancement. Our cost of doing business is going up due to high electricity rates and unfriendly business environment in the country. He said that except agriculture, nothing was there in the budget speech

for the rest of sectors. He proposed that agriculture sector should also come under the tax net. He termed the budget as election budget, and it is not going to be the final budget.

The BMP Chairman commended the government for removing duty from solar panels import by agreeing to the demand of industry. The FPCCI former president said that the government has announced some measures for the agriculture sector but it has failed to introduce a well-thought out strategy for enhancing production of key crops including cotton, wheat and oilseeds in addition to reducing cost of production of farmers in federal budget 2023-24. He expressed dismay that on

one hand the government was rightly distressed over rising inflation, but on the other hand it fell short of addressing the root cause of this alarming trend, which was continuous downward trend in farm productivity. He also called for reducing the input cost of farmers that was increasing particularly due to upsurge in power tariff and increase in rates of fuel.

Mian Anjum said that the government gave a big miss to the local as well as the export industry, the backbone of the national economy while announcing budget 2023-24. He said that input cost of farmers increased many times, but the government did not announce any tangible step for reducing it.

## COURT NOTICE

IN the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at D a g g a r . A p p e a l No.23/13.Institution 17/2/2023 Date of hearing. 28/6/2023 Shamsul Mohamad VS Ibrahim Khan etc.Notice to no 1.Abrahim Khan s/o Hamza Khan. 3.Alam sons of Sher Mohamad .13. Mst Riwayat d/o Sher Mohamad resident of Kangar village Sora tehsel Mandran district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8. am dated 28/6/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court

## COURT NOTICE

IN the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No.97/1. Institution 17/3/2023. Date of hearing. 17/6/2023. Mst. Hurmat Begum VS Abdullah Jan.Notice to no 1.Abdullah Jan son of Muhammad Jan resident of Anghapur tehsel Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8. am dated 17/6/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.





## In brief

## Fizza Hafeez qualified

ABBOTTABAD. (APP): A special 7th-grade student Fizza Hafeez Abbasi from village Molia Circle Bakote Saturday has qualified for the Special World Olympics in Berlin, Germany. According to the details, she has brought pride to the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as the sole representative of the region. Fizza, a student of the Rise Model School for Inclusive education in Abbottabad, is an exceptional athlete in various sports including badminton and others. She has won three gold medals in the Special Olympics Pakistan's Provincial Games. Fizza is the only student from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who will be participating in the World Games in Berlin, Germany in 2023. People of the Union Council Circle Bakote highly appreciated the talents of Fizza, her father is a businessman, and her mother is a government school teacher. Despite her disability, Fizza Hafeez has not only brought honor to her parents and community but also illuminated the name of Pakistan and raised the national flag high. The local community prays for her success and hopes that she will achieve more awards and win more models in the world games.

## Shadab adds another feather

KARACHI (Web Desk): Pakistan all-rounder Shadab Khan, who is currently playing for Sussex in the ongoing T20 Vitality Blast, has achieved another milestone in the shortest format of cricket. At the age of 24 years and 247 days, Shadab has become the second-youngest player to complete 250 matches in T20 cricket. He achieved the milestone as he played a match against Middlesex earlier this week. In the 250 matches, the right-arm batter scored 2408 runs, including eight 50s. He also showed impressive game with ball as he took 280 wickets, including a five-wicket haul. While representing Sussex in a Vitality Blast game against Middlesex, he smashed a blistering knock of 59 runs from only 30 balls, including five sixes. He also displayed an economical bowling spell as he gave only 30 runs in his four overs. Later, he was named player of the match. Afghanistan all-rounder Rashid Khan is youngest cricketer to play 250 matches in the shortest-format.

## Messi gets welcome

BEIJING (AFP): Football superstar Lionel Messi arrived in Beijing by private jet on Saturday and was greeted by hundreds of jubilant fans, with his World-Cup-winning Argentina set to face Australia in a friendly match next week. "Messi! Messi!" chanted several hundred fans who were waiting for him at the airport, many wearing the blue-and-white striped jersey of the Albiceleste's No. 10. Several hundred others waited outside his hotel, not far from the banks of the Liangma River, popular with Beijingers for strolls. This is Messi's 7th trip to China, the last being in 2017, according to local media. World champions Argentina will play a friendly against Australia on June 15 at Beijing's newly-renovated 68,000-capacity Workers' Stadium. By mid-day, the arrival of global sporting superstar Messi was the most talked-about topic on the Weibo social network.



PARIS: Karolina Muchova of Czech Republic and Iga Swiatek of Poland pose for a photograph ahead of the Women's Singles Final match on Day Fourteen of the 2023 French Open at Roland Garros.

## Pakistan outplay Japan in Asian Youth Girls Netball C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan downed Japan in its opener of the Asian Youth Girls Netball Championship at South Korea on Saturday. According to the details, Pakistan defeated Japan by 31-52 in the game. Ayman Mehmood and Muqadas scored 40 and 12 points, respectively against Japan in the ongoing championship.

During the match,

Zainab Shujaat, Hamna, Haya Gul, and Alveera Kashif played brilliantly. Pakistan Community Korea President Nazakat Mirza, Al Madinah Masjid, Jangnam Pusan Korea Khatib Mian Muhammad Ashraf and Pakistan Netball Federation President Mudassar Arain have congratulated the national team for winning against Japan by a huge margin and expressed hope.

It is said that the national team will perform brilliantly in other matches of the Asian Youth Girls Netball Championship.

A total of 11 teams were participating in the mega event including Singapore, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, India, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Brunei, Chinese Taipei, Korea, Japan and Thailand. Pakistan would play its second match against Thailand on Sunday.

## Nuggets now in full command of NBA Finals, top Heat 108-95 for 3-1 lead

MIAMI (AP): The mission for the Denver Nuggets was clear: Come to Miami, get two wins and head back home with a chance to finally become NBA champions. It's officially there for the taking.

The 47-year wait for Denver might be over as soon as Monday, with Nikola Jokic and his Nuggets now just one win away from getting the title that he's wanted for so long. Aaron Gordon scored 27 points, Jokic added 23 and the Nuggets beat the Miami Heat 108-95 on Friday night to take a 3-1 lead in the NBA Finals.

"We haven't done a damn thing yet," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. "We have to win another game to be world champions." Bruce Brown scored 21 off the bench for the Nuggets, who won their fifth straight road game to grab complete command. They'll have three chances to win one game for a title, two of those in Denver, the first in what's sure to be a raucous atmosphere for Game 5. Jamal Murray had 15 points and 12 assists — his fourth consecutive double-digit assist game — for Denver.

"Today was a team effort," Murray said. "I can't even name one person. Everybody locked in. We've got one more to go."

Jimmy Butler scored 25 points for Miami, which has now fallen into 3-1 holes in each of its last three finals appearances — this one joining 2014 and



2020. Bam Adebayo had 20 points and 11 rebounds for the Heat, while Kyle Lowry added 13 points.

The Heat walked off the floor in silence, fully aware of how much trouble they're in now.

"Now we're in a must-win situation, every single game — which we're capable of," Butler said. "It's not impossible."

The Nuggets were overwhelming favorites to start the series, for obvious reasons. Denver was the Western Conference's No. 1 seed; Miami was the Eastern Conference's No. 8 seed. The Nuggets had won nine of the last 10 regular-season meetings between the teams, and their run of success over the Heat has continued through four games of the finals.

"Our guys are locked in, man," Malone said. "We're focused."

Denver led by 13 going into the fourth, and Miami came out for the final quarter with appropriate desperation. The Heat scored the first eight points, Jokic committed his fifth foul and

had to go to the bench with 9:24 left — and it was down to 86-81 when Butler converted a three-point play with 8:42 remaining.

But the Nuggets — who fell apart in the fourth quarter of Game 2 for their lone loss of the series — didn't fold, even with their two-time MVP still out. Murray made a 3-pointer to stop Miami's 8-0 spurt, and Jeff Green made a huge corner 3 from near the Heat bench for a 94-85 edge with 6:21 left.

"We have guys that can step up, night in and night out," Gordon said.

Jokic checked out with Denver up 10. He came back with the Nuggets up nine. Miami didn't take advantage of that chance, and now finds itself on the wrong end of history. A team that had to scramble just to make the playoffs now needs to pull off the ultimate scramble to win a championship.

"This is what this year's been all about for this group, so definitely not going to hang our heads or quit," Heat guard Duncan Robinson said.

## ICC U19 men's CWC qualification resumes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The qualification for the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup Sri Lanka 2024 returns next week with Darwin, Australia set to play host to the next generation of cricket talent in the East Asia-Pacific (EAP) Qualifier from June 12 to 21.

In what would be the first U19 Men's Qualifier to take place in the region since 2019, future stars from seven teams will battle it out to determine the next qualifying nation in the race to Sri Lanka 2024, the 15th edition of the celebrated event, which continues its rich legacy of forging the careers of some of the greats of the game, said a press release.

A total of 12 teams have already secured their place at the U19 Men's Cricket World Cup, and with only one spot available from the region, the EAP Qualifier will see Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu go head-to-head knowing only the winning team will seal their passage through to the next year's main event.

Ten days of competition would see 21 matches take place across five venues in the Northern Territory capital, which will host a combination of day and night matches in a round-robin format.

Speaking ahead of the EAP Qualifier, Rob Gomm, ICC Development Manager, East Asia-Pacific commented, "I will like to wish Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Vanuatu the very best for the event, and extend my sincere thanks to NT Cricket for hosting what will no doubt be an incredible event."

Among the venues hosting the EAP Qualifier is TIO Stadium, a multi-purpose venue which regularly hosts Rugby League and Australian Rules Football.

The venue will see the welcome return of international cricket after 15 years, following the installation of a drop-in pitch earlier this week.

Gavin Dovey, Chief Executive Officer of Northern Territory Cricket added, "Cricket is surging in popularity across the Asia-Pacific region so there will be some serious talent on show for our cricket loving community to watch.

## ‘Sit and talk,’ Younis Khan on Asia Cup deadlock

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Former Pakistan captain Younis Khan shared a piece of advice on the ongoing deadlock regarding the venue of Asia Cup 2023, stating that dialogue is the only way forward.

The former Pakistan captain joined the ongoing debate regarding the venue of this year's Asia Cup and the deadlock between two arch-rivals Pakistan and India.

He while highlighting the importance of the rivalry in cricket also shared a piece of advice regarding the tie on the Asia Cup venue and shared that the officials should sit and talk to resolve this issue.

"Everyone [officials] should sit and talk regarding Asia Cup. If there's no dialogue then the matter will not be resolved," said Younis Khan during the MoU signing ceremony

here for the Karachi Premier League.

Younis Khan further weighed in his opinion by asserting that Pakistan-India matches are beneficial for all and without them, there would be no entertainment in cricket.

"If there are no India-Pakistan matches, then there is no fun in cricket. If Pakistan plays India, everyone will benefit," Younis Khan stated.

This year's Asia Cup is originally scheduled to be hosted by Pakistan. However, the BCCI refused to send their team to Pakistan for the continental event on political grounds.

The BCCI since then made several efforts to take the hosting rights from Pakistan and to hold Asia Cup at a neutral venue.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) was

determined not to give away the hosting rights of the tournament and thus the chairman of the PCB management committee Najam Sethi came up with a hybrid model.

As per the PCB-proposed model, Pakistan will host the four to six group matches which will feature Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Afghanistan.

However, the BCCI has refused the hybrid proposal for both events and once again demanded to shift the Asia Cup entirely from Pakistan.

Following BCCI's reported refusal, the final decision regarding the venue of the Asia Cup was likely to be taken on the sidelines of the Indian Premier League (IPL) final. However, no development was reported on the deadlock.

## Inam Butt qualifies for Beach Wrestling World Series quarter-finals

ORTACA (Agencies): Olympian Inam Butt started his Beach Wrestling World Series campaign on a high as he stormed into the quarter-finals of the tournament, here on Saturday.

Inam, who won the gold medal in the 2021 World Beach Wrestling Championship, displayed his brilliance in the recently commenced tournament here as he remained undefeated in the group stage to book a quarter-finals spot.

Former champion and last edition's bronze medal winner, scripted a flying start to his Beach Wrestling World series as the national wrestler blew away his opponents and claimed four successive victories.



Inam Butt, competing in the Group A of the 90kg category, locked horns with China's Chaoliang Yang in his first fight of the day.

The former champion thumped Yang 3-1 after a one-sided affair and qualified for the next fight.

Inam Butt then took on Belgium's Jonas Van Caeneghem and utterly dominated him throughout the competition before blowing him away by the

score of 3-0.

He then faced Azerbaijan's Ibrahim Yusubov in his third group-stage fight and also emerged victorious.

In his final duel on the opening day of the Beach Wrestling World Series, Inam Butt then came face to face with Romania's Mihai Nicolae Palaghia and also secured a perfect 3-0 victory to taste his fourth triumph of the day.

It is pertinent to mention that Inam Butt will now compete in the Beach Wrestling World Series' quarter-finals on June 11. The two-day event will conclude tomorrow, with the knockout rounds taking place on the same day.

## Eymen sets her goal for ACC Women's Emerging Teams Asia Cup

LAHORE (APP): Eymen Fatima, an 18-year-old sportswoman hailing from Sargodha, is another rising star in Pakistan's cricket scene, driven by her passion for the sport.

Fatima and her family made the bold decision of relocating to Lahore to pursue her dreams. "I used to live in Sargodha and there was a lack of cricketing facilities in my city compared to the major urban centers. My father wanted me to play this game, so for the love of the game, my family shifted to Lahore and I got registered in Abdul Qadir Cricket Academy," she said.

As a right-handed opening batter, Eymen's talent and dedication have earned her recognition, including a chance to represent Pakistan U19 in the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup. Focused on performing in upcoming tournaments, Eymen aspires to make a lasting impression on the international stage.

Prior to her departure to Hong Kong to feature in the ACC Women's Emerging Teams Asia Cup 2023, Eymen, a member of the 14-player squad, talked exclusively to Pakistan

Cricket Board (PCB) Digital.

The opening batter featured in the first-ever Women U19 T20 Tournament 2022-23, which was held in Muridke and Sheikhupura from 13 to 22 August. Playing for Central Punjab Women U19, Eymen scored 171 runs from five matches at a strike-rate of 119.58, which included one half-century. She finished on second spot in the batting list and her highest score of 70 not out came in the final against Sindh Women U19.

Later that year, Eymen featured in the phase-1 of the T20 Women's Cricket Tournament, held from 26 November to 2 December 2022 at the Lahore City Cricket Association Ground (LCCA) in Lahore. The first phase of the tournament was planned with the objective of expanding the selection options for the national squad, enabling the selectors to choose from a larger talent pool for the inaugural ICC Women's U19 T20 World Cup 2023.

Playing for Conquerors, Fatima scored 89 from four outings, where she struck 15 boundaries. In the ICC Women's U19 T20 World

Cup, Eymen played five matches and amassed 157 runs at 52.33. Her runs were scored at the strike-rate of 126.61 as she managed to grab two player of the match awards in the competition for her half-centuries against Rwanda and Zimbabwe respectively.

Talking about her journey in the ICC event, Fatima said, "It was a great experience playing in the first edition of the mega event. I am pleased with my performance which helped the side win matches in the tournament. In the future, my goal is to bat more responsibly and actively contribute to the team's success."

As an opening batter, Fatima showcased her skills alongside England veteran Danni Wyatt in the Women's League exhibition matches staged in Rawalpindi in March this year. The experience of playing alongside international stars not only elevated her game but also provided valuable learning opportunities.

With her eyes firmly set on the future, Eymen is excited for the upcoming ACC Women's Emerging Teams Asia Cup 2023.

## Novak Djokovic eyes history with a 23rd Grand Slam title at French Open; Casper Ruud seeks 1st

PARIS (AP): Novak Djokovic pursued Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal for quite some time. They were the guys he measured himself against. The players who established the standards he sought to surpass.

Sure, when Djokovic locks across the net in Court Philippe Chatrier during the French Open final on Sunday, he will see Casper Ruud trying to prevent him from earning a men's-record 23rd championship at a Grand Slam tournament.

Neither Federer (who announced his retirement last year) nor Nadal (who is out since January with a hip injury and recently had arthroscopic surgery) will be at Roland

Garros, racket in hand and ready to present a challenge, of course.

Still, it's important to remember that the milestone Djokovic is chasing now is in many ways defined by his two great rivals. Entering the 2011 season, Federer owned 16 major championships, Nadal nine and Djokovic one. Just five years ago, Federer was at 20, Nadal 17 and Djokovic at 12.

Since then? Djokovic has collected 10 of the last 19 Slam titles and made clear his intention to keep adding to his total.

Federer stopped at 20; entering Sunday, Djokovic and Nadal are tied at 22. The only players in tennis history to exceed that number are Serena Williams,

whose 23 are the most in the Open era, and Margaret Court, whose 24 came in part during the amateur era.

"I put myself, again, in a position to fight for another Grand Slam trophy. I've been very fortunate that most of the matches in tournaments I've played in the last few years, there is history on the line. I like the feeling. It's a privilege. It's incredible privilege to be able to make history of the sport that I truly love, and it has given me so much," Djokovic said after eliminating No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz in the semifinals. "The motivation is very high, as you can imagine. There is one more to go, and hopefully (I'll) get my hands on

the trophy."

Ruud will see what he can muster in an attempt to be the champion at a major for the first time.

"Is Novak the favorite? Yes, of course. There is no question about it," said Alexander Zverev, who has lost in the semifinals in Paris each of the past three years, including against Ruud on Friday. "He knows how it's done. He knows how to do it. But Casper is playing great tennis. If I would have to bet money, maybe I wouldn't bet on Casper too much. Does he have chances? Yes, he does. He's playing amazing tennis and I think he deserves to be in the final."

While this is Djokovic's 34th appearance in a major final — tied with Chris Evert for the most by a man or woman — it will be Ruud's third.

Ruud is 0-2 so far, and both losses came in 2022: against Nadal at Roland Garros, and against Carlos Alcaraz at the U.S. Open.

Ruud mentioned repeatedly that he will aim to avoid feeling pressure on Sunday.

"It's just a matter of not thinking, like, 'I need to win this match. ... This is a word that I try to sort of avoid. Obviously in the beginning of the tournament, that's sort of what you feel more and what you think about more, like: 'This is important to try to

get this win and get going in the tournament,'" said Ruud, a 24-year-old from Norway who is coached by his father, Christian, a former professional player.

"But now I'm in the final. It's been a great two weeks, no matter what happens on Sunday, and I'm going to, of course, give it my all," Ruud said, "but sometimes you play your best tennis when you don't think too much."

He will see if he can devise a better way to attack the problems presented by Djokovic, a 36-year-old from Serbia.

They have played four times previous, twice on hard courts and twice on clay, and not only is Djokovic 4-0, but he has won all eight sets.





## In brief

### 181,800 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 181,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 210,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1428.31 feet and was 30.31 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 85,400 cusecs and 68,000 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1136.40 feet, which was 86.40 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 50,900 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 85,000, 81,600, 59,400 and 22,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 45,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 9,800 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### 5 illegal arms holders booked

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested five illegal arms holders and recovered arms and ammunition from their possession during the crackdown here on Saturday. According to a police spokesman, City police held Waqar and recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from his possession. Similarly, Ganjmandi police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Ashiq. While New Town police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Umair. Following the operation, Civil Lines police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Arshad. Gujjar Khan police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Ayub. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was underway. Divisional SPs appreciated the performance of police teams, adding that strict action will be taken against all those who were involved in carrying illegal weapons.

### NHMP saves dumper

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) on Saturday saved a dumper from major damage by swift action. A dumper had caught fire in its rear tyre and the Motorway Police on Hazara Motorway near Haripur was approached for help. Realizing the sensitivity of the matter, the fire was brought under control with the help of fire extinguisher, said a spokesperson of NHMP. The fire in the tyre of the dumper was controlled in time and major damage was avoided. The dumper, going towards Peshawar from Hattar was saved from any major damage.

### DG RDA visits high-risk areas

RAWALPINDI (APP): Director General (DG) of Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA), Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa here on Saturday visited high-risk areas along Nulla Lai to inspect preparations for monsoon season. According to RDA spokesman, the DG had directed the Managing Director WASA Muhammad Tanveer and Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi (MCR) to complete cleanliness work before the start of monsoon rains. He said that WASA and MCR were instructed to remove solid waste and encroachments from the banks of Nulla Lai, adding, the citizens were also asked not to dump solid waste near Nullah Lai.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-faith Harmony, Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood addressing at the launching ceremony of a book at National Press Club. —APP Photo

## ANF recovers 833 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in six operations conducted across the country managed to recover over 833 kg drugs and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Saturday.

He informed that in an operation, ANF foiled a bid to smuggle drugs from Quetta to Punjab and recovered 180 kg charras concealed in secret cavities of a vehicle near Dera Ghazi Khan. ANF also arrested two accused residents of

Pishin.

In another operation near Wazirabad Road, 500 grams heroin was recovered from the possession of two accused resident of Sialkot.

In third operation, a raid was conducted on Indus Chowk near Gadap Town, 51 kg charras concealed in secret cavities of a vehicle was recovered. Charras was being smuggled from Quetta to Karachi while an accused resident of Quetta was netted during the operation.

In fourth operation conducted in a deserted moun-

tainous area of Pishin, 371 kg heroin and 221 kg morphine stored there to smuggle abroad were recovered.

In fifth operation on Airport Road Quetta, 10 kg charras was recovered from a Rickshaw while an accused resident of Kalat was nabbed.

In sixth operation conducted in Bonastan area in Panjgur, 15 kg charras concealed in bushes were recovered.

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

## ‘No intention of affiliating with any other political party’

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former provincial president of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and ex-defence minister Perviz Khattak has quashed rumors of his meeting with newly launched Istehkam-i-Pakistan Party founder Jehangir Khan Tareen and joining the IPP, while clearing the air about his political affiliation.

Taking to his Twitter handle, the veteran politician from the KP posted on Saturday: “I want to make it clear that I have no intention of affiliating with any other political party nor have I had any meetings with Jahangir Khan Tareen. The ongoing news circulating in the media about me is unfounded and completely false.

On June 1, Khattak announced his resignation

from all positions of the PTI in the wake of May 9 incidents following the arrest of party chairman Imran Khan.

During his presser, he said that the political environment of the country was bad. “I have decided to leave the post of the party... I will decide about the future course of action after consulting with friends”.

## NDMA urges public to avoid shorelines, follow authorities’ guidance

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Saturday urged the general public to stay informed about cyclonic activity and stay away from shorelines and follow local authorities’ guidance in any emergency situation.

According to the NDMA spokesperson, in the latest development, as reported by Joint Typhoon Warning Center (JTWC) and International Weather Models on June 10, 2023,

Tropical Cyclone BIPARJOY was currently located in the Northern Indian Ocean with sustained winds of 150 km/h.

He added that the storm was predicted to strengthen and maintain its intensity for the next 24 hours, with a possibility of significant shifts in its position.

As per the report, BIPARJOY cyclone was located approximately 910km from Karachi and 890km south of Thatta while maintaining speed

of 150km/h at its center.

The tropical cyclone was likely to impact coastlines which were potentially exposed to damaging winds, storm surge and flooding.

The NDMA has already officially forewarned the relevant authorities and instructed to conduct preparedness measures proactively about cyclone in coastal areas in its probabilistic projections about unprecedented extreme climatic events in May, 2023.

## Rs5 billion earmarked for NGIA

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan’s new Federal budget 2023-24 has allocated about Rs. 5 billion in the total cost of New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA). With the allocation, NGIA’s total cost will be increased from Rs. 55.4 billion to Rs 60.208 billion.

Ministry of planning has already approved the Rs. 5 billion in the meeting of Central Development Working Committee (CDWP), high-powered government decision-making body, on June 02 in Islamabad, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Saturday.

The government had originally sanctioned the project’s construction at a cost of PKR 7.5 billion in 2010. The first revision of PKR 22.5 billion was approved in 2015.

Second revision occurred with revised PC-I at a cost to Rs 51.298 billion in December 2021. Later Rs 55.4 billion was greenlighted October 12, 2020.

The NGIA will play a pivotal role in establishing Gwadar’s strategic importance, meeting the forecasted increase in aviation activity, and supporting the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

In relation to the New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA) project, the Planning Minister emphasized the importance of providing ample job opportunities to the local population of Gwadar. Furthermore, he emphasized that special attention should be given to prioritizing and expediting the completion of critical components of the Gwadar Airport project.

## Motorcycles recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two members gang involved in motorcycle theft and recovered 9 stolen motorcycles from their possession during the crackdown here on Saturday. According to a police spokesman, Naseerabad police held a two-member gang identified as Habib and Mohsin. Police have registered separate cases against both of them and started an investigation. SP Potohar Muhammad Waqas Khan appreciated the performance of police teams.

## Solution to Kashmir dispute lies in UN resolutions: Speakers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The participants of a discussion held on the social networking site “Twitter” have said that any formula for resolving the Kashmir dispute which is not acceptable to Kashmiris is not viable.

The discussion on Twitter space was organized by the youth organization Global Youth Pakistan.

The participants said the best solution to the Kashmir dispute lies in the resolutions passed by the United Nations. They said apart from the resolutions of the World Body, any formula or solution which is not accepted by Kashmiris cannot prove to be long-lasting.

The speakers said the struggle of Kashmiris for the right to self-determination is completely legitimate and just under the UN Charter, which India is trying its best to suppress on the basis of force. They said the former rulers had also presented many formulas for the solution of the Kashmir dispute, which

ultimately did not yield any results.

The speakers said the so-called formulas have no status and are the cause of dividing Kashmiris. They added that Indian stubbornness was the main obstacle in resolving the long-pending conflict. India’s position is nothing but an aggressor which has suppressed the Kashmiris right to self-determination for more than seven decades.

They said Pakistan is a strong supporter and advocate of Kashmiris’ right to self-determination, adding the people of Kashmir only want a referendum to decide their future and Pakistan is raising their voice at every international forum.

The speakers further said that India had been trying hard to destabilize and weaken Pakistan but it had failed in its nefarious intentions and conspiracies. They said the recent Indian initiative of the G-20 meeting in the occupied territory has further exposed it at the

global level and many countries, including China and Turkey, have boycotted the meeting and supported Pakistan’s position regarding Kashmir.

They said long-lasting peace and development in the region is not possible without settling the Kashmir dispute according to the UN resolutions and the will and intention of the Kashmiris.

Diplomat Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, British Shadow Minister Mohammad Afzal Khan, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Shah Ghulam Qadir, Chairperson, Friends of Kashmir Ghazala Habib Khan, Hurriyat leader Engineer Mushtaq Mehmood, analyst Waqar Ahmed Khan, anchor person Yasir Rehman and Murtaza Durrani, former advisor to Azad Kashmir government, and Kashmiri leader Abdul Hameed Lone were present in the talks.

## Budgetary progress to remain stagnant without an IMF agreement: Rashid

RAWALPINDI (NNI): Awami Muslim League Chief Sheikh Rashid said there would be no progress in the budget if the government failed to reach staff level agreement with the International Monetary Fund.

Taking to Twitter, he

raised many questions regarding the budget from asking the government on how loans would be paid and how the revenue collection of Rs9200 billion would be completed to raising concerns regarding the increase of exports if indus-

try did not start.

Responding to the speech of the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, he said his speech was acceptance of errors committed by him adding the masses have rejected the newly formed party.

## Pellets blinded Insha Mushtaq passes 12th class exams

ISLAMABAD (APP): In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Insha Muhstaq, who lost her eyesight due to the pellets fired by Indian troops, has passed the 12th class board exams.

A resident of Sedow area of Shopian district, Insha Mushtaq lost her eyesight due to the pellet injuries in 2016. She is among the nearly 65 percent of the candidates who passed class 12th board exams, Kashmir Media Service reported on Saturday.

On July 11, 2016, Insha opened the window of her house in Sedow to look out at the protests against the killing of popular youth leader Burhan Wani by Indian troops. The next moment, the Indian forces’ personnel deployed in the area fired a volley of pellets indiscriminately, hitting Insha in the face, skull and eyes. Insha has not been able to see since then.

Insha’s family had immediately rushed her to the District Hospital in

Shopian where doctors referred her to a hospital in Srinagar. She was also taken to various hospitals in Delhi and elsewhere, but she could not regain her eyesight.

Insha qualified her class 10 examinations in 2018 despite facing a complete loss of sight in both eyes. She is one of the hundreds of teenagers who have lost their eyesight in one or both eyes in the occupied territory due to the pellet firing by Indian troops.

## Meeting held to review security arrangement for Eidul Azha

RAWALPINDI (APP): A meeting was held here Saturday with SSP Operations Captain (Rtd) Muhammad Amir Khan Niazi in the Chair as part of coordination with Ulema to review security arrangements for Eid ul Azha.

According to police spokesman, the meeting discussed security arrangements with Ulemas at the Police Lines Headquarters.

Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal Rizvi, Syed Zahid Abbas Kazmi, Qari Saifullah

Saifi, Sahibzada Muhammad Usman Ghani, Qari Muhammad Shakur, Abdul Hamid Naqshbandi, Mufti Muhammad Zeeshan, Yasir Iqbal Rizvi, Syed Chiraguddin Shah, Hafiz Qasim Ayub, Pir Syed Atiqur Rehman, Kausar Abbas Qumi, Qari Khalid Mahmood Abbasi, Qari Muhammad Amin Sialvi, Qazi Haroon Al Rasheed, Shaikat Abbas Jafari participated in the meeting.

The SSP welcomed all

the participants of the meeting and said that the best security and traffic arrangements would be made on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Azha.

Police will make all out efforts to maintain law and order, the SSP said and added that effective patrolling would be ensured to keep an eye on suspects.

The Ulema assured their full cooperation in maintaining peace adding that it would be continued in future.

## Experts discuss role of new, emerging technologies in national security

ISLAMABAD (APP): The experts at a seminar explored the role of emerging technologies in comprehensive national security, highlighting the need for collaboration and a human-centric approach.

The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, successfully concluded a seminar on the ‘Role of New & Emerging Technologies in Comprehensive National Security.’ The event brought together renowned experts and policymakers to explore the profound impact of technological advancements on national security strategies, a news release said.

In his Keynote Address, Advisor National Command Authority & Former Director General, Strategic Plans Division, Lieutenant General (R) Khalid A. Kidwai emphasised the crucial link between changing technologies and comprehensive

national security.

He highlighted the need to consider the reliability, shelf life, and strategic effects of new technologies, as they could cause tactical and strategic imbalances.

General Kidwai underscored the importance of embedding political stability, a sound economy, and social cohesion within the nation’s fabric to ensure comprehensive security. He appreciated CASS for initiating a timely debate on a subject that was vitally important and relevant to comprehensive national security. Professor Dr Rabia Akhtar, Director of the Centre for Security, Strategy and Policy Research at the University of Lahore, shed light on the impact of new technologies on traditional security.

She emphasised the need for synergy and collaborations between state institutions, academ-

ics, and industry experts.

Dr Akhtar stressed the significance of investing in emerging technologies like AI-powered weapons, bioengineering, and cyber warfare to maintain an edge in national security. Furthermore, she highlighted the need for a regulatory framework and massive investment in research to address privacy concerns and civil liberties.

Aamna Rafiq, Research Associate at the Arms Control and Disarmament Centre, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, explored the potential of emerging technologies in enhancing non-traditional security and national development. She discussed how innovative technologies were directly supporting the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Rafiq highlighted the role of emerging technologies in poverty

reduction, market access, agricultural practices, healthcare, education, and gender equality. She emphasised the need to bridge the gender divide in technology and ensure equal access for all.

Dr Syed Arif Ahmad, Former Advisor at the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, focused on the prudent harnessing of technological development to support comprehensive security.

He raised concerns about the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence and the potential challenges in controlling its application. Dr Ahmad stressed the importance of adapting AI technologies to stay prepared for future conflicts and avoid isolationist policies. He also highlighted the implications of hypersonic weapons and the need for Pakistan to invest in supercomputers for testing new technologies.

## World Day against Child Labor to be marked on June 12

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Day Against Child Labor will be marked on June 12 (Monday) across the globe including Pakistan to raise awareness of the plight of child laborers world-wide.

Hundreds of millions of girls and boys around the world are affected.

Child labor is a problem in both developing and industrialized countries.

Every year, numerous events are held around the world on June 12 to mark the World Day Against Child Labor and call attention to the problem.

Child labor is especially rampant in many developing countries - but even in industrialized nations many

children are forced to work.

According to UNICEF, children in the United States “are employed in agriculture, a high proportion of them from immigrant or ethnic-minority families.” There have also been a number of incidents of westerns companies exploiting child laborers in developing countries to save production costs.

In 2011, there were an estimated 215 million child laborers in the world - 115 million of which were involved in hazardous work. To combat child labor around the world the International Labour Organization (ILO) initiated the World Day Against Child Labor in 2002.



**Three women arrested**

BALKH (Agencies): Local security officials have arrested three women accused of stealing jewelry worth \$45,000 from a house in northern Balkh province. Deputy police chief Abdul Hai Abid said security forces arrested the female thieves along with two kids who had stolen gold from a house in the 10th security district of Mazar-i-Sharif. The group, in coordination with a man, stole some of a woman's gold from a makeup salon located in Karte Ariana.

**RSF call for Mortaza release**

KABUL (Khaama Press): RSF reiterated its call for the immediate and unconditioned release of journalist Mortaza Behboudi, who has been detained in Kabul since January 7 without any public announcement of charges against him, RSF said. "Five months of arbitrary detention and failure to respect criminal justice procedures... The Taliban authorities have produced no evidence to explain why they continue to hold Mortaza, a journalist paying for his professionalism," RSF said.

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

## Robert appointed as new Charge d'affaires

KABUL (Khaama Press): The UK government has appointed Robert Chatterton Dickson as Britain's charge d'affaires for the interim mission of the UK to Afghanistan, a statement said.

The UK Foreign, Common and Development Office (FCDO) stated that Dickson replaces Hugo Shorter, whose term as director ended in February.

"Mr Robert Chatterton Dickson has been appointed Charge d'Affaires ad interim of the UK Mission to Afghanistan in succession to Mr Hugo Shorter," the statement said. According to the FCDO, Dickson will take up his appointment in July. Previously, he held the position of British High Commissioner in Dhaka.



From 2013 until 2015, he worked as the United Kingdom's deputy ambassador to Afghanistan.

In August 2021, the previous Afghan government was toppled, and Britain relocated its diplomatic presence to Doha.

## Interior Minister visits Jawzjan province



JAWZJAN (Agencies): Minister of Interior Affairs Sirajuddin Haqqani visited Dasht-e-Leili in Jawzjan province, where a large number of prisoners of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) were shot or suffocated to death in 2001.

Upon reaching there, Haqqani performed the noon prayer, recited the Holy Quran and prayed for the souls of those who were killed, the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

Haqqani said the "martyrs" of Dasht-e-Leili are the "nameless soldiers" of Islam who were killed in oppression. "This great caravan of the martyrs of Islam has only one name and that is 'The martyrs of Dasht-e-Laili'," Haqqani said.

"Their sacred blood took their murderers, humiliated and disgraced them. These

murderers will be dealt with severely by the Almighty Allah; History will not forget these war crimes," Haqqani said.

The local authorities of Jawzjan province announced plans to build a wall, a minaret, and a mosque at the site of the incident in order to "preserve the sanctity of the blood of the martyrs," the Interior Ministry's statement said.

Haqqani gave directives for its implementation and also provided financial assistance for this purpose.

The Dasht-e-Leili massacre occurred in December 2001 during the US invasion of Afghanistan when 250 to 2,000 IEA prisoners were shot or suffocated to death in metal shipping containers while being transferred by Junbish-e Milli soldiers under the

supervision of forces loyal to General Rashid Dostum from Kunduz to Sheberghan prison in Afghanistan.

Some of the prisoners were survivors of the Battle of Qala-e-Jangi in Mazar-e-Sharif. In 2009, Dostum denied the accusations.

According to all sources, many of the prisoners died from suffocation inside the containers, and some witnesses claimed that those who survived were shot. The dead were buried in a mass grave.

The allegations have been investigated since 2002 by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR).

PHR conducted two forensic missions to the site under the auspices of the United Nations in 2002. In 2008, PHR reported that the grave had been tampered with.

## 1 killed, 2 injured in Jawzjan oil station fire

JAWZJAN (Khaama Press): One person was dead, and two others were injured after a fire broke out at a fuel station in the capital city of Sheberghan, Jawzjan province.

Abdul Sattar Halimi, a Taliban spokesperson in the province, said that at least one person was killed and two others were wounded in the incident.

The injured persons were taken to the hospital,

where they were partially burned.

The tragedy happened last night at around 3 o'clock in the Alam Yar Bayat fuel station near Andkhoi port, located in the city centre of Shabarghan province, Halimi said.

At the same time, the firefighters and rescue crews were quickly dispatched by local authorities to control the blazing fire.

Fortunately, they controlled the fire and prevented it from spreading to the surrounding areas.

The fire caused the loss of human beings and substantial financial damage.

According to the sources, the financial loss of the incident has been estimated at around \$ 100 000.

Meanwhile, it has been said that the cause of the fire was the carelessness of the fuel station employees.

## Turkmen doctors provide medical aid to 473 pregnant women in Herat in 9 days



HERAT (Agencies): Turkmen female doctors have provided health services to more than 700 patients in Afghanistan's Herat province in less than two weeks, health officials said, adding that they arrived nine days ago in the province.

These doctors have treat-

ed 473 pregnant women and provided health services to 276 children in the health center of Torghundi town in past nine days, among them 12 children were also born, according to officials.

Turkmenistan has built a 20-bed maternity hospital in Torghundi town, which

provides all facilities, health services and medicine in a sustainable way.

Officials of the Consulate of Turkmenistan in Herat meanwhile said that this health center currently provides health services to the people of four districts.

"Today, we are very

## 2,643 more Afghan refugees return home

KABUL (Xinhua): Afghanistan's Ministry for Refugees and Repatriation said Saturday that over 2,600 Afghan refugees have returned from neighboring Iran earlier this week.

"A total of 2,643 Afghan refugees returned to their homeland Afghanistan on Thursday after years of living as refugees in Iran, and the process of returning the refugees to their country continues," the ministry said in a statement.

On June 4, the ministry also reported the return of 2,106 Afghan refugees from Iran. More than 60,000 Afghan refugees have reportedly returned from Iran since January.

Data show more than 2.5 million registered Afghan refugees live in Iran, and about the same number of Afghan refugees live in Pakistan. The Afghan caretaker government has called on Afghan refugees living abroad to return and work, contributing to the reconstruction of their war-ravaged homeland.

## Afghan MMA fighter released

KABUL (Khaama Press): Abdul Azim Badakhsh, an Afghan free fighter who was arrested for beating and assaulting an Indian MMA fighter, was released after spending a year in prison in India.

Abdul Karim, Badakhshi's brother on Saturday, confirmed the MMA fighter's release to the media and said he has been released after spending a year in jail.

According to his family, Badakhshi had severely beaten up an Indian MMA fighter during a fight, which resulted to his arrest by this country's police later.

Meanwhile, Abdul Azim Badakhshi claimed that he punched the Indian MMA fighter who sustained serious injuries for insulting Afghanistan.

Prior to this incident, Mr. Badakhshi was admitted to the International Mixed Martial Arts Federation (IMMAF).

Badakhshi was supposed to fight his first match against an opponent from China on May 24, in Shanghai City, which was canceled due to not receiving his visa on time.

In a Facebook post, the Afghan MMA fighter emphasized that he is determined to get a chance to fight in UFC in the future.

Badakhshi, the first-ranked athlete in South Asia, has recorded 13 victories and three defeats in his professional career so far.

Meanwhile, in the Central Asian ranking, he has secured 7th place, a decent position for a young, motivated athlete who has a chance to fight many more matches and win many victories.

## Jihad against invaders: Hanafi praises courage and sacrifices of Mujahideen



KABUL (Agencies): Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, Abdul Salam Hanafi, in a meeting with the head of the Central Army Corps, reminded saying that the system and security that are ruling the country today are the results of the tireless efforts of the Mujahideen.

Deputy PM, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, met

with Mullah Abdul Manan Mahmood, the head of the Central Army Corps of the Islamic Emirate and a group of Mujahideen, a statement said.

In the meeting, Mullah Abdul Manan Mahmood speaking at the meeting shared details about the activities, achievements, and status of the Mujahideen of the Central Army Corps.

The mujahideen of this corps are working day and night to ensure the security of the citizens and guarding the Islamic Emirate and they are ready to enforce any orders of the officials of the Islamic Emirate, said the head of the central army corps.

For his part, Mawlawi Hanafi praised the courage and sacrifices of the

Mujahideen during the Jihad against the invaders and also after the establishment of the Islamic system.

Deputy PM Hanafi deemed the system and security that prevails in the country today as the result of the tireless efforts of the Mujahideen and added that the people and the Islamic Emirate appreciate their efforts and sacrifices.

## Daesh claims responsibility for Afghanistan mosque explosion

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Islamic State group or Daesh claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing inside a mosque in northern Badakhshan province.

On Thursday, the explosion inside Nabawi mosque in Badakhshan province killed at least 13 people and wounded 30 others during a memorial service of provincial deputy governor Nisar Ahmad Ahmadi.

The Islamic State in

Khorasan Province, a regional offshoot of IS, stated in a statement late Friday that the attacker had targeted the service near the Nabawi Mosque in the city of Faizabad in the Badakhshan province on Thursday.

The statement by Daesh claimed that at least 20 senior Taliban officials were killed and 50 others were injured, higher casualty totals than those provided by the Taliban authorities.

The deputy governor of Badakhshan, Nisar Ahmad Ahmadi, was killed in a car bombing on Tuesday in Faizabad, and a memorial service was organized in his honour. The Islamic State organization also claimed responsibility for the incident, which claimed the life of the deputy governor's driver and injured ten others.

Since the Taliban seized Kabul, the Daesh group has increased its attacks on Tal-

iban officials, foreign nationals and ordinary people.

The group has taken responsibility for several attacks across the country, Chinese travellers and the Russian embassy in Kabul.

Last year in December, the provincial police commander of Badakhshan was assassinated in a car bombing while he was on his way to work. Daesh took responsibility for the attack.

## Facing unemployment, young people illegally migrate

KABUL (TOLONews): Youth in Kabul told TOLONews that at as the unemployment level in the country rises, young people must inevitably take the path of illegal immigration.

Young people said it has become more difficult to cover the costs of living in the current situation and therefore they have to go to neighboring countries or farther away.

Abubaker is a resident of Laghman and head of a 9-member family and decided to go to Iran illegally.

"I want to go to Iran for work, I am in the 12 grade but now I will leave school," said Abubaker.

Young people who are fed up with poverty called on the government to provide opportunity in the work and education field.

"There is no work, and we have to go there to another country and trav-



el," said Emal, a Nangarhar resident.

"We ask the government to provide work for youth and to provide an educated generation so that young people are not forced to go abroad," said Abdul Ali, a Kabul resident.

Meanwhile, the Ministry

of Economy said that they have large economic projects to reduce poverty in the country, which will provide job opportunities for hundreds of young people.

"To reduce poverty, strengthen small and medium industries, activate half-finished projects and devel-

opmental projects, as well as launch macroeconomic projects, these are on our agenda," said Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy of the Economic Ministry.

According to reports, every day hundreds of people go on smuggling routes into neighboring countries.

## Attendance at parks in Kabul decreasing: Officials

KABUL (TOLONews): Officials of some parks in Kabul said that after the imposition of restrictions by the current government, the presence of people in parks has decreased significantly.

According to officials, the lowered attendance of people in the parks has caused them to not be able to pay the expenses to maintain the parks.

"Before, on Fridays 15,000 visitors came here and visited our park but nowadays 300 people come here. The reason for the decrease in visitors is that the Ministry of Vice and Virtue has imposed restrictions," said Habibullah Zazie, head of Zazie Park.

Meanwhile, visitors at the park called for more recreational places to be established and said that the restrictions should be removed.

"Compared to other years, the number of visitors has decreased. One-

third of the tourists who used to come in the past years do not come now," said Hedayatullah, a visitor.

Meanwhile, some restaurant owners said that their business is also less prosperous compared to the past. "Businesses have generally weakened. Especially restaurants and shops in parks. The more visitors come to the park, the better our work will be," said Zainullah, head of a restaurant.

"All over Afghanistan, there is no work like as in previous years, and the recent changes in the country have affected people's business," said Mohammad Umar, a cook.

The Ministry of Vice and Virtue originally allowed women to go to parks and recreational areas for three days a week in the first order, but later women were completely banned from going to amusement parks.





# Bilawal sees better, democratic and progressive future for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Saturday said that despite many economic and political challenges faced by Pakistan, ranging from climate change to Russian-Ukraine conflicts and domestic issues, he was confident that the people of the country would come together to overcome these ordeals and build a better future.

In an interview with Al-Jazeera English TV channel during his recent visit to Iraq, the foreign minister said that the floods last year that devastated large parts of Pakistan was not only significant for Pakistan but for the entire world. It had affected 33 million people, besides causing huge financial losses which had far reaching effects upon Pakistan's economy.

To build back climate resilient Pakistan, he said, they had arranged a conference in Geneva in collaboration with the UN, adding they were making efforts to materialize about \$9 to \$10 billion pledges made during the conference. Whereas, a large chunks of finances had been arranged through bilateral engagement with the world financial institutions, he informed. The foreign minister said besides, they were trying to revive International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme.

He also rubbished allegations of misuse of funds donated for the areas hit by natural catastrophe in the past by saying that there were misconception about funds which were based upon frivolous accusation as none had been ever proved. They did not hold any weight, he maintained. About PTI chief Imran Khan's allegations, he said that he was responsible for his downfall and the history would prove it.

The foreign minister said that the country had faced dictatorships in the past and Imran Khan always supported the dictatorships. It was documented and established fact that he was brought to power through rigged elections. He said the announcement by the military top brass that the army would not involve in politics and would remain apolitical, had definitely upset the PTI's supporters.

The citizens were offended on the incidents of May 9 when the PTI supporters attacked GHQ and Corps commander house, he added. He said

the elements involved in those incidents would face the legal consequences. To a question, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, said "We don't believe the change could come by overnight", adding the only way was through the change brought about by the democratic forces in the society.

He said change should take place through civilian and political process involving the parliament, adding Imran Khan had paid less attention to parliament. "The fate of the country can't be decided on streets but by the parliament," he stressed while underlining the need for the civilian and political leadership to strengthen the democratic role, squeezing space for others. He said the PPP was the party that always challenged dictatorship including the last one of late Musharraf and regretted that not an attack had ever been mounted by any political party in Pakistan as done by the PTI on May 9. The foreign minister said that he did not regret returning to Pakistan to realize the vision of his mother.

"Pakistan is transitioning towards democracy. We are at the fork towards road to democracy," he added. To a query, he said after the fall of Kabul, the international community had many expectations from the new rulers. "Pakistan's position is in line with the position of the international community", he said, adding the international community wanted Taliban rulers to do with the women's rights and education and that the Afghan soil should not be used for terrorist activities.

Foreign Minister Bilawal further stressed that engagement of the global community with the new rulers of Afghanistan was the only solution as it was in the interest of all to have a secure and prosperous Afghanistan that was at peace with itself and with its neighbours. The world wanted the incumbent rulers to fulfil their commitment with the international community, he said.

The foreign minister, replying to a question, said that Pakistan faced security threats from terrorist outfit TTP as different terrorist incidents occurred in Pakistan after the fall of Kabul. He reiterated that Pakistan wanted Taliban to act against these terrorists and cited hosting of a recent

meeting of Pakistan, China and Afghanistan which focused on threats of terrorism. About ties with Iran, the foreign minister said that recently a border market was established at Iran-Balochistan border to encourage bilateral trade whereas, they were also working on electricity transmission from Iran to Balochistan.

Bilawal termed the restoration of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran as a 'positive development'. "It is a positive news not only for the two countries, but for the whole region and for us," he said, stressing that through engagement all the issues could be resolved paving way for peace dividends. The foreign minister strongly rebuffed the allegations against China's investment in Pakistan and said that it was unfortunately a reflection of "biased attitude".

He said all weather strategic cooperation between Pakistan and China was based upon economic prosperity. Pakistan was engaged with China, through China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a flagship of 'One belt one road' initiative under which China was completing different energy and road infrastructure projects, he added. He reiterated that they were optimistic to live up to their commitment, adding "Development is the right of all countries."

As result of CPEC, they were optimistic to further increase their economic activity between the two countries. The economy of the two countries supplemented each other. To another query, he said Pakistan was committed to maintaining relations with all the countries and was seeking enhanced engagement with the Russian government through deep meaningful ties. He said that they wanted to maintain neutrality over the Ukraine conflict.

About his visit to Iraq, he said that it would further enhance the bilateral and economic cooperation between the two brotherly countries. They also wanted to strengthen the security and defence cooperation and share their experiences learnt from terrorism. For the promotion of cultural and religious ties, both the countries agreed to ease visas for tourism, he added.



LAHORE: Former MPs Mian Marghoob Ahmad and Mian Muftaba Shuja-ur-Rehman call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## Yasmin sent on two-day remand

LAHORE (INP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) has sent Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and former health minister Punjab Dr Yasmin Rashid on two-day physical remand. As per detail, the anti-terrorism court heard the vandalism and tower attack case against the PTI leader.

Police presented Yasmin Rashid before the court and urged the court to send the PTI leader on physical remand for further investigation. Furthermore, the physical remand plea was accepted and the court directed the police to present the PTI leader before the court on June 12. Earlier, the Interim government of Punjab challenged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Yasmin Rashid's acquittal in Jinnah House.

In a statement, the Punjab police said: "All conspirators, planners, and perpetrators of the May 9 incident, including Dr Yasmin Rashid, would be brought to justice." The anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore discharged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Yasmin Rashid in a case linked to the vandalism of Corps Commander House in Lahore, also known as Jinnah House, on May 9. It is pertinent to mention here that PTI Central Punjab President Yasmin Rashid was taken into custody under section three of the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO).

## LHC bench to hear Khadija bail plea

LAHORE (Agencies): A Division bench of the Lahore High Court has been formed to hear the bail application of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) activist Khadija Shah who is behind bars under charges of an arson attack on Jinnah House on May 09.

Khadija Shah, a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) activist and daughter of former finance minister Dr Salman Shah is currently in jail on judicial remand in the Jinnah House attack case. It is pertinent to mention that on June 08, accepting the US consular access to PTI leader Khadija Shah on June 08, Federal Interior Ministry has granted the access to PTI leader Khadija Shah in the matter. The ministry received the request through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Interior Ministry has directed the Punjab Home Department to extend full cooperation to the US Consulate in Lahore in this regard.

## Imran spoiled ties with China, Turkey: Dastgir

F.P. Report

GUJRANWALA: Federal Minister for Energy Engineer Khurram Dastgir said on Saturday that former premier Imran Khan made a horrifying agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2019, and then violated it in an appalling manner, which forced the incumbent coalition government to set aside a huge amount of Rs 7,000 billion for payment of foreign loans.

Addressing a press briefing at GEPCO headquarters, he said: "Had the PTI chairman not signed such agreements and acquired loans, the repayment amount would have been restricted to Rs 3,000 billion, instead of Rs 7,000 billion." The minister regretted that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project had been paralysed during the Imran Khan government, which inflicted huge

losses on the nation. He said that work on Thar coal project was also halted, adding that cheaper electricity could have been generated if work on project had not been stopped. He said a big chunk of amount was repaid in the budget during the tenure of PTI government.

Khurram Dastgir said Imran Khan spoiled relations with China, Turkey, the USA and Saudi Arabia. Even after passage of 14 months, the friendly countries were not ready to trust the Pakistan government, he complained. The energy minister said the Shehbaz Sharif-led coalition government got restarted work on CPEC.

Regarding elections, he said that decision on elections would be made by the ruling coalition Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) as per the Constitution. He said an amount had also been set aside in the budget for elections. The minister said that

the tenure of National Assembly would complete on August 12, adding that if the assembly would be dissolved automatically on completion of its tenure, then elections would be held in 60 days. And if the prime minister would dissolve the assembly a day before its tenure completion, then the elections would be held in 90 days, the minister explained. However, he added, till date, there was planning for holding election on November 10.

Khurram Dastgir said the government would provide Rs 68 billion to farmers of Balochistan for installation of tube-wells. Similarly, Rs 70 billion would be allocated for electricity consumers in Azad Jammu & Kashmir this year, while a relief of Rs 80 billion would be given the next year. He said a relief package of Rs 39 billion would be given to the people of FATA.

## PTI MNAs resignations: Intra-court appeal filed

LAHORE (Agencies): The National Assembly Secretariat has filed an intra-court appeal against the Lahore High Court (LHC) verdict for the restoration of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Members of the National Assembly (MNAs).

The NA secretary Tahir Hussain filed the intra-court appeal against the LHC verdict for restoring the PTI MNAs whose resignations were approved by the NA speaker. Malik Karamat Ali Khokhar, Maleeka Bokhari, other lawmakers, NA speaker, Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and federal government were made parties. It stated that 123 PTI MNAs had tendered resignations after the successful no-trust motion. It

added that the LHC single bench announced the verdict on May 19 to restore the lawmakers contrary to the law.

The NA Secretariat pleaded with the court to nullify the LHC's verdict. On June 6, the National Assembly Secretariat decided to file an intra-court appeal against the Lahore High Court's (LHC) verdict in the PTI MNAs resignation case. Sources said that the LHC allegedly gave two contradictory verdicts regarding the PTI MNAs' resignations. In a short verdict, the National Assembly was ordered to conduct the interviews of the lawmakers again.

Later, the NA Speaker's decision was rejected after the approval of the PTI MNAs resignations in the

detailed verdict. The secretariat started preparations to challenge the verdict, sources said. In May, the Lahore High Court (LHC) had overturned the resignations of 70 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf MNAs.

The PTI MNAs, including Fawad Chaudhry, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Pervaiz Khattak and others challenged the acceptance of their resignations as MNAs by the NA speaker. In the petitions, the lawmakers maintained that the speaker did not listen to their viewpoints before accepting their resignations. Earlier, the Lahore High Court (LHC) had also suspended the Election Commission of Pakistan's notification that de-notified 43 MNAs of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

## Islamabad, Punjab ask Center for army withdrawal

LAHORE (Agencies): After finding law and order situation under control in federal capital and Punjab on Saturday the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Chief Commissioner and Punjab caretaker government has decided to return the services of Pakistan Army.

The Islamabad Chief Commissioner and Punjab Home Department has written a letter to the Interior Ministry in the matter requesting the Ministry to

withdraw its notification issued on May 10 in public interest.

The army was called in to control the law and order situation in ICT and Punjab following the May 9 riots after the arrest of PTI Chairman Imran Khan in the Al-Qadir Trust case.

The caretaker government of Punjab had called in the army on May 10. In May 10, keeping in view the precarious security situation, the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments

have sought the services of the Pakistan Army under Article 245 of the Constitution in aid of the civilian authorities across the provinces.

Consequently, the federal Interior Ministry approved the requisition and initially, 10 companies of the army were deployed in Punjab.

On Saturday, the Punjab Home Department wrote a letter to the federal government, asking it to withdraw the services of the army from the province.

## ACE lodges FIR against Imran, sister

LAHORE (Agencies): The details of an FIR registered by the anti-corruption establishment, Dera Ghazi Khan, against former premier and PTI Chairman Imran Khan, his sister Uzma Khan, former Punjab chief minister Usman Buzdar and two others for concluding a shady land deal in tehsil Chobara in Layyah have emerged.

The ACE, DG Khan, nominated five accused including Imran Khan, Uzma Khan, Usman Buzdar, Ahmad Majeed and Patwari Asghar in the FIR for conducting a non-transparent land purchase deal on behalf of PTI chairman's sister. The FIR further stated that the role of other co-accused in the case would be determined later.

However, according to legal experts, the FIR is very weak as it contains legal lacunae. The accused have been provided relief by inserting documentary fraud sections in the FIR. According to the FIR, Uzma Khan purchased 5,261 kanal land in Nawab Kot which was worth Rs6 billion for just Rs130 million. The land was bought by hoodwinking the local residents in the name of the Greater Thal Canal Project.

## Hina holds talks during Denmark, Finland visit

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar held government level interactions, engaged with think tank and local media during her two-day visit to Denmark and Finland from June 8-10.

In her visit to Denmark, she called on the Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy, Dan Jorgensen.

During the meeting, the two ministers agreed on building collaboration in renewable energy sector, under the recently signed Green Framework Engagement Agreement. Hina hoped that the Danish Minister's upcoming visit to Pakistan next week (16-18 June 2023) would be instrumental in this regard and assured Minister Jorgensen warm welcome and full cooperation on government's behalf. Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release on Saturday.

In a meeting with Prehn Rasmus, Member of the Danish Parliament, she underscored the importance of parliamentary engagement in further cementing mutual ties. Discussions were also held on areas where quick progress could be made bilaterally.

The State Minister engaged with the Danish chapter of the Schiller Institute on Pakistan's approach to key regional and international issues. The talk was joined in via zoom by the international president of the Schiller Institute, Helga Zepp-LaRouche. She also gave an interview to the leading Danish newspaper, Berlingske.

Hina called on Johanna Sumuvuori, the State Secretary to Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland in Helsinki on June 9. The two ministers noted the growing bilateral cooperation, especially in the fields of education and vocational training.

The MoS identified Green Energy as a key sector, in which significant bilateral collaboration could be developed in near future. Minister Khar also exchanged views with her counterpart on regional and global issues of interest.

"The visit of the Minister of State to Denmark and Finland provided excellent opportunity for high-level political engagement with the two countries. These engagements are expected to build mutual confidence and trust, resulting in mutually beneficial partnerships

across various sectors," it was further added.

## Eight PTI's leaders booked

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The anti-corruption establishment registered a case against eight members of the assembly, including the former Senior Provincial Minister and the Former State Minister, on the charge of illegal recruitment in the fisheries department.

The former State Minister was arrested on the same charge files have been opened and after the anti-corruption police investigated the allegations of illegal recruitment in the fisheries department. PTI's former Senior Provincial Minister Atif Khan, Former State Minister Ali Muhammad Khan, Former MNA Mujahid Khan and former assembly members Zahir Shah Toru, Malik Shaikat, Amir Farzand Khan, Ifthikhar Mashwani and Abdul Salam Afridi, a case has been registered against stunt director and class four employees of the Fisheries Department Arif Ali, Shah Faisal, (s) Zakreen, Ali Ahmed, Imranullah, Gul Ziad,

## Getting rid of International Monetary Fund

**Ghulam Idris Khan**  
WORLD has celebrated Environment Day on 5th June, a seminar was held in Islamabad in this regard in which government minister's focus was plastic consumption in our daily life, whereas in Pakistan major victim is Agriculture sector. Last year monsoon rains followed by floods wreaked havoc on life and properties of farming communities, standing crops were wiped out, buildings were collapsed. Due to standing water which did not recede after flood, wheat winter sowing was not possible in some parts of Sindh. It was estimated that about 30 Billion USD is needed in damages caused by this flood.

During an international donor's conference, a number of countries has committed pledges in presence of Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif. The theme of Environment Day in Pakistan should have been "Food Security and Climate Change". The agriculture sector is most vulnerable to climate change. These untimely rains and floods are the product of climate change which devastated our rural economy. Pakistan sits quite low on the list of carbon emission countries but is ranked no

eight in top ten countries of the world which are prone to climate change due our geographical location in the planet.

Now the question is how to face it and convert it in to Fortune. To reduce the impact of climate change, forestation and reforestation campaign be undertaken on urgent basis in mountain and sub mountains areas. These areas have suffered severe deforestation due to unavailability of natural gas and electricity. The on ground reality of "Billion Tree Tsunami" launched by PTI led Government in 2014 at a cost of Rs 14334.7 Million may also be examined. With increase in temperature, melting of glacier flash floods coupled with torrential rains have devastated most vulnerable segment of society. This flood water needed to be stored for which small dam or check dams are needed to be built in the Koh-Suleiman mountain range of Balochistan and part of South Punjab. By doing so Sindh and area of DG Khan can be saved.

The rain water can be used for cropping for production of more wheat, cotton and sunflower. Pakistan treasury which is dried up of foreign exchange and we are roaming in world to secure dollars. Furthermore, the government of Pakistan has ful-

filled all desirable and undesirable requirement of International Monetary Fund (IMF) only to get 1.5-billion-dollar loan facility but still IMF till date has not executed staff level arrangement.

The food import bill of Pakistan is touching almost ten billion dollars annually which include five to six billion dollar of edible oils, wheat, pulses etc. only the edible oils bills the second most after petroleum products. Last year rains also contributed in the upward trend in food import basket. Cotton not only produces lint but by the product is used as edible oil extracted from it seed and cake is used by animals as feed. Date orchard are completely destroyed in Sindh, including other Kharif crops such as sugarcane and seasonal vegetables. Soil for wheat cultivation was not in condition for sowing due to undrained water still standing in the fields.

Furthermore, government decided to import wheat in 2020 albeit the fact that once Pakistan was exporting wheat. Cotton crop provides raw material to ginning and textile industries and can be a big source of Pakistan foreign exchange.

Wheat crop cover almost major area of about 22.70 million acres and produce 27.75 million tons of wheat

whereas our requirement is 30.20 million tons. As per new census survey, headcount of Pakistan is 250 million so the consumption may see an upward trend. On the other hand, Pakistan is low in per unit production as compare to leading producer on earth. Our national production is 1.2 tons where in the world it is 2.2 tons which is almost double.

The Prime minister the other day announced that we have agreed to all the International Monetary Fund (IMF) requirement which is prerequisite for staff level agreement, but yet IMF not convinced. The government of Pakistan is so desperately waiting for 1.5 billion USD tranche for Pakistan economy. To come out from IMF and other international lenders clutches,

Pakistan leadership should focus on Agriculture sector. Agriculture is the life savor of Pakistan economy and play major role in poverty reduction. Agriculture is a primary industry and provide raw material to textile, sugar, cigarettes, flour mills, solvent extraction industries of oilseed. Moreover, Agriculture is also the sources of foreign exchange such as cotton and its products, Rice, sugar, tobacco and its product to name a few.

Seventy percent of Pakistan's pop-

ulation is directly and indirectly engaged in farm production. A strategy needs to be adopted to double per unit production of wheat to match it with advanced wheat producing countries. Some area should be converted to other crops like sunflower and canola, same program should be adopted for sugar cane. Per unit production can be enhanced by adopting scientific approach at farmer's doors. About one million acres should be shifted from sugarcane to oilseed crops. Arid land in Baluchistan can be utilized for wheat production when floods or rain water race through the lands. The water stored in Check Dams can be a new source of irrigation in flood affected area. whenever heavy rains occur, wheat, pulses can be grown on residual moisture.

If these new practices are put into action, huge foreign exchange can be saved with this strategy about two million acres be covered under sunflower and canola which will produce 2.4 million tons of sunflower and canola seed. The solvent extraction industries which is underutilized now and are importing canola and sunflower seed to operate their units will be able to procure produce from the local farmers due to which on one hand valuable USD can be saved on the import of edible oils and on the

other hand foreign exchange can be saved on the import of seed for crushing purpose can also be curtailed, same is the case with the wheat, with surplus production country will be able to again start the export of wheat. The Pakistan Oilseed Development Board (PODB), which now have the status of subordinate office of the ministry needs to be revamped and make operational. A cell should be created with core staff for policy making, monitoring project and provincial agriculture departments should be made responsible for execution.

Government must pay attention toward agriculture sector if it wants self-sufficiency and food security. The Russia-Ukraine war has further aggravated food security worldwide. If government of the day or the one coming in power after election desire to have sustainable economy, then it must concentrate on agriculture sector which in turn will help in getting free from the shackles of IMF and be able to provide some relief to common Pakistani.

*The writer is agriculture expert and retired as Managing Director Pakistan oilseed Development Board (PODB) Ministry of National Food Security and Research Govt. of Pakistan.*