

**NA, Senate to meet today**

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Both houses of the Parliament in Islamabad will meet on Monday. The Senate will meet at 3 pm, while the National Assembly session will resume at 4:00 pm. Both houses will likely to start a discussion on the Finance Bill, 2024. The federal government presented the financial plan for the fiscal year of 2023-24 on Friday with a total outlay of Rs14.5 trillion.

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**Amir Dogar sent to jail**

MULTAN (INP): A Multan district and sessions court has sent Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Amir Dogar to jail on 11-day judicial remand in a case related to protest at Cantt Station on May 9, wherein military installations came under attack. According to details, the former member of National Assembly (MNA) was presented before a district and sessions court.

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# PM hopeful to reach agreement with IMF in June

LAHORE, Jun 11 (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Sunday expressed hope that Pakistan will reach agreement with International Monetary Fund (IMF) in June to get the remaining loan as his government had met all the conditions with sincerity.

Speaking at a ceremony at Sabzazar Sports Complex here, he said he had a long conversation with chief of IMF recently and he assured that the government would meet conditions for the loan and provide the required information about budget.

He said Pakistani nation was vibrant and was capable of meeting all the coming economic challenges in case of any further delay in the IMF programme.

He said despite all the economic difficulties, the federal government raised the salaries of employees by 30 to 35 percent, increased pension by 17 percent and increased minimum wage from Rs 25000 to Rs 32000. The government was aware of the economic difficulties of the poor people, he added.

He said major funds were allocated for the sectors of agriculture and information technology in the federal budget presented by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, adding the budget would provide relief to the common man and create jobs.

The prime minister said he assumed government in April 2022 amid very tough economic conditions. Last year, the government of Imran Niazi broke the agreement with International Monetary

## First Russian oil cargo arrives in Karachi: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday announced that the first Russian discounted crude oil cargo has arrived in Karachi and will begin oil discharge on Monday.

In a tweet on the social media platform Twitter, he said, "I have fulfilled another of my promises to the nation. Glad to announce that the first Russian discounted crude oil cargo has arrived in Karachi and will begin oil discharge tomorrow."

"Today is a transformative day. We are moving one step at a time toward prosperity, economic growth and energy security & affordability. This is the first-ever Russian oil cargo to Pakistan and the beginning of a new relationship between Pakistan and the Russian Federation." "I commend all those who remained part of this national endeavour & contributed to translating the promise of Russian oil import into reality," he added.

Fund and the coalition government had to face the challenge of rising commodity and oil prices in the international market and then it spent huge funds for the relief and rehabilitation of people affected by the devastating funds, he mentioned. The government had to seek help from friendly countries to overcome economic challenges, he continued. He said the government of Imran Niazi showed negligence and did not buy gas when its prices were very low in the international market during the COVID pandemic.

Imran Niazi did nothing for the people but wasted all his time in waging vendetta against opposition leaders, he added.

He said Nawaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz, Hamza Shehbaz and other leaders

that innocent would be treated fairly and with justice.

The PM said in 2017, as servant of Punjab province he started work on a plan for establishing 14 state of the art sports complexes but the fascist government of Imran Niazi stopped the project after the stolen elections of 2018.

The proposed sports complexes included facilities of swimming pools, gymnasiums, badminton and squash courts.

He recalled that the leadership of Pakistan Muslim League(N) was put in jail for initiating huge public welfare projects including projects of clean drinking water and solid waste management in cities.

**PM visits Sabzazar Sports Complex in Lahore:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday here visited Sabzazar Sports Complex and reviewed the facilities provided at the complex managed by Lahore Development Authority (LDA). The PM expressed satisfaction with the standard of sports facilities for the people.

He appreciated the administration for making separate arrangements for women's sports.

Commissioner Lahore briefed the prime minister on the ongoing sports projects initiated by LDA.

Shehbaz Sharif issued special instructions for the early completion of projects. Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) Vice President Punjab Rana Mashhood accompanied the prime minister during the visit.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif holding Pakistani Flag during National song being play at Sabzazar Sports Complex.

## Three soldiers embrace martyrdom amid killing 3 terrorists in Waziristan



RAWALPINDI (APP): Three soldiers of Pakistan Army have embraced martyrdom while eliminating three terrorists including four injured during a fire exchange that took place on the night of June 09/10 between the Army troops and terrorists in general area Miran Shah of North Waziristan District.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Sunday, the Army troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location and resultantly three terrorists were sent to hell, while four terrorists were injured. The security forces also recovered weapons and ammunition from the killed terrorists.

The martyred soldiers were identified as Subedar Asghar Ali (age 40 years, resident of Lakki Marwat District), Sepoy Naseem Khan (age 26 years, resident of Lakki Marwat District) and Sepoy Muhammad Zaman (age 22 years, resident of Abbottabad) having fought gallantly, embraced shahadat during intense exchange of fire. The sanitization of the area was being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area.

"Armed forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the ISPR said.

**Govt announces massive relief for salaried class: Dar**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Finance Minister Ishaq Dar Sunday said 35 per cent increase in the ad-hoc relief allowance for federal government employees in grades 1-16 was a massive relief given for the salaried class during budget 2023-24. Similarly, employees in grades 17-22 will receive a 30 per cent raise in their ad-hoc relief allowance, said Dar while talking to a private news channel, adding the government has made extensive efforts to provide maximum relief to the masses.

To a question he criticized the previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for formulating weak policies. He stated that these policies had caused significant difficulties for the masses in their daily lives, leading to financial constraints for the country. Minister Dar emphasized that the coalition government of Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) was taking all necessary measures to renegotiate with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on more favorable terms and conditions. He expressed hope that the IMF would be satisfied with Pakistan's progress, as the country has fulfilled the necessary requirements.

## Death toll climbs to 29 as torrential rains, windstorms unleash havoc in KP, Punjab

PESHAWAR/LAHORE (NNI): Severe weather conditions struck the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab resulting in a devastating toll on human lives and infrastructure. As heavy downpours, strong winds, and thunderstorms battered the region, at least 25 people lost their lives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and 4 lost their lives in Punjab while over 200 others sustained injuries.

As per details, the onslaught of the storm caused widespread destruction, including the toppling of walls, uprooting of trees, and pylons, leading to power outages in several areas. The Director General of Rescue reported that multiple incidents resulted in the collapse of roofs and walls of houses, tragically claiming the lives of both children and women.

The Director General of Rescue announced that relief operations are actively underway in various cities of Khyber

## PM grieved over loss of lives in Punjab, KP rains

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Sunday expressed grief and sorrow over the recent loss of precious human lives in rainstorms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab.

In a statement issued on Twitter, he said rescue departments and relief teams were working to help the affected people.

Without any doubt, these were effects of climate change resulting in damage caused by unusual hailstorms, untimely rains and melting of glaciers, he added. These weather events were not only causing loss of lives and property but were also badly affecting agriculture and economy, he said adding Pakistan was one of the countries which were worst affected by climate change.

The PM said at present the whole world was facing the negative effects of climate change.

"We need to collectively take solid steps for the safe future of the coming generations," he concluded.

Pakhtunkhwa, including Kirk, Bannu, and Lakki Marwat. Sources said that falling trees and poles resulted in the blockage of multiple roads in Lakki Marwat, and the electricity system also experienced disruptions. Over 20 individuals, including women and children, were injured

and subsequently transported to the hospital. Tragically, among the deceased, three children and one woman have been identified. KP Governor directs CS to expedite relief efforts in rains.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali directed Chief Secretary to expedite relief efforts in the rains and storms hit areas of Bannu and Laki Marwat districts.

Expressing profound grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives in these districts, Governor KP highly praised Pakistan Army for immediately starting relief operations in the affected areas. He appealed to the local people to participate in the relief operations and extend support to the affected people. The Governor said he equally shared the grief and sorrow with the victims families in this hour of difficulty and prayed for eternal peace of all the victims and early recovery of the injured.

**Sherry Rehman expresses grief, hails Pak Army's efforts:** Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman expressed deep grief over the loss of lives and hailed Pak Army's and PDMA's efforts in ongoing rehabilitation operations.

## Sindh CM rejects criticism towards budget -PPP always improve people lives

KARACHI (NNI): Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said on Sunday that the Pakistan People Party would continue to serve the people of Sindh. He addressed the post-budget press conference and talk in details about the details of development expenditure.

The CM also rejected the criticism pointed towards the budget and said critics should not be biased and they should look at the positive things in the budget.

Mentioning the details of the budget, he said Karachi Hub water canal would cost Rs24 billion, waste water treatment plan would cost Rs60 billion, one desalination plant to be Rs13 billion, Jinnah safety and security project to Rs2 billion, Marble city project to be Rs5 billion and NED technology park to cost Rs24 billion.

Earlier, the Sindh cabinet on Saturday approved Rs2.24 trillion provincial budget for the upcoming fiscal year 2023-24.

The CM also expressed gratitude to Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for his visionary approach, highlighting the participation of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in local body elections.

It is pertinent to be mentioned that the budget for the upcoming fiscal year amounts to Rs2.237 trillion which reflected a 35% increase compared to the previous year.

Additionally, the development budget for 2023-24 has been set at Rs410 billion, 267.5 billion has been allocated for school education, Rs228 billion for health, and Rs143 billion for law and order.

Meanwhile, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah also talked about the cyclone that is hurtling towards Karachi coastline adding that the Sindh government was ready to deal with any emergency situation.

## Murtaza, Naeem's nomination papers declare valid

KARACHI (NNI): In Karachi's mayoral and deputy elections, the documents of Barrister Murtaza Wahab a Pakistan Peoples Party candidate and Jamaat-e-Islami's Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman have been declared valid.

In the Karachi Provincial Election Office, the papers of Murtaza Wahab's covering candidate Najmi Alam, Deputy Mayor candidate Abdullah Murad of the People's Party were also declared valid. The nomination papers of other candidates of Jamaat-e-Islami, Saifuddin and Junaid Makati were also accepted. The nomination papers of deputy mayor candidates Qazi Syed Sadruddin and Saifuddin were also accepted by the ECP. Mayor and deputy mayor of Karachi will be elected on June 15.

It should be noted that Ameer-e-Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi Hafiz Naeem had submitted nomination papers for Karachi mayor in the regional election commission office on Saturday.

On the other hand, while talking to media, Mr Naeem said that attempts were being made to steal the mandate of the Karachi people. He said democracy and democratic norms were being violated in Karachi. The JJ would not accept this stealing of mandate, he warned.

## No one will cast vote for PTI chief: Maryam Nawaz

SHUJAABAD (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz on Sunday lambasted the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan, saying no one will cast vote for the latter now.

Addressing a youth convention, Maryam Nawaz who is also the Chief Organizer of PML-N took a swipe at the PTI chief, saying, "After losing the government, he resorted to vandalism and attacked military installations on May 9. Those who were involved in the May 9 vandalism deserve no sympathy or relief.

The mastermind of the May 9 mayhem hides in his residence and lay blames at the workers".

At the outset of her speech, Ms Nawaz said, "I have come to Shujaabad for the first time and would like to thank you for your support and love. PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif visited Shujaabad seven times". Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz said that the PTI which broke the party of Mian Nawaz Sharif has now become a party of Ching Chee (the

local pronunciation of the Chinese rickshaw named Qingqi).

"He should be ashamed to call himself a leader. This man has set this country on fire because his own children do not live here," she maintained. The PML-N leader said the mastermind of the May 9 incidents is now begging for negotiations via Youtube addresses but he should remember that no one will forgive those who attacked and damaged the military installations and monuments of the martyrs because the arsonists do not deserve any concession and forgiveness. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz said the chapter of destruction is over and the chapter of development has been started in the country and if her party will get a chance, they will change the destiny of the country in the next 5 years as when Nawaz Sharif returns, the country will go up.

She said the youth are the future of the country so they don't have sticks in their hands but should have to hold laptops. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)

Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz heaped praise on the PML-N supremo, saying, "Nawaz Sharif never did politics of vandalism. The leader is the one who went to jail holding his daughter's hand".

"Nawaz Sharif fought oppression but never encouraged chaos," Maryam Nawaz said, adding that the PML-N supremo will once again rise to power through democratic way.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz further said that the person who build metros, hospitals and schools can never incite people to 'harm the country'. "A person's lust for power had damaged the country and state institutions," he added.

"Despite the intention of breaking the PML-N, the party stood with Nawaz Sharif. But the PTI chief's own party has shrunk today," she asserted.

Speaking about the budget, Ms Nawaz praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, saying, "The premier presented the best budget despite the many challenges the country is facing".



MULTAN: Chief Organizer PML-N Maryam Nawaz addressing the Youth Convention at Shujaabad.



**Rs 112514.1m tax collected, says Mukesh**

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Minister for Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Mukesh Kumar Chawla while releasing the details of tax collection in the current fiscal year, has said that in the current fiscal year from July 2022 to May 2023 a total of Rs112514.159 million in tax has been collected.

According to the details, Rs 9,476.699 million in terms of motor vehicle tax, Rs 66,690.691 million in the form of infrastructure cess, Rs674.931 million in the form of professional tax and Rs3.417 million in the form of cotton fee while the remaining amount was received in the form of other taxes.

The Provincial Minister expressing his satisfaction over the overall situation of tax collection said that the Excise department had achieved more than 90 per cent tax targets and hopefully they would get over 100 per cent tax targets by June 30. He advised tax defaulters to take advantage of the online tax filing facility.

**NEPRA holds meeting**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) convened a meeting to discuss and advance the power development initiatives in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The meeting which chaired by Mathar Niaz Rana (nsc), Member (Tariff & Finance) NEPRA, was attended by Secretary Power AJK and CEO of K-Electric and his team, said a press release issued.

The primary focus of the meeting was to address key challenges and explore opportunities for facilitating power development initiatives in AJK.

In his opening remarks, Mathar Niaz Rana shed light on the crucial aspects of the Competitive Trading Bilateral Contract Market (CTBCM) and its implications for the power sector.

A comprehensive discussion ensued during the meeting, highlighting the immense hydro power potential in AJK, estimated at a known potential of staggering 23,000 MW and an estimation of about 46,000 MW.

The participants examined strategies to streamline the ongoing and upcoming projects that face obstacles from power purchasers, ensuring their smooth resolution.

K-Electric expressed gratitude to Mr. Mathar Niaz Rana for his support in this matter, affirming KE's commitment to procure cheap hydro power from AJK to bring down the tariff of K-Electric for its consumers, this will also reduce the subsidies being provided by the Government of Pakistan to K-Electric. Mathar Niaz Rana pledged wholehearted support and assistance to the AJK Government to actively resolve any hurdle hindering power development in the region. The outcome of the meeting reflects NEPRA's dedication to promoting power development and its commitment to fostering collaboration between stakeholders.

NEPRA remains steadfast in its mission to create an enabling environment for sustainable, reliable and affordable power generation.

## CM visits Punjab Agriculture, Food & Drug Authority project

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi visited the Punjab Agriculture, Food and Drug Authority project to review ongoing construction works.

He inspected construction work of auditorium, sample centres, labs, meeting room, other sections and expressed satisfaction over the pace of work.

While directing the authorities concerned to continue construction work at the same speed, he said that the project of public importance should be made functional at the earliest. He ordered for taking all necessary steps in order to make the project operational, adding that all possible steps would be taken to ensure provision of funds for the project.

The caretaker CM ordered expeditious installation of essential equipment required for the Punjab Agriculture, Food and Drug Authority.

The CM was informed during the briefing that ceiling of building, sanitary and electricity work was going on speedily and the project would be completed by the last week of July.

Chief secretary, Communication and Works secretary, Lahore commissioner

and deputy commissioner, and senior officials of the Authority were also present.

**CM reviews progress on Darbar Bibi Pak Daman project:** Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi presided over a meeting at his office in which progress on the construction and extension of Darbar Bibi Pak Daman, along with its renovation project, was reviewed.

He directed the authorities concerned that the colour of religious sanctity and esteem should be kept prominent in the new design of the building. He ordered for completing the construction, extension and renovation project before the month of Muharram-ul-Haram.

It was informed during the briefing that the steel structure of the central dome of the Darbar Bibi Pak Daman had been completed. A central dome and three small domes in the Darbar would bestow a religious and historical sanctity to the building. Wood and marble work was going on speedily. Renowned architect Nayyar Ali Dada presented a model of the project to the caretaker chief minister. Communication and Works secretary apprised the CM about progress on the project.

## Murad urges people not to come out of their homes unnecessarily if cyclone ‘Biparjoy’ hits coast

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday said that cyclonic storm, ‘Biparjoy’ is likely to hit the cities and towns of the coastal belt between June 13 to 17, which may cause heavy rains in Badin, Sujawal, Umkot, Tharparkar, and Karachi.

He urged the people not to come out of their homes unnecessarily if the storm hits the coastal belts.

While quoting Pakistan Met Office warning, he said that the very severe cyclonic storm (VSCS) ‘BIPARJOY’ over east-central Arabian Sea has further intensified into an extremely severe cyclonic storm (ESCS), moved Northward during the past 12 hours, and now lies near at about 760 km south of Karachi, 740km south of Thatta and 840km southeast of Ormara. He said that under the existing upper-level steering winds, the ‘BIPARJOY’ was most likely to track further Northward until June 14 morning, then recurve Northeastward and cross between

Keti Bander and Indian Gujarat coast on June 15 afternoon.

He said that thunderstorm rain with few heavy falls likely in Karachi, Hyderabad, Tando Muhammad Khan, Tando Allahyar, Mirpurkhas districts from June 13, 14 and 16. Murad Shah said that high-intensity winds may cause damage to loose and vulnerable structures (Kutch Houses).

The Storm surge is expected at Keti Bander. The Arabian Sea conditions may get very rough high accompanied by high tides along the coast, therefore fishermen have been advised not to venture into the open sea. The chief minister said that Thatta, Sujawal, and Badin had more danger. He had sent Commissioner Hyderabad to evacuate people, if necessary. He further said that the Karachi Commissioner had also been directed to secure billboards. He said that he was in touch with Corps Commander Karachi, DG Rangers, and GOC Hyderabad to develop close coordination to avoid any untoward incident.

## Training of manpower to change the destiny of the country: Altaf Shakoor

KARACHI (NNI): Expressing dismay at insufficient outlays in the budget for education and training sectors, Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Altaf Shakoor here Sunday said that to change the destiny of this country we have to give the top priority to education and training of our huge idle manpower.

He said we have millions of young people but they are jobless, we have vast fertile land that is yet to be cultivated, we gave ample river water that is yet to be channelled through new dams and canals and we have all-weather sunshine that could yet be converted into solar electricity. He said our manpower, lands, water and renewable energy are being simply wasted because the government is not interested in utilizing them optimally. He said this could be only possible when we educate and train our people to use our precious natural and human resources to develop the country and break the deadly debt trap that devours more than half of what this nation earns.

He said the economic hitmen of the international lending institutions have entangled the Pakistani nation in this debt trap and sadly every ruling party of Pakistan has its fair share of these economic hitmen in their senior rank and file. He said this is why these political parties have always ignored the crucial matter of

the manpower training because it would lose the debt trap of their paymasters.

Altaf Shakoor asked to revamp the whole education system of Pakistan from primary to university level and make practical training the centerpiece of their educational strategies. He said modern training in agriculture, irrigation and water conservation systems is a must at grass-roots level to boost our economy. He said agriculture has a great potential which can be tapped with proper education and training to our farming communities.

He suggested making all high schools in Pakistan as technical schools and ensuring vocational training as a compulsory part of education up to matriculation. He said instead of issuing a matriculation certificate a technical junior diploma certificate should be issued to the qualified students. He said similarly the Intermediate certificate should also be converted into a diploma certificate and entrance to university or college should be based on this technical diploma.

He suggested that the education and training departments and ministries should be given to highly qualified professionals instead of petty politicians, who themselves need an education. He said all the countries that have attained economic freedom have done that by revamping their education systems.



LAHORE: Prime Minister's Special Representative Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi addressing during Istehkam Pakistan Ullema Mashaikh conference.

## Various measures already in place, experts stress elimination of child labour in Pakistan

LAHORE (APP): The World Day Against Child Labour would be marked on June 12 (Monday) across the globe including Pakistan to raise awareness about the plight of child labourers worldwide.

To call attention to the problem on this day, every year, various discussion events, seminars, and walks are held globally on June 12 to mark the day. Experts told APP on Sunday that hundreds of millions of girls and boys around the world are affected due to the child labour menace. It is a social stigma on the forehead of humanity and a gigantic problem in both developing and industrialised countries and low-income communities, they said. About 3.3 million of Pakistani children are trapped in child labour, who are deprived of their childhood, their health and education. They are forced to spend a life of poverty and want, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) says in its report.

To prevent child labour, global organisations like the International Labor Organisation (ILO) and SPARC must work jointly to save children from the curse of child labour. The government should also help reduce poverty so that parents are not forced to send their children to work, people concerned demand.

Children in all provinces of Pakistan are being exploited physically, morally, socially and mentally. Ms Munawar Sultana, National Project Coordinator, Asia Regional Child Labour (ARC) project, said that around 160 million children aged 5 to 17 years engaged in child labour in 2020, with 79 million children involved in hazardous work. A total of 160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys – are in child labour globally, accounting for almost one in 10 of all children worldwide.

Mr. Peter Buwembo, officer-in-charge, ILO Country Office, in a statement on child labour, emphasised

the significance of reliable data on child labour. He mentioned that an ongoing child labour survey in Pakistan would generate updated and accurate evidence for programme and policies. He acknowledged the Government of Pakistan for ratifying all eight fundamental conventions of the ILO including C182 in 2001 and C138 in 2006 and enacting national and sub-national legislation, prohibiting the employment of children in general and hazardous work in particular. Mr. Buwembo underscored the need for harmonizing the age of children in all relevant laws by federal and provincial governments, urging all stakeholders to work together for a long-lasting solution and accelerating progress towards achieving the SDG targets by 2025. According to a recent study report of the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), the growth of girl workers is higher as compared to boys. The industrial structure shows that at the national level and in the rural area, agriculture engaged the maximum number of children, followed by services, whereas, in the urban area, the services sector dominated.

As for employment status, most of the children are unpaid family helpers. The occupational pattern indicates that the majority of them work on farms and in production activities. The Government of Pakistan has enacted the Employment of Children Act of 1991 which has banned the employment of children below the age of 14 years and their employment is now a cognizable offense under the Act punishable by imprisonment and fine. Such interventions can lead to reductions in the already limited choices available to the child. For example, this legislation may mean that the child can neither work nor go to school. To put it differently, this ban does not address market failures, for example, in the

education market, Ministry of Human Rights sources told APP.

Meanwhile, the government of Pakistan, through the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), has so far enrolled 11.8 million children in schools under the 'Benazir Taleemi Wazaif' initiative, the sources added.

According to the Economic Survey 2022-23, released on last Thursday, to eliminate child labour, a total of 3 million children had been enrolled under the scheme during July- March FY2023. So far, Rs 63.3 billion have been disbursed since the inception of the Benazir Taleemi Wazaif initiative, out of which Rs 23.4 billion have been disbursed from July to March, FY2023.

This shows that the majority of children in Pakistan are victims of child labour. Among other reasons, the major causes of child labourers are illiteracy, poverty, and the increasing cost of education. The stipends rates for the students are Rs 1,500 per quarter per boy, Rs 2,000 for girl students at the primary level, while Rs 2,500 and Rs 3,000 are being paid for boy and girl students, respectively. While for the Higher Secondary level, Rs 3,500 and Rs 4,000 are being paid to the boy and girl students, respectively. The girls are also given a one-time bonus of Rs 3,000 on graduation from primary education. Syeda Ghulam Fatima, a human and labour rights activist, told APP that it was a welcoming sign that to prevent child labour, a stipend beneficiary child must attend school or college for at least 70 per cent of the school or college days. She appreciated the federal government to ensuring child protection measures across Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the federal government has constituted a National Commission on the Rights of Child in line with Section 3(1) of the National Commission on the Rights of Child Act of 2017 to prevent children rights abuse.

## Orange Line - a source of comfortable, economical journey

LAHORE (APP): In an era of soaring petroleum prices and high fuel expense, cheaper and comfortable public transport is no less than a blessing for those commute daily within the city for education, work or other purposes.

Punjab being the most populated province of the country was in dire need of quality public transport system in its major cities to mitigate the sufferings of those affected directly owing to high petroleum prices, and that need was fulfilled to a great extent by the successive governments of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz during their tenures from year 2008 to 2018.

Metro Bus Service was launched in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan for public welfare which facilitated millions of commuters due to its modern design of route and low fare affordable for all.

People of Lahore, the most populated city of the province, are privileged to have a state-of-the-art commuting facility in the shape of Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT) – a landmark project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, through which up to 0.2 million passengers travel daily to reach their destinations. No other city in the country has such a fast and comfortable public sector transport facility like the OLMT, which is at par with the international standards. It is the first-ever electricity-run train, which facilitates dwellers of major parts of the provincial capital.

General Manager

(Operations) OLMT Syed Uzair Shah, while talking to APP said the Punjab Mass Transit Authority (PMA) had been taking several measures to increase ridership on the train, which was being utilized by many visitors from other parts of the country other than Lahorites.

The train having 26 stations and 27.1-km-long track, travels at maximum 80 km/h speed, and begins operations at 6:15 am which continues till 10:00 pm. As an early-harvest project of CPEC, the Orange Line was jointly established by the China Railway Group Corporation and China North Industries Corporation, which started its operation on October 25, 2020 in Lahore.

Shah informed that around 200,000 people commute daily on Orange Line Train which had a capacity of 245,000, mentioning that 75 million people had taken ride of the train since its inception.

"The fare was initially fixed at Rs 40, however a revised fare structure had been introduced to further facilitate commuters under which the fare was fixed as per distance travelled. On taking 4-kilometre minimum ride, it would cost Rs 20 only, whereas the maximum fare would be 40 rupees," the general manager said.

He said the provincial government was providing a subsidy of Rs 6.5 billion annually on the project, out of which Rs 1.5 billion was being paid for electricity as

the train run with zero emissions, saving people from pollution.

"Due to rising inflation and increasing petroleum prices, more people are opting for the OLMT journeys," he added.

As it begun operations at 06:15 am every day, the train is a convenient mode of commuting for students who prefer it to save time and get a hassle-free ride to their schools, colleges and universities. The train provided a very comfortable ride with a central air-conditioning system, and passengers did not have to wait long for their ride; a train arrives every station after every five minutes, the GM explained. A passenger Tahseen Raza, who uses Multan Road to reach his office at Allama Iqbal Road from McLeod Road, expressed his delight over OLMT service and said his travelling woes came to an end after the train provided him the latest, fast, comfortable and economical travelling facilities.

He said he had been using auto rickshaw or internet based rides which were quite costly for him as he could not use public transport because of its long route and time consuming practice.

Syed Uzair Shah asked for public cooperation for making the multi-billion modern train project more successful. "The OLMT is the third public sector transport project in the city being managed by the Punjab Mass Transit Authority, the government of the Punjab, after the

Metro bus and feeder bus service (Speedo)," he explained.

Ahmad Ali, another commuter, said the OLMT was a perfect option for those who had to cover long distances to reach their destinations, as it would cost them less with comfort.

Covering the distance from Ali Town to Dera Gujran in 45 minutes, it would pass through city areas and was the country's first mass rapid transit train system, connecting Raiwind, Multan Road, McLeod Road, Lahore Junction Railway Station and the Grand Trunk Road, he added.

Muhammad Irfan, another commuter, who travels from Chowburji to Allama Iqbal Town daily to reach his office, appreciated the PML-N government for the initiative and said the Orange Line was a modern travelling facility yet economical for working class. Concluding his remarks, the General Manager (Operations) said regardless of limited resources the government had established such a state-of-the-art project to facilitate masses and now it was the responsibility of people to use it properly.

Where Orange Line Metro Train was useful for many sections of society including students, laborers, office goers and general public, it also passes by some of the cultural and historical sites of the city, helping tourists to get to the sites easily promoting tourism.



LAHORE: Construction work underway at underpass of Samanabad in Provincial Capital.





# Elections in October, Nawaz Sharif to return home before elections

PESHAWAR (APP): The Advisor to PM on Political & Public Affairs, National Heritage and Provincial President PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer Amir Muqam has said that general elections would be held in October and the party supremo Nawaz Sharif will return home before it.

He was talking to journalists here at the headquarters of Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Sunday wherein he presided over a high-level meeting regarding restoration of the power supply system on emergency basis

## KP govt announces summer vacations

PESHAWAR (APP): The KP Education Department Sunday decided to change the summer holidays from June 12 instead of June 15 earlier being announced, says a notification issued here Sunday.

According to the Education Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the date of the Summer Vacation to Middle, High and Higher Secondary Schools has been changed due to abrupt and unusual change in the weather condition of the province.

Therefore, the summer vacation will be from June 12 instead of June 15 till August 31, 2023, said the notification. In the plains of KP, including Peshawar, changes were made keeping in mind the weather conditions. The government had earlier announced the summer vacation from June 15. Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan has approved summer vacations in the plains areas, Rahmat Salam Khattak said when contacted.

Due to the heat wave, most of the schools are facing problems due to lack of electricity and solar power, Education Advisor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa replied to a question. In Peshawar, there have been complaints of children fainting in government and private schools, Rahmat Salam Khattak said.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Department has been instructed to hold summer vacations from today (Monday, 12th June), said Education Advisor.

after destruction of power transmission system due to heavy rains in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He was given a detailed briefing by the management of both PESCO and Tribal Electric Supply Company (TESCO) regarding losses inflicted on the power transmission system in the province.

The PM's aide said that the people have now acknowledged that the panacea for all problems and Imran Khan lying with only Nawaz Sharif and PML-N. He said that after becoming Prime Minister for fourth-term, Nawaz Sharif will bring the country out of all prevailing crises.

Amir Muqam said that rehabilitation work on restoration of rain affected power supply system is full swing and all staff from

Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) to Lineman level of both power distribution companies is in the field.

He said that out of the total 364 damaged feeders, 300 have been rehabilitated, while rehabilitation work on two damaged grid stations of the TESCO was continued. He told the media that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif himself is monitoring the rehabilitation operation.

He said that the federal government has announced a compensation package of Rs.1 million for heirs of dead persons in rainstorm while critically and minor injured will get Rs.3,00,000/- and Rs.50,000/- respectively. He said a survey for conducting assessment of losses is also being underway.

Amir Muqam expressed special gratitude to Prime

Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for playing the full role of representing the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that earlier the Prime Minister has distributed subsidized flour worth billions of rupees through the Utility Stores and later also abolished restrictions on wheat transportations to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which has declined the price of one bag flour from 4000 rupees in the province to Rs.2400/.

He was further grateful to the Prime Minister for extending tax exemption for the erstwhile FATA/PATA for another period of one year. He said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has always stood by the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa whether it was storm or flood.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to PM on Political & Public Affairs, National Heritage Engineer Amir Muqam presiding over a meeting at WAPDA House.

## DG: KPCTA parapers for Shandur Polo Festival

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Director General of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA), Bakhtiar Khan, has stated that a large number of domestic and foreign tourists are expected to attend the Shandur Polo Festival, which will be held in Shandur Valley from July 7 to July 9, 2023.

During a meeting held to discuss arrangements for the festival, DG KPCTA Bakhtiar Khan expressed his excitement in welcom-

ing foreign tourists to witness the event, where teams from lower and upper Chitral will participate. Last year, the Polo Event was won by Chitral.

He further said that the concluding ceremony of the three-day festival will take place on July 9. Various events, including a traditional show of Gilgit-Baltistan music, will be organized for the tourists attending the festival. DG KPCTA also stated that preparations for the event have already begun, with the KPCTA, district admin-

istration, and Chitral Scouts actively involved.

Additionally, he mentioned that camping pods have been installed in Upper Chitral to accommodate tourists, and they will be open before the start of the event.

He told that the festival would be held on its planned dates. All the required preparations have been nearly finalised. KPCTA will be welcoming all the Tourists to facilitate them in exploring Chitral and Shandor especially the Polo Festival.



PESHAWAR: Governor Haji Ghulam Ali addressing graduation ceremony of Elementary & Secondary Education Foundation 2023.

## APTA sights upgradation in coming fiscal year

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: All Primary Teachers Association (APTA) KP Provincial President Azizullah Khan said that the primary teachers have endured a lot of sacrifices and hardships for the upgradation.

More than one lakh primary teachers and teachers of other cadres of the province, including about one and a half lakh teachers, are looking towards the provincial government and the Chief Minister that they should not take any decision on the basis of which these one and a half lakh teachers came out on the streets of Peshawar. we have proved it in October 2022 national and international media are witnesses.

Therefore, we are hopeful that the provincial government and the caretaker chief minister will bring smiles and happiness to the depressed faces of the teachers. Because this authority has been given by Allah Almighty to you that you will give the builders of your province their rightful right.

On this occasion, all the political elites who stood in solidarity with us during the five-day sit-in of October 2022 and said that it is your right and we are with you, so now is the time for you to support us, from July 1, teachers May get the joy of upgradation.

## AC raided Cinema for showing vulgar dances

PESHAWAR (APP): Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Shah Fahad after receiving an information regarding a stage show is being run in Arshad Cinema located in Khyber Bazar in which vulgar dances are being performed.

On this Deputy Commissioner Peshawar deputied Syeda Zainab Naqvi along with a heavy Police team who raided Arshad Cinema in Khyber Bazar in which a stage show and dance were going on without NOC, upon which the Assistant Commissioner evacuated the hall during the show and closed the show and sealed the cinema by arresting two persons including the owner of the Cinema. Assistant Commissioner Syeda Zainab Naqvi also submitted a detailed report to Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Shah Fahad for further action.

## IGP inaugurates newly constructed modern CTD Regional HQ Dera

PESHAWAR (APP): Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur Sunday inaugurated the newly constructed modern Regional Headquarters CTD Dera Ismail Khan building.

During the inauguration ceremony Additional IGC TD Shaukat Abbas, Regional Police Officer Dera Abdul Ghafoor Afridi, District Police Officer Dera Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, SPCTD Region-I Fazal Wahid, SPCTD-II Izhar Shah and CTD officers and district police officials were also present.

Regional Police Officer Dera Abdul Ghafoor Afridi gave a detailed briefing to Inspector General of Police KP Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur about the CTD building.

During this, IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur reviewed the internal and external security of the police station CTD and while visiting different parts of the Police

Station building, the CCTV cameras there.

IGP KP also inspected the electronic monitoring system. The IGP visited the Regional Headquarters CTD offices, Hawalat, Investigation Cell and various counters and reviewed the performance of each department in detail.

On this occasion, he said that modern equipment, weapons, ammunition and vehicles have been provided to the CTD police, the purpose of establishing the CTD is to completely eradicate terrorism from this province.

He said that the close and friendly relationship between the police and the public can eliminate crime, so there is a need to increase bilateral cooperation in the current situation.

IGP Akhtar Hayat Khan also presided over a high-level meeting with police officials at Police Club Dera in which Additional IGC TD Shaukat Abbas, Regional Police Officer

Dera Abdul Ghafoor Afridi, District Police Chief Dera Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, DPO Tank Waqar Ahmed, DPO South Waziristan Upper Niaz Mohammad, DPO Lower Shabir Hussain, Additional SP Dera Iftikhar Ali Shah, SP Investigation Dera Iftikhar Khan, SP Investigation Tank Nasir Ali, SP Special Branch Tohid Khan, SP TD Region-I Fazal Wahid, SP Region-II Izhar Shah, SPFRP Iqbal Khan participated in the meeting.

In the meeting, IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa RPO asked about law and order, crime rate and police efficiency in Dera region and a detailed briefing was given on anti-crime operations. In the meeting, IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was also briefed on the steps taken, professional performance and important actions taken by the police in various districts of Dera region including tribal districts, on which IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa expressed satisfaction.

## Enterprise development training concluded

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: KPEC and ECI have identified 10 business clusters in Peshawar and Khyber districts, including boutique and Gemstone clusters, through a detailed assessment study and now based on training needs assessment, 500 entrepreneurs are being trained in business management under a capacity building programme.

In this regard, ECI organized four-day training for business women and men related to boutiques

and gemstones under the project of KPEC. The training was conducted between June 6 and June 10 with the objective of enhancing business development, promotion, and management skills. In this training, 26 women and 26 men completed their training successfully. The following dignitaries attended the closing ceremony of the trainings, Imran Zahoor, Project Director, KPEC, Sadiq Hussain, Trade specialist, KPEC, Ms. Mehanz, Gender Specialist from KPEC, Haji Mahmood, Pattern in chief ACPCIA, Syed Mihanjuddin, Chairman, APCIA, Sartaj Ahmad Khan, Coordinator PPCCI, Azra Jamshed, President, Women Chamber of Commerce, Anila Khalid, Vice, President, Women Chamber of Commerce and Muhammad Arif, Project Manager, ECI. At the end of the training, the chief guests distributed certificates to those who successfully completed the training. Under this project, training will be provided to 50 more entrepreneurs from these sectors.



PESHAWAR: A group of participants of four-day training organized by KPEC and ECI.

## Crimes rates increases by 136% in City, 232 people killed this year

PESHAWAR (APP): The crime rates increased by 136 percent in Peshawar, a report prepared by City Police revealed here Sunday.

Increasing crimes and incidents of terrorism are challenges, CCPO Syed Safaran Anwar told media men. He said that improvements will be made through technology and better

investigation. The report further revealed that 232 people were killed in Peshawar this year with an increase of 136% while 170 people were killed in the first 5 months of last year.

There is also an increase in the incidents of murder as 360 incidents were reported and in the first 5 months of last year, 310 cases of attempted murder

were reported. A total of 216 people were injured in the city this year similarly last year 224 people were injured in different crime incidents.

However, 102% increase in the incidents of robbery in Peshawar city as in the first 5 months of last year, 39 cases of rape were reported, while this year 79 cases were reported and 29

rape cases reported in the first 5 months of this year.

The report says that 18 cases of rape were reported in the first 5 months of last year and 14 cases of unnatural behavior with men, women and animals were reported. There was a decrease in the kidnapping cases and this year 22 cases have been reported as compared to 36 last year.

## Green Pakistan: A key initiative to combat climate change, desertification receives major financial share in budget 2023-24

PESHAWAR (APP): Grean Pakistan - a key initiative of the federal government to combat climate change, desertification and reverse deforestation, have received substantial allocation in the budget 2023-24 aimed at strengthening of the forestry and wildlife resources.

Being implemented through Ministry of Climate Change Division with a huge allocation of Rs4050 million under Public Sector Development Programme in the budget 2023-24, the government under its Green Pakistan programme has announced various key projects for promotion of forestry, wildlife, environment and biodiversity resources in all provinces of Pakistan for well being of people.

"The budget is pro-forestry and agriculture as evident of huge allocation of Rs4,050 million for various gigantic projects of the climate change division for the upcoming fiscal year that would make Pakistan

green," said Gulzar Rehman, former conservator of forests KP while talking to APP on Sunday. He said the huge budget for green sector would greatly help in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"Pakistan is confronted to monster challenges of desertification, eco-degradation, deforestation and climate change and whopping plantation was the most viable option to address these environmental issues with less investment," he said.

The National Forest Policy 2015 has revealed that Pakistan was losing about 27,000 hectares of forests per year due to high rate of deforestation, wood demands of increasing population and socioeconomic imbalances.

The forest resources were under tremendous pressure mostly in community and private-owned natural forests in Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, the policy said. In watershed areas, the deforestation was making negative impact on agriculture yield and quality of water at outlets besides triggering land degradation, floods and loss of biodiversity.

The policy further said in riparian, low-lying and coastal areas, the deforestation and climate change-induced weather patterns including rainfalls, floods and glaciers' melting were posing threats of amplifying sea's water intrusion.

He said precious agriculture land was badly affected by the last year's devastating flood due to which the salinity increased in soil making it unproductive for agriculture purposes.

He said environmental degradation and climate change in Pakistan are adversely affecting the economy, livelihood of the poor and sustainable development.

Gulzar said that Green Pakistan was an important

initiative of the government launched through climate change division that showed Govt highest priority to strengthen forestry sector to counterbalance the effects of environmental challenges.

Tauheedul Haq, former Conservator KP Forest Department hailed Federal Budget and Green Pakistan program, adding such programs were helpful in maintaining of ground water table.

He said Pakistan was gradually heading towards water stress country due to climate change-induced weather patterns and shortage of dams, which might lead to food insecurity for living creatures in future.

According to National Water Policy, the per capita surface water availability had declined from 5,260 cubic meters per year in 1951 to around 1,000 cubic meters in 2016 and this quantity would likely to further drop to 860 cubic meters in next few years if

deforestation continues with existing pace.

The policy warned that the groundwater situation was expected to further drop in the country mostly in Punjab and Sindh provinces, where about one million tube wells were currently pumping about 55 million acres feet (MAF) of underground water for irrigation, which is 20pc more than that available from canals.

The budget document revealed that under the ongoing schemes, the government had allocated Rs 3,950 million for three ongoing schemes including Rs 26.5 million for capacity building on water quality and monitoring and SDG (6.1), Rs 20.95 million for Climate Resilient Urban Human Settlements Unit and Rs 3,902.55 million for a revised project of Up-scaling of Green Pakistan Programme.

Under the new schemes, he said that Rs 100 million was earmarked for the

Pakistan Bio-safety Clearing House (Pak-BCH) for GMOs Regulation, Rs. 2,800 million for a national programme for the improvement of water-courses phase-II, Rs. 900 million for the national programme for enhancing the commend area in Barani areas of Pakistan and Rs. 700 million for the promotion of olive cultivation on a commercial scale.

Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, Deputy Project Director, 10 billion trees afforestation project told APP welcomed Federal Budget 2023-24 and Green Pakistan program.

He said the program would help combat climate change and environmental challenges. He said climate change is expected to increase the frequency of heavy precipitation in the country especially in KP, which can harm agriculture crops by eroding soil and depleting soil nutrients.

He said heavy rains can also increase agricultural

runoff into oceans, lakes, and streams that can harm water quality and negatively impacted wildlife and aquatic resources, adding water table is dropping due to excessive water usage by the car washing stations and fast glaciers melting.

The Met Office spokesman told APP that the national rainfall record of last month was excessively high and above average i.e plus 127pc and stands second wettest rainfall in May during the past 63 years as 34.30 mm rainfall was recorded in 1987.

The record breaking rainfall and hailstorms recorded in May last and the yesterday devastated storms coupled with rainfalls in Bannu and Lakki Marwat have badly affected the production of watermelon, melon and tomato crops in these areas.

To counter climate change and deforestation, he said billion trees afforestation project was launched in 2014 under

which around 1.20 billion saplings were planted in its first phase in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said the program was later extended to all provinces of Pakistan in 2018 where 10 billion plants including additional one billion in KP would be planted to offset the effects of climate change and deforestation.

He said the national project was being implemented by the Ministry of Climate Change along with provincial forest departments and would continue in upcoming fiscal year.

Ibrahim said that 690.16 million plants including 352 million through 6081 enclosures and 337.06 million by farm forestry under the 10 billion trees afforestation project were planted by April 30, 2023.

He said the provincial climate change policy 2016, range land policy, and REDD plus strategy were implemented in the province.





## In brief

### Three sisters killed

**SARGODHA (INP):** Three sisters of a family killed as the roof caved due to heavy storm at Noor purr here on Sunday. According to the spokesperson deceased were identified as Kashaf (8) Manzar batool (10) and Sitara (12). The police said the family was sitting in the room when its roof caved in. As a result, the members trapped in the debris. On information, Rescue 1122 reached the spot and started rescue operation. The rescuers pulled out the injured from the debris and shifted to Hospital.

### 3 of a family gunned down

**PAKPATTAN (INP):** Rivals shot dead a man and his two children over old enmity in Sham Garh village of Pakpattan's on Sunday, police said. According to media reports, Ghulam Farid Baloch, his son Sagib and daughter Amina lost their lives in a shooting incident. After receiving an emergency call, a police team arrived at the crime scene gathered necessary evidence and shifted the bodies for autopsies. Preliminary police investigation showed that the victims were targeted by their rivals.

### Man kills wife for honour

**MANDI BAHAUD-DIN (INP):** A man stabbed to death his wife for honour in tehsil Phalia of Mandi Bahaudian on Sunday. The accused was arrested. Police said that accused Zubair residing in Mughalpura area along in rental house along with his four children and wife. The culprit stabbed to death his wife with sharp edged weapon after she was found involved in illicit relations with another person. The body was shifted to hospital for postmortem where it was handed over to heirs after legal formalities. The police held the accused with murder weapon and after registering a case against him started an investigation.

### Inter student gang raped

**HAFIZABAD (INP):** A student of intermediate was gang raped in Soorianwala area of Hafizabad, police said on Sunday. Two women among three accused involved were held. According to details, a Grade 11th student while returning home from tuition centre was kidnapped by five culprits including two women. The culprits took the girl to a house in neighbourhood and raped her. The police arrested key accused and two women involved in the crime. Police said that DNA tests of the rape victim girl and detained accused have been conducted and raids were being conducted to arrest two other culprits.

### Man's killer arrested

**HABIBABAD (INP):** Police in Habibabad area of Kasur have arrested a woman who had killed her husband in connivance with her 'paramour' a few months ago, police said Sunday. Police have also arrested the woman's friend.

### Swindler gang busted, 3 held

**MULTAN (APP):** Police have busted a swindler gang involved in depriving citizens of cash and arrested three members of the gang besides recovering valuables and a mini-van from their possession here on Sunday. Taking action on the repeated complaints about a gang involved in looting citizens by offering them energy saver LED bulbs along with a lucky coupon to win cash and other valuables after a lucky draw.

# CS inquires after health of injured in rain related incidents

**BANNU (APP):** Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry along with Deputy Speaker National Assembly Zahid Durrani Sunday visited District Headquarter Hospital Bannu and inquired after health of injured due to overnight heavy rain, wind and storm that killed 15 persons and more than 100 injured in the district.

In district Lakki Marwat, five persons were killed including children and women while 42 others reported as injured, in district Karak four persons were killed while a child was killed in Dera Ismail Khan and two women were injured as result of strong wind, heavy rain and storm.

Chief Secretary KP Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry directed District Headquarters Hospital officials to take good care of the injured and ensured them all facilities. Both CS KP and Deputy Speaker Zahid

Durrani met with the injured persons admitted in the hospital. Commissioner Bannu, Deputy Commissioner, DIG and other concerned officials were also present.

In his media talks, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry said that they stand by the families who lost their loved ones and should care for all those injured in the storm and rain. The caretaker provincial government is an equal participant with the families of the dead and injured in this hour of sorrow.

He said Rs. 1 million for those who died in the houses collapsed due to storm and rains and Rs. 0.3 million will be given to the injured and Rs. 50,000 to those with minor injuries.

While surveying and estimating the damages of the dead livestock and collapsed houses, they are trying to help the victims and settle the victims as soon as possible, the Chief

Secretary added. Security forces have a key role in relief operations.

He said what happened on May 9 was actually crossing the red line as Pakistan Army is our red line and no one would be allowed even an inch to cross that red line rather those who crossed the limits should be treated with iron hands.

The Pakistan Army is our red line and not a single flame will be allowed to cross it, Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa warned. The incidents are being investigated with full evidence, the guilty will not be spared and the innocent will not be tortured, he added.

He said, there are a lot of problems in the hospitals, problems of funding but there is a lot of burden on the hospitals and they are planning for it to ensure facilities to the general public at the door steps by developing each of the hospitals at the district level.

## AC visits hospital and schools, inspects facilities

**DIR LOWER (APP):** Assistant Commissioner Timargarah, Dir Lower, Sunday visited hospital, schools and main Timargarah Bazar and inspected cleanliness and other facilities to the general public.

According to detail, AC Timargarah reviewed the facilities etc. provided to the patients in BHU Odigram along with other officials including Additional Assistant Commissioner Hazrat Bilal. He said as directed by Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower Iftikhar Ahmed, they have checked the staff attendance, cleanliness etc. and reviewed the facilities provided to the patients during the visit to BHUs.

He informed the patients

and their families about the treatment and directed the management to provide the best facilities to the patients. AC Timargarah also visited Govt High School Hajiabad, Govt High School Odigram, Govt Primary School Odigram, and Govt Primary School Munjai.

During their visit they checked the performance of students in different classrooms, encouraged the children with good performance and also reviewed the attendance of the staff and other facilities provided to the children. They also issued necessary instructions to the school principals and headmasters.

Apart from this, Additional Assistant Commi-

ssioner Timargarah cleaned the tandoors and bakeries in the markets, rates of the bread and checked the weight of the bread. During their visit to the Bazar, AC and AAC also interacted with the general public and asked about rates of various food items they purchased.

They strictly warned those violating the actual rates of various food items and said that immediate action would be taken against those who did not follow the official rates. The people thanked the officials of the district administration for their visit to bazaars besides checking the overall facilities for the general public in the BHUs and facilities for the students in the schools.

## Rain damaged public properties in Abbottabad

**ABBOTTABAD (APP):** About half-hour-long torrential rain coupled with thunder and hailstorm uprooted trees, damaged houses, cars and flooded streets in several localities of Abbottabad city and surrounding areas.

According to details, last night heavy downpours and hailstorms not only triggered a flash floods but also damaged dozens of vehicles that were moving on the roads or parked in the open space. The flooded water entered the houses in various areas including Sir Syed Colony, Hassan Town and Bilal Town.

After the heavy rain and hailstorm, the staff of Abbottabad Cantonment Board later midnight started rescue work at Tarkhanna Niaz Colony where the incomplete work of the National Highway Authority (NHA) caused difficulties for the Canton-

ment Board due to the flash floods coming from the District Council areas to the Cantonment board areas.

The Vice Chairman ACB Fawad Ali reassured the residents of Niaz Colony that the Cantonment Board stands with its people in every difficulty, we will contact NHA to expedite the completion of work on under construction sewerage system on both sides of the Main Mansehra Road so that the flood waters from the District Government can be controlled.

He said that the Cantonment Board has completed work on sewerage lines and natural drains in its jurisdiction, that's why the area up to Sarban Chowk in Abbottabad city remained safe during this torrential rainfall.

The District Government should take steps on its own to provide alternative routes for these flood-prone

areas in their jurisdiction as well, adding the vice chairman said.

### Three died and two injured in Basham road accident

At least three persons of a family were killed while two others sustained injuries on Sunday when a passenger jeep plunged into several hundreds of feet deep gorge in Basham Kohistan.

According to the police sources, a passenger jeep that was heading towards nearby Kormang village from Basham fell into a deep gorge when the driver lost control of the vehicle, resulting in three persons of a including husband, wife and son killed on the spot while two others sustained critical injuries.

The locals recovered the bodies and injured from the ravine and shifted them to the Basham Rural Health Center (RHC).

## Heatwave triggers surge in visitors to pools, canals

**MULTAN (APP):** As temperatures climb above 40 degrees Celsius in recent days, individuals are flocking to swimming pools, canals, and tube wells for recreational activities and respite from the scorching heat.

While swimming pools situated outside the city are witnessing a significant increase in visitor numbers, a few pools within city limits have experienced comparatively lower public gatherings.

In response to the prevailing heatwave, swimming pool owners have raised their bathing charges. Visitors now face fees ranging from Rs 400 to 600 per person, in contrast to last year's rates of Rs 250 to 350.

The swimming pool industry has endured dwindling visitor numbers over the past two years, leading to imminent closures. However, most pool owners have undertaken essen-

tial repair work to attract more patrons and reopen their pools. Renovation efforts are also underway at various pool facilities to enhance their appeal to the public.

During an interview with APP on Sunday, Akaash Ansar emphasized the importance of swimming pool bathing as a means of protecting oneself from the blistering heat. With unscheduled power outages making it unbearable to stay at home, Ansar highlighted that swimming pools offer both relief from scorching temperatures and an excellent recreational opportunity to socialize with friends.

Another individual, Muhammad Sufyan, shared that he personally covers the cost of swimming pool bathing fees from his pocket money. However, Sufyan expressed concern for friends who cannot afford the daily charges of Rs 500

or more to access the pools. He urged pool owners to consider reducing the fees to attract a larger number of visitors.

Tahir Hussain, a swimming pool owner, disclosed that he has invested over one million in constructing his pool. However, he faces the challenge of generating revenue for only two to three months per year. Hussain explained that despite having to cover expenses such as electricity charges and staff salaries throughout the year, his income is limited to just a few months.

Concerned about this limitation, Hussain shared his plans to transition his swimming pool business into a venture that can generate year-round income, reducing reliance solely on the summer season. He is exploring alternative business options to ensure a consistent revenue stream throughout the year.



**BANNU:** Chief Secretary KP Nadeem Aslam Choudhry along with Caretaker Provincial Ministers and Commissioner Bannu inquiring after health of injured people from rain at Bannu hospital.

## AC Dara visits FATA University

**PESHAWAR (APP):** Assistant Commissioner Dara Adam Khail Aamir Nawaz visited FATA University Dara Adam Khel on Sunday and inspected the ongoing construction work there.

During his visit, Assistant Commissioner Dara Adam Khail inspected the construction work and checked the use of quality materials.

He also directed the contractors to avoid use of sub-standard materials by maintaining the standard of work, otherwise, stern action would be taken.

He said, on the instructions given by Deputy Commissioner Kohat Azmatullah Wazir, he would visit from time to time to check the ongoing construction work.

During his visit AC Dara Adam Khail Aamir Nawaz also paid a visit to various petrol pumps and checked the rate and quantity of petrol and diesel on the occasion.

Assistant Commissioner Dara Aamir Nawaz inspected the fruits, vegetable, bakery and other shops in Dara Bazar and the shopkeepers who violated the official price list were fined on the spot.

## Five POs arrested

**WAH CANTT (APP):** During crackdown against proclaimed offenders (POs), police arrested as many as five suspects wanted in different heinous criminal cases including murder and they were declared POs by the respective courts of law.

Sub Divisional Police Officer DSP Ghulam Asghar Chandia told the reporters here Sunday that Taxila Police arrested Noor Rehman who allegedly shot dead Nawab Ali over old enmity. Moreover, the same police also arrested two suspects identified as Aabid and Sajid wanted in an abduction case.

Separately, Wah Saddar Police arrested two suspects identified as Adnan and Aslam, wanted in abduction and snatching cases.

## Drug peddler held

**WAH CANTT (APP):** Taxila Police during a honey trap rounded up a member of inter provincial racket of drugs supplier supplying drugs to the students of the various educational institutions and recovered huge quantity of the drugs from his possession which was being supplied to the potential customers- mostly students of the various colleges and universities of twin cities of Taxila and Wah Cantonment.

Police sources said that a team of Taxila Police led by station house officer Sub Inspector Sarmad Ilyas organized a honey trap for Sanab Gull- a native of Khyber agency and presently operating from Thatta Khalil and recovered 2.130-kilogram hashish from his possession. Police sources said that during the preliminary interrogation the accused confessed to be a member of an inter provincial gang of drug supplier supplying drugs among youth.

## Skill Development Program concluded

### F.P. Report

**KHAR:** Frontier Corps North, in its continued commitment to uplifting the local community, successfully organized the 2nd Skill Development Program for the youth of Salazarai in the Bajaur district.

The program, held from May 8th to June 3rd, aimed to impart valuable and profitable skills to the local youth, enabling them to pursue a brighter future. Following the success of the 1st Program held in February 2023, where 30 students were trained, with 10 locals securing admission to CTTI Islamabad for mining-related training, the 2nd Technical Skill Enhancement Program expanded its offerings. This time, the program included comprehensive training in

Computer Skills, Basic Electrical Skills, Vehicle Mechanics Course and Vehicle Driving Course.

A total of 58 students actively participated in the Skill Enhancement Training and successfully completed the program. The rigorous training equipped them with essential technical skills, positioning them for better employment opportunities and entrepreneurial ventures.

To recognize the achievements of the trained individuals, Frontier Corps North organized a grand Certificate Award Ceremony on June 10th, 2023. The ceremony was attended by approximately 150 locals, including the parents of the students and esteemed community elders (Maliks).

During the ceremony,

prizes were distributed among the best students in each skill group, further encouraging their pursuit of excellence. The youth of Salazarai expressed their heartfelt appreciation for this significant initiative and enthusiastically called for the continuation of such programs in the future, acknowledging the immense value they bring to the local community.

Frontier Corps North has facilitated these opportunities for the youth of Bajaur district, empowering them with essential skills that will contribute to their personal growth and the socio-economic development of the area. The success of this program reflects Frontier Corps North's dedication to fostering a skilled workforce and nurturing a prosperous community.

## Kundi expresses grief over loss of lives during rains

**DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP):** State Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday expressed his grief and sorrow over the loss of lives and property during the rain-related incidents in different areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a statement, the state minister said his heart was saddened by the loss of precious human lives due to rains in many areas of the province. He also condoled with the bereaved families and sympathized with the affected people.

He prayed to the Almighty for the elevation of ranks of the deceased in paradise and for the early recovery of those who got injured in the rainstorms.

He said that the federal government and related institutions were in contact with the provincial government and the local administrations to help the victims.

He said that steps would be taken to compensate the farmers for the damages caused to their crops and orchards.

Faisal Kundi, who is also the Central Inform-

ation Secretary of Pakistan People's Party, directed the local leadership of his party to play their role in helping the victims.

He said that PPP equally grieved over the loss of lives due to the rainstorms.

Kundi said all possible help would be provided to the injured.

He appealed to the party workers to donate blood for the injured people.

Besides, the workers also take part in rehabilitation work by making liaison with administrations, he said.

## Uniform fare chart issued for non-AC transport services

**FAISALABAD (APP):** Secretary Regional Transport Authority (RTA) Abdul Jabbar has issued uniform fare chart for non-airconditioned transport services in Faisalabad.

Speaking in a meeting of transporters on Sunday, Assistant Administrator General Bus Stand (GBS) Rana Habibullah said the RTA secretary released uniform fare chart for non-AC Wage and Bus Services and the fare chart would be implemented in letter and spirit.

He said that overloading and overcharging was an offence and it would not be tolerated at any cost. He said that a special team would start checking of fares in buses and wagons from Monday and whosoever was found involved in overcharging would be handed down heavy fine in addition to impounding of his vehicle.

He directed the transporters and drivers of non-AC public transport service to act upon uniform fare chart and avoid violating the rules and regulations.

### 3 bodies found in Faisalabad

The bodies of three people were found from different parts of Faisalabad during the past 12 hours.

A police spokesman said here on Sunday that some passersby spotted corpse of a man floating on surface of water in Gugera branch

canal near Tandlianwala Assistant Commissioner House and informed Rescue-1122.

A rescuers team fished out the body, which was later on identified as 39-year-old Amanullah of Iqbal Colony Tandlianwala. According to initial investigation, the ill-fated man was an addict person. He had left his house late in the night under the influence of drugs and did not come back.

Meanwhile, the body of 27-year-old youth was found from Eidgah Road near School in Gulberg whereas another body of a 35-year-old man was found lying on Samundri Road near Roshanwala.

The police took the bodies into custody while further investigation for their identification was under progress, he added.

### Man kills father over property dispute

An infuriated man shot dead his father over property dispute in the area of Madina Town police station. A police spokesman said here on Sunday that one Mudassar had demanded his share in property of his father, but his father Rana Karamat Ali refused to divide his property in his life.

An altercation occurred between the son and father, and the former shot dead the latter. The police took the body

into custody and shifted it to mortuary for post-mortem. The police were conducting raid to arrest the accused, who had managed to escape after the fateful incident.

### Man commits suicide due to poverty

A man reportedly committed suicide over poverty related issues in the area of Rail Bazaar police station.

A police spokesman said here on Sunday that 23-year-old William Masih of Tehsil Quarters No 3 was unemployed for the last many months and his family was facing severely financial constraints.

He got dejected due to the situation and committed suicide by shooting himself. Receiving information, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Civil Lines Mian Khalid, along with SHO Rail Bazaar police station and other police officials, shifted the body to mortuary for postmortem, he added.

**Youth electrocuted**  
A youth died of electrocution, in the limits of Raza Abad police station.

Police said on Sunday that 19-year-old Zohaib, s/o Ghulam Abbas, resident of Gulzar Colony was passing through Street No.3 in Raza Abad when he touched a short-circuiting pole.

Zohaib received fatal electric shock and died on the spot.





## Round-the-clock bus service provides seamless transportation to Hajj pilgrim

MAKKAH MUKARMA (APP): The Pakistan Hajj mission is providing streamlined transportation services to Pakistani pilgrims this year, with a fleet of 190 buses ensuring round-the-clock, direct transportation to and from Masjid Al-Haram, enabling Hajj pilgrims to fully devote themselves to their sacred obligations.

The mission plans to increase the number of buses to 360 once all arriving Pakistani pilgrims have arrived in Makkah, in anticipation of the upcoming Hajj set to commence on June 26.

Bus stops have been strategically positioned at various locations surrounding Haram Sharif, including Ajyad, Ghaza, Jorwal, and Kudai.

Furthermore, the mission has appointed 28 guides to provide pilgrims with instructions on both internal and external routes of the Haram Sharif.

Director Moavineen e Hujjaj Sajjad Haider Yaldrum told that in Masquota, buses are organized sector-wise and labeled for easy identification of intending pilgrims.

The arrangement of buses is orderly to facilitate efficient pick-up. Director Moavineen e Hujjaj Sajjad Haider Yaldrum commended Moavineen's exceptional services in assisting and supporting the pilgrims.

Director Hajj Makkah, Faheem Khan Afridi said comprehensive transportation guidelines have been issued at each building.

Additional buses will be deployed in Masquota to meet the transportation needs of all pilgrims, ensuring their adequate accommodation and smooth journey.

Spokesman Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Muhammad Umer Butt told that the designated pick-up times have already been communicated to the pilgrims in each building.

For the pilgrims residing in sectors 2, 5, 6, and 7, the pick-up point is the bus stop near the entry, exit point of the Haram Sharif known as Bab e Abdul Aziz.

Similarly, the pilgrims residing in sector 4 are being picked up from either Bab e Salam or the gates of Safa and Marva. As for the residents of sector 8, they are being picked up from the gate of Haram Sharif known as Bab e Abdul Aziz.

In January, Saudi Arabia reinstated Pakistan's pre-pandemic Hajj quota, allowing 179,210 Pakistani pilgrims to participate in the annual Islamic religious ritual. Moreover, the kingdom removed the previous age limit of 65 years, permitting individuals of all ages to embark on this sacred journey. The government hajj scheme will accommodate approximately 80,000 pilgrims out of Pakistan's total Hajj quota, with the remaining intending pilgrims choosing private Hajj Group Organisers (HGO) to undertake the pilgrimage, ensuring that all can fulfill their religious duties.

## French town to pay tribute to those who chased off knife attacker

ANNECY (AFP/APP): Residents of the Alpine town of Annecy will gather Sunday to honour the people who rushed to stop a Syrian refugee who stabbed six people, including four young children, last week.

The city's mayor, Francois Astorg, will pay homage to those who "acted with courage and professionalism" in confronting the attacker before police arrested him.

They include two municipal agents who tried to stop the attacker with a shovel, a young man renting out pedal boats and a maths teacher who both tried to step in, and a tourist who chased the attacker. A childminder also rushed in to rescue two wounded children.

On Friday, French President Emmanuel Macron met the civilians being hailed as heroes for chasing the attacker from the playground where the stabbings took place.

On Saturday, public prosecutor Line Bonnet-Mathis paid tribute to those who, "by their action, were able to preserve human lives". She also acknowledged the work of the emergency services.

She also announced that the Syrian refugee detained over the stabbings, named as Abdalmasih H, had been charged with "attempted murder".

The attack left the normally peaceful lakeside town in shock. Hundreds of people have laid flowers, soft toys and heart-shaped balloons at the site of the attack.

Abdalmasih H. "did not wish to speak" during his 48 hours in police custody nor before the magistrates leading the investigation, Bonnet-Mathis told reporters on Saturday.

After two psychiatric evaluations, he was deemed "compatible with police custody", and doctors had determined he did not suffer from delusions.

However, she added, it was too early to diagnose or rule out other psychological pathologies.

Bonnet-Mathis also said that the victims of the attack were no longer in a life-threatening condition.

The children, aged between 22 months and three years, were initially hospitalised in a serious condition, while one adult was also seriously wounded and another lightly hurt.

Recently divorced from a Swedish national and in his early 30s, the suspect had previously lived for 10 years in Sweden where he was granted refugee status in April, security sources and his ex-wife told AFP.

He left the country because he had been unable to get Swedish nationality, she added.

French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told broadcaster TF1 that "for reasons not well explained he had also sought asylum in Switzerland, Italy and France".

It emerged that his application in France was rejected last Sunday as he already had refugee status in Sweden.

France has been the target of a series of traumatic Islamist attacks over the last decade.

According to video taken by a bystander however, the attacker could be heard shouting "in the name of Jesus Christ" during the attack.

While prosecutors say they have not identified a terror motive in the attack, the incident has intensified tensions in France over immigration, with right-wing politicians seizing on the suspect's foreign origins.

## In Cyprus no-man's land, owls come to the rescue of farmers

DENEIA (AFP/APP): Standing amid ears of wheat growing tall in the buffer zone dividing Cyprus, farmer Christodoulou can rest easy.

The rodents that once ran rampant in the decades since the no-man's land was created and destroyed his crops are being driven out by owls.

"Our village was full of rats and mice. They ate our crops, nibbled on our tyres," recalls Christodoulou, who owns a farm in the demilitarised corridor that splits the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus and the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. "Then we set up these boxes for the owls," he said.

Around 50 light wooden boxes with circular openings have been installed on tree trunks as part of a 10-year-old initiative led by the BirdLife Cyprus non-governmental organisation and the Cypriot government.

BirdLife says the objectives of the project are to encourage farmers to abandon using poison and to help repopulate the barn owl population of Cyprus, which has been in decline across Europe.

Deneia, one of the few villages in the 180-kilometre (112-mile) buffer zone that is still inhabited, is now home to between 20 and 50 barn owls and their chicks -- recognisable by their milk-white plumage.

The birds of prey are only about 30 centimetres (12 inches) tall, but have large appetites, devouring as many as 5,000 rats and mice a year.

Rodents have proliferated in the corridor in the absence of large amounts of human activity -- ransacking agricultural areas.

Farmers have often tried to address the situation with rat poison -- harmful to both humans and the environment -- before the launch of the initiative.

"The owls are a miracle!" said Christodoulou, who first tried spraying poison on his fields. Their presence has had a "radical" impact in driving away the rodents and he can now practise organic farming.

Today, thanks to the owls, "to find a rodent here, you would have to search for a week", said Deneia mayor Christakis Panayiotou.

BirdLife director Martin Hellicar, who counts more than 1,300 owl boxes across Cyprus, attributes the success of the project to farmers becoming "attached to the barn owls and reconnecting with nature".

Further west in the same demilitarised corridor, whole villages have been abandoned for decades since the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, in response to a Greek-sponsored coup attempt.

Bird boxes have gone up in coordination with the United Nations.

Not far from looming watchtowers manned by some of the 800 UN peacekeepers patrolling the area, a ranger wearing gloves pulls two owl chicks out of a box.

The small creatures blink, blinded by the daylight. With an expert hand, Nikos Kassinis attaches a ring to them with an identification number.

Every year, authorities find the bodies of around 20 owls. Autopsies reveal that many die as a result of consuming rat poison.

"They lose their capacity to fly and get hit by cars," added the mayor, noting that this most often takes place outside in more populated areas.

## Syrians turn plastic waste into rugs to make a living

HEZREH, SYRIA (AFP/APP): At a rubbish dump in northwest Syria, Mohammed Behlal rummages for plastic to be sold to recyclers and transformed into floor rugs and other items in the impoverished rebel enclave. In rebel-held Syria, recycling is rarely an environmental impulse but rather a grim lifeline for needy residents looking for work or items they otherwise could not afford.

Braving the stench, insects and risk of disease, 39-year-old Behlal hacks through the rubbish pile with a scythe and his bare hands.

He and two of his six children earn a living sifting through the refuse in Idlib province's village of Hezreh, earning \$7 to \$10 a week each.

"It's tiring... but what can we do, we have to put up with this hard labour," said Behlal, who was displaced from neighbouring Aleppo province during Syria's civil war.

"Thank God, at least we have work with the trash," he added.

Behlal was shot in the leg during fighting and has had trouble finding employment.

Hunched over to collect pieces of plastic or metal, he throws everything into a bag to sell to a nearby scrap facility. Syria's conflict has killed more than 500,000 people, and around half of the country's pre-war population has been forced from their homes since fighting broke out in 2011.

More than four million people, most of them dependent on aid, live in areas controlled by jihadists and Turkish-backed groups in Syria's north and northwest. In a large scrapyard next to agricultural fields, workers sort plastic junk loosely into piles according to colour. They then cut it up and crush it into small pieces that are washed and melted into plastic pellets.

Farhan Sleiman, 29, is among those who handle the material brought in from the landfill.

"We buy plastic from roaming trash-picker trucks and children," said Sleiman, originally from Homs province.

He expressed fear of the risk of contracting "cholera or chronic illnesses" from working with the rubbish.

Elsewhere in northern Idlib province, workers at a factory making mats and rugs churn out brightly coloured plastic thread while large weaving machines click and clack.

Factory owner Khaled Rashu, 34, says rug-making is a family tradition.

"We have more than 30 employees" at the factory, he boasted as a significant feat in a region where many are jobless.

Large mats featuring geometric designs, some made with striking red or purple plastic thread, emerge from the weaving machines and are stacked into piles.

Shop owner Mohammed al-Qassem, 30, is among those selling the mats, which he says are a hit in an area where many people are displaced and live in basic tents or makeshift dwellings.

The mats made from recycled plastic cost between \$5 and \$15, while traditional Persian-style rugs are around \$100.

"In summer, demand for plastic mats increases" because they retain less heat, Qassem said from his shop in Maaret Masrin, a town in Idlib province. But "they can also be used in winter and are less costly", he added.

## Canada wildfire crews try to control the uncontrollable

ROBERVAL (BBC): Hazardous smoke from Canadian wildfires blanketed the skies in large parts of North America last week. The government says the country as a whole is on course for its worst year for wildfires on record. In the province of Quebec, over 120 fires are burning, and fire crews are battling an element that always surprises. Six in the morning is not long gone, but work has already begun on Saturday in a nondescript two-storey office building in Roberval, a town of some 10,000 people in south-central Quebec. That's where the next 24 hours are being strategised in a fight against wildfires, a battle waged in increments and by the hour.

"A fire is alive, an uncontrollable element that we're trying to control," said Patrice Charest.

The 43-year-old, with a sleeve of tattoos, a canvas cowboy hat and a bushy red beard has been fighting fires for 20 years. He has been working 12-to-14-hour shifts for 19 days straight, without a break.

Firefighting water bombers - planes fitted with large water tanks - stand at the ready outside, along with helicopters to ferry on-the-ground fire crews to blazes burning in the regions north, east and west of the town. Inside the building, about 100 people with the provincial firefighting agency, the SOPFEU, are tracking the behaviour of each fire and the weather that could help or hinder their work.

That information will help them decide where to deploy strained resources like Mr Charest and his crews. "I execute - I'm the soldier, they send me to war," the firefighter said. His nemesis in recent days has been Fire 236, a 7,000 hectare (17,300 acre) blaze, now contained, that was threatening homes near the municipality of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette. He'd hoped for 25 crew, but with over 120 fires burning in the province - over 728,000 hectares have burned this year to date, compared to the 2,147 hectare 10-year average - he understands why he's forced to make-do with just 12.

They've slowed the fire's progress - on an aerial image, there's a scar of blackened ground but no visual smoke and flames. But work on 236 is not done.

No flames does not mean the fire is out. Crews will be looking for fires that burn below ground in a layer of decaying roots, dead leaves and bark, that produce little to no smoke.

With experience, a firefighter like Mr Charest can detect the scent of the plumes of smoke produced by that type of fire. "You look for it, put your nose to the wind," he said. It's a unique smell but one he struggled to describe.



## Zelensky says counteroffensive against Russia underway

KYIV (AFP/APP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that a counteroffensive against Russian forces was underway while declining to give specifics on his troops' operations.

"Counteroffensive and defensive actions are taking place in Ukraine: at which stage I will not talk in detail," Zelensky said on Saturday, commenting after Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that Kyiv's operation was already failing. Russia has reported thwarting Ukrainian attacks in the east and south.

"It's interesting what Putin said about our counteroffensive. It is important that Russia always feels this: that they do not have long left, in my opinion," Zelensky said.

He added that he was in daily touch with military commanders, including armed forces chief Valery Zaluzhny, and "everyone is positive now -- tell that to Putin!" On Saturday, Kyiv's forces conducted counteroffensive operations in at least four front-line areas, according to the Washington-based think tank the Institute for the Study of War (ISW).

"Russian sources claimed that Ukrainian forces have tactical advantages in conducting assaults at night due to Western-provided equipment with superior night optics systems," ISW said.

To shore up that stockpile, Zelensky secured fresh pledges of military aid while meeting with visiting Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau over the weekend.

Trudeau, 51, and Zelensky, 45, hugged and used each other's first names as the Canadian leader made his second unannounced visit to Kyiv since full-scale war broke out in February last year.

Canada, which hosts a large Ukrainian diaspora, has been one of Kyiv's key allies since the Russian invasion. It has provided Ukraine with significant military aid, trained more than 36,000 soldiers and adopted sanctions against Moscow. On Saturday, the Canadian leader said he would provide Can\$500 million (US\$375 million) in fresh military assistance to Kyiv, and pledged Canada would be part of the multinational effort to train Ukraine's fighter pilots. Trudeau also urged international organisations to come to the aid of those in Russian-occupied territories after flooding from the breached Kakhovka dam forced thousands to flee their homes and sparked fears of humanitarian and environmental disasters.

Ukraine accuses Russia of blowing up the dam on Tuesday, while Moscow says Kyiv fired on it.

When asked why he stopped short of blaming Russia for the dam collapse, Trudeau said: "I know there are investigators and there are a lot of questions and intelligence being analysed on what exactly happened to have this dam collapse."

"But there is no doubt in my mind that absent Russia's invasion of last February, that dam would still be standing today."

Pledging Can\$10 million in flood relief, Trudeau also said Russia "will be held to account" for its actions in Ukraine. Earlier in the day, Trudeau placed flowers by a wall of remembrance displaying photos of soldiers killed in combat.

Ukrainian Deputy Defence Minister Oleksandr Polishchuk handed Trudeau a box that he said held shrapnel from a rocket that fell on the Black Sea port city of Odesa. He said the gift was intended to remind Trudeau of Ukraine's suffering from Russian strikes.

Three people were killed early Saturday in a fire sparked by debris from shot-down Russian drones in the Odesa region.

French President Emmanuel Macron urged his Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi to "immediately end" Tehran's support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which involves supplying Moscow with attack drones, the Elysee said. Macron in a telephone call underlined the serious "security and humanitarian consequences" of Iran's drone deliveries "and urged Tehran to immediately end the support it thus gives to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine", said a statement.

## 'Children of the bush,' lost 40 days in Colombian Amazon, found alive

BOGOTÁ (AFP/APP): Exhausted but happy, four Indigenous children who had been missing for more than a month in the Colombian Amazon rainforest were reunited with their relatives Saturday, in a happy ending to a nerve-racking saga that gripped the nation.

The siblings, who had been wandering alone in the jungle after surviving a small plane crash, were discovered after an intense rescue operation involving sniffer dogs, helicopters and aircraft.

Looking thin and frail, the children were transported by army medical plane to a military hospital in Bogota, according to AFP journalists at the scene. Defense Minister Ivan Velasquez, who visited them in the hospital with President Gustavo Petro, said they are recovering, but cannot yet eat solid food.

The youngest two children, now five and one, spent their birthdays in the jungle, as Lesly, the oldest at just 13 years old, guided them through the ordeal.

"It is thanks to her, her value and her leadership, that the three others were able to survive, with her care, her knowledge of the jungle," Velasquez said.

General Pedro Sanchez, who led the search operation, credited Indigenous people involved in the rescue effort with finding the children. "We found the children: miracle, miracle, miracle!" he told reporters.

Members of the Huitoto Indigenous group, the children -- aged 13, nine, five and one -- had been lost in the jungle since May 1, when the Cessna 206 in which they were traveling crashed.

The pilot had reported engine problems only minutes after taking off from a deep Amazon area known as Araracuara on the 350-kilometer (217-mile) journey to the town of San Jose del Guaviare.

The bodies of the pilot, the children's mother and a local Indigenous leader were all found at the crash site, where the plane sat almost vertical in the trees. Officials said the group had been fleeing threats from members of an armed group. "They are happy to see the family... they have all their senses," the children's grandfather, Fidencio Valencia, told reporters shortly after visiting them. "They are children of the bush," Valencia said, adding that they know how to survive in the jungle.

They "survived at first by eating a little flour (which was on board the plane), then seeds," he said.

At the request of their father, General Sanchez will be made the youngest child's godfather.

"For me, it is an honor," the visibly moved officer told local television, placing his hand on his heart.

A massive search involving 160 soldiers and 70 Indigenous people with intimate knowledge of the jungle was launched after the crash, garnering global attention.

Army chief Helder Giraldo said rescuers had covered over 2,600 kilometers (1650 miles) in total to locate the children. "Something that seemed impossible was achieved," Giraldo said on Twitter.

Petro posted a photo on Twitter showing several adults, some dressed in military fatigues, tending to the children as they sat on tarps in the jungle. One rescuer held a bottle to the mouth of the smallest child, whom he held in his arms.

He heralded the success as a "meeting of Indigenous and military knowledge" that had demonstrated a "different path towards a new Colombia."

The area is home to jaguars, snakes and other predators, as well as armed drug smuggling groups, but clues such as footprints, a diaper, and half-eaten fruit led authorities to believe they were on the right track.

Worried that the children would continue wandering and become ever more difficult to locate, the air force dumped 10,000 flyers into the forest with instructions in Spanish and the children's own Indigenous language, telling them to stay put.

The leaflets also included survival tips, and the military dropped food parcels and bottled water.

Rescuers had also been broadcasting a message recorded by the children's grandmother, urging them not to move.

According to the military, rescuers found the children about five kilometers (three miles) west of the crash site.

The children's grandmother Fatima Valencia said 13-year-old Lesly kept her younger siblings safe with her "warrior" spirit.

But the search is not completely over: the army announced Saturday it would continue looking for Wilson, a rescue dog that went missing during the search.

"No one is left behind," the army said in a tweet containing a video of the six-year-old Belgian Shepherd Malinois.

The dog was key to finding some of the items left behind by the children in the jungle, and may have at one point -- while straying along with the kids. They recounted a dog following them, but it's unclear if it was Wilson.

News of the children's rescue came as Petro returned home from Cuba, where he signed a six-month truce with Colombia's last active guerrilla group, the ELN.

On Friday, he praised "the effective coordination between the military and the Indigenous peo-



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## Charter of economy and need for a dialogue

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has said that the country's economy direly needed reforms, which in turn, could be undertaken in a stable political environment as economic development was intrinsically linked to political stability. The Premier took to his tweeter handle in the defence of the Federal Budget 2023-24, that recently presented by his government, and declared that the Charter of Economy appears to be the only way forward for our political parties to achieve prosperity for our people. According to him, the coalition government had prioritized the right areas that have the potential to spur economic growth, attract investment and make the economy self-sufficient, while the current budget would be the beginning of the process to fix the economy's long-term ailments. The Prime Minister was of the view that 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 the minimum wage to Rs32000. According to him, a more balanced budget that levied no new tax could not have been possible within the existing constraints.

Pakistan had been struck by a persistent political upheaval and economic frailty over the past one and half years and still passes through a crucial period in its history. There had been an all-time high risk of economic default and serious challenges to the nation's survival, yet, the rigid politics of combatant leaders did not spare any movement to further complicate the situation. The Prime Minister has rightly observed that the volatile economy direly needs reforms and political stability, while the charter of the economy is the only way forward to move the country in the direction of sustainable economic growth that leads to economic prosperity and the well-being of the public. The pro-nation sentiments of the self-claimed Khadim-e-Ala are highly appreciable in that he has remorse over the political situation and economic weakness of the country and feels the need for a charter of the economy. On that part, it is pertinent to mention that a charter of the economy is not possible without a charter of democracy to forge consensus among all political stakeholders over urgent issues that confront the nation including political instability, economic depletion, and electoral issues to pave the way for a permanent peace, economic revival and smooth holding of upcoming elections and afterward government transition. On these pages, we have persistently proposed a dialogue between all political forces including the parties in the coalition government and the PTI-led opposition to deliberate on the national issues and formulate a strategy to sail through the current deadlock. In that context, the Prime Minister and his aides had been advocating for dialogue in the past months but this endeavor could not get fruit due to no cooperation from the Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Currently, the Chairman PTI has expressed his willingness for dialogue and formed a committee to engage with the coalition government but at the time the ruling coalition refused to negotiate with its adversary.

Apparently, the call for dialogue is being considered a sign of weakness by the opposing political factions, and no one has the courage to use this opportunity for the larger benefit of democracy and the country. In fact, economic and political stability, and consensus over upcoming electoral reforms is the need of every political group, however, selfish leaders are not ready to capitulate to their ego thus political wrangling continues and the economy nose-downs every passing day. Although, the government has passed through a very crucial phase during the past year and faced multiple challenges arising out of the super-floods, followed by relief and rehabilitation operations, a global energy crisis, the worst effects of war in Ukraine, and other geostrategic upheavals. At the same time, the continued political instability damaged the economy and multiplied the challenges for the government and the public.

As for the government and the opposition, both factions had blatantly bulldozed the national economy with their reckless politics, and a limited time had been left with them to initiate a dialogue prior to the next election. The government should convene an All Parties Conference (APC) to deliberate on important national issues and forge a nationwide consensus on the national economy, draw red lines in politics, define a code of conduct, and promote a positive political culture in the country. The nation has paid a heavy price for the selfish politics of its leaders and now the public will not tolerate such rigid behavior anymore that has torn the national unity, ruined the economy, and caused challenges to the survival of the country. After all, the people will not care for a leader or political group who does not value the national prestige, public interest, and sovereignty of the country.

# Morocco leads the way in building a sustainable future

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges of our time, posing significant threats to ecosystems, economies and human well-being. Its impacts are expected to worsen existing vulnerabilities, especially in developing countries, leading to increased poverty, food insecurity and displacement. As global temperatures continue to rise, it is imperative that nations worldwide collaborate and take decisive action to mitigate and adapt to the warming planet.

Morocco has emerged as a surprising frontrunner in sustainable development strategies that center around the mitigation of climate risks. The country recognizes its vulnerability to climate-change impacts and has taken proactive steps to transition to a green economy. Morocco has also set ambitious goals, striving to generate more than half of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. With initiatives such as the Noor Ouarzazate Solar Complex, Morocco is demonstrating its commitment to clean energy and setting an example for other nations to follow.

Addressing climate change is a particularly urgent priority for Morocco. Its vulnerability to various natural hazards, such as floods, droughts and heat waves is well-documented, putting more pressure on Morocco's limited natural resources. Rising temperatures pose a significant threat to Morocco's economy and society, primarily through impacts on agriculture, scarce water resources and worsening desertification. The latter, for instance, could lead to a decline in fertile land and exacerbates water scarcity. This, in turn, can result in the displacement of rural populations, increased poverty and heightened social inequalities.

Meanwhile, water shortages are expected to intensify in the coming years, especially in the south, and agriculture — a vital sector contributing 13 percent to Morocco's GDP — is also at risk due to climate variability and change, with droughts affecting cereal yields by 60 percent. The agricultural sector, when

combined with fishing and forestry industries, employs nearly a third of the country's workforce, necessitating its insulation from further climate-induced shocks.

Morocco's dependence on imported fossil fuels has been another cause for concern, beyond merely complicating its plans to reduce its emissions footprint. The North African country must also bolster its energy security while simultaneously accelerating its sustainable development. In contrast to neighboring countries such as Algeria and Libya, which are major oil and gas producers, Morocco has limited domestic energy

**The country has committed to adding 10 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy capacity between 2018 and 2030, consisting of 4,560 megawatts (MW) of solar and 4,200 MW of wind power. These targets are part of a broader plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 18 percent and increase renewable power capacity to more than 50 percent by 2030. To achieve these goals, Morocco has been successful in attracting international investment, with key players such as ACWA Power, Aries and TSK partnering with the Moroccan Agency for Solar Energy, or Masen, to develop these projects. The resulting achievements in solar and wind energy by Morocco are truly impressive. The Noor Ouarzazate Solar Complex, with a combined capacity of about 580MW, is the world's largest concentrated solar power plant. This complex plays a crucial role in providing clean energy, offsetting more than 770,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually. In addition, Morocco boasts the Tarfaya Wind Farm, one of the largest wind farms in Africa, which produces roughly 325MW. These projects, and the many to come, exemplify the North African country's push to accelerate renewable energy development, a critical component of the green economies of the future.**

resources and relies heavily on imports to meet its energy needs.

This reliance on imported fossil fuels puts Morocco at a disadvantage when it comes to its energy security and sustainable development compared to its resource-rich neighbors. This dependence on imported fossil fuels makes Morocco more susceptible to global market fluctuations, as it is vulnerable to price and supply shocks. Relying on fossil fuels also hinders the country's transition to a sustainable future, as it contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and exacerbates the impacts of climate change.

Given these challenges, Morocco has charted a path toward mitigation and adaptation, ensuring a more resilient, sustainable future for its population. Morocco's proactive

approach to transitioning, as demonstrated by the country's "Plan Vert," is quickly becoming an important example of how peer nations can feasibly transform their economies and societies without sidelining development goals. Continued investment, trade and climate-focused engagement will further propel Morocco to overcome hurdles and lead the way in the planet's fight to limit rising temperatures.

Morocco's ambitious renewable energy targets are already paving the way for a greener future. The country has committed to

world's largest concentrated solar power plant. This complex plays a crucial role in providing clean energy, offsetting more than 770,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually. In addition, Morocco boasts the Tarfaya Wind Farm, one of the largest wind farms in Africa, which produces roughly 325MW. These projects, and the many to come, exemplify the North African country's push to accelerate renewable energy development, a critical component of the green economies of the future. The positive impact of

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Morocco's renewable energy initiatives on its economy and energy security is undeniable.

First, the renewable energy sector has significant job creation potential, with the Solar Complex alone generating about 1,000 construction jobs and 60 permanent jobs during its operation and maintenance phases.

Second, these projects help to reduce the country's dependence on imported fossil fuels, as 90 percent of its energy is currently imported. By increasing renewable energy capacity, Morocco can achieve greater energy independence and reduce vulnerability to disruptions. Lastly, there is export potential for Morocco's renewable energy. As the country continues to develop its renewable energy infrastructure, it may be able to export

clean energy to neighboring countries, further bolstering its economy and solidifying its position as a green leader in this part of the world.

Besides ambitions to "export the sun," Morocco has been implementing robust water management strategies as part of its adaptation strategies. It has invested in desalination, such as the Agadir plant, which produces 275,000 cubic meters of water a day. This initiative not only tackles water scarcity but also provides clean water for agricultural purposes, helping to secure the livelihoods of local communities. Additionally, Morocco

has been working on improving wastewater treatment infrastructure to combat water pollution and reuse treated water for irrigation. The country's National Liquid Sanitation Program aims to increase wastewater treatment coverage to 60 percent by 2030.

Elsewhere, Morocco is actively engaged in reforestation efforts as a climate-change adaptation strategy. The country's High Atlas Reforestation Project aims to restore degraded lands, combat desertification and preserve biodiversity. By planting native tree species, Morocco is enhancing the resilience of local ecosystems and preventing soil erosion.

Furthermore, Morocco's commitment to the Bonn Challenge — a global effort to restore 350 million hectares of deforested and

degraded land by 2030 — underscores its dedication to reforestation and biodiversity conservation. Morocco aims to restore 1 million hectares of land by 2030, which will be a significant contribution to this global objective.

Beyond its borders, Morocco continues to play a significant role in advancing renewable energy across Africa, notably through its involvement in the African Renewable Energy Initiative, or AREI. Launched in 2015, AREI aims to develop at least 10GW of new renewable energy generation capacity on the continent and to mobilize financial support for African countries to transition to sustainable energy systems.

In addition to its contributions to AREI, Morocco has forged strong partnerships with other North African countries to share knowledge and resources. The country has collaborated with Tunisia and Egypt on various renewable energy projects, including the establishment of a joint research center for solar and wind energy technologies.

Furthermore, Morocco is tipped as a major contributor in collaborations between European and North African countries to develop renewable energy projects across the region and export clean electricity to Europe.

As the world grapples with the urgent need to address climate change, Morocco's leadership in fostering regional cooperation and championing global climate action serves as an inspiring example for other nations. Continued collaboration at both regional and global levels is essential for achieving the ambitious goals set forth in the Paris Agreement and ensuring a sustainable future for all.

Countries around the world should look to Morocco as a model for how bold action and collaboration can drive meaningful progress in the fight against climate change. By embracing renewable energy, forging partnerships and advocating for robust climate policies, Morocco has demonstrated that it is possible to achieve a greener and more sustainable future, and that other nations can follow suit.

## Full steam ahead for both Democrats and the Republicans

Yossi Mekelberg

There is a long way to go before the first ballot is cast in the US presidential election in November 2024. Nevertheless, it is already full steam ahead for both the main parties as the Democrats and, especially, the Republicans select their candidates for the nationwide poll that will decide who leads this mighty country for the next four years.

When the dust has settled and the respective candidates are chosen, the most likely outcome seems to be a rematch between incumbent President Joe Biden and his predecessor, Donald Trump. All things considered, who could have imagined this turn of events in the aftermath of the 2020 election?

When we consider US elections it would be foolish at this early stage to attempt to predict either the result of the presidential primaries or who the next occupant of the White House will be. History has taught us that major upsets can and do happen, and when the field of candidates is rather crowded, as is the case with the Republicans, and the long, sharp knives are already out, anything could happen in the coming months.

It might seem like not a day goes by without another Republican hopeful throwing their hat into the ring. Most recently it was Mike Pence, formerly vice president under Trump, whose candidacy threatened to turn an already inflamed situation into an explosive one, which was followed by an announcement from the former governor of New Jersey, Chris Christie.

There are some elements of this particular presidential race that make it even more unpredictable than usual. One is the age factor, which cannot be ignored considering that the incumbent will be nearly 82 years

old in November 2024, and the person he is most likely to face will be 78.

In a recent NBC News poll, 70 percent of those surveyed said Biden should not run again due to his age, although a majority of Democrats supported his candidacy. Asked whether age was a factor, 69 percent said yes.

The second issue, one which casts doubt on

the next election, this support might yet dwindle or be surpassed by the legal implications of those cases.

There is a real danger that while the US is facing one of its most challenging periods, domestically and internationally, the primaries and the subsequent election campaign will turn into the kind of media circus

thought to her suitability for the top job.

There is also a strength in continuity, and the current administration has done a much better job in running the country's affairs than approval ratings give it credit for. Under difficult circumstances it managed to steady a very rocky ship after the

**Many voters who are considering voting for Biden would not, under normal circumstances, be too concerned about whoever is running for vice president. On this occasion, however, considering the incumbent's age and Harris being the most likely to take over should the president be incapacitated, those voters might give serious thought to her suitability for the top job. There is also a strength in continuity, and the current administration has done a much better job in running the country's affairs than approval ratings give it credit for. Under difficult circumstances it managed to steady a very rocky ship after the tumultuous four years of Trump's term, led the country out of the COVID-19 pandemic, stood up to Russia over the war in Ukraine, and changed budgetary priorities with considerable success. On the Republican side, notwithstanding the large number of presidential wannabes, the agenda is still being dictated by Trump and his caprices. A party that once prided itself on providing a big tent that could house a wide range of opinions has been rapidly shrinking and lurching further and further to the populist right as it turns into a cauldron of chaos.**

Trump's candidacy, is the legal woes he faces wherever he goes. It is astonishing that following a court ruling in a civil suit that found Trump had sexually abused the journalist E. Jean Carroll in a New York department store changing room 27 years ago, a ruling that for the first time in history branded a former US president a sexual predator, that he is still regarded as a fit candidate to run for the highest office in the land by the vast majority of Republican primary voters.

This is as much a reflection of American society as it is of Trump himself. Yet, given that Trump will have to deal with a number of other legal battles before

that is inevitable when Trump is involved, and therefore distract from the country's priorities.

Barring any unforeseen circumstances, however, we can be fairly certain Biden will be running for reelection, and so all eyes will also be on his running mate, Kamala Harris.

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While voters have been expressing their concerns

about a wide range of issues, the two leading Republican contenders, Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who are not so far apart in terms of their political and social views, are, despite or maybe because of this, already concentrating on their respective smear campaigns and the more emotive aspects of campaigning than on substantive issues.

Inevitably, this is encouraging the other contenders, including those who previously worked for him, to remain in the race and add fuel to the fire of the various investigations through more information and allegations.

At this early stage, DeSantis is probably making a mistake by trying to out-Trump Trump in terms of disruption, but he also makes Trump look more liberal in comparison on issues such as freedom of speech or abortion — which is a very dubious achievement. But this might be simply a tactical move, considering his young age, designed to position him as Trump's heir apparent for the 2028 election.

From the perspective of the Democrats, the work might be done for them should the Republican primaries turn into a blood-bath while they themselves build on their better-than-expected mid-term successes and hope that, come November next year, the seeds of policies they planted at the beginning of the Biden presidency will yield convincing enough fruit before the American people make their final decision.

One thing is guaranteed, though: This coming cycle of elections, from the presidential vote to the last of the gubernatorials, is unlikely to be a shining example of the civility and constructiveness of democratic debate.



# General election in Spain could cause shockwaves across Europe

The focus in much of Europe during the summer months often turns toward Spain, the euro zone's fourth largest economy, given that it is one of the leading tourist destinations in the region. However, two major political events are intensifying the focus on the country this year.

Not only is Spain gearing up for the most important national election in Europe this year, a “snap” ballot due to be held in late July, Madrid is also preparing to take over the presidency of the EU Council on July 1. This rotating, six-month position does not carry any executive powers, per se, but it does allow the incumbent state to set the agenda, host meetings, steer negotiations, draft compromise texts, organize votes and speak vis-a-vis the other EU institutions.

The coincidental timing of these two events is not ideal for Spain, preparations-wise, nor indeed for Brussels. Certainly, this is not the first time an EU presidency has coincided with a general election; last year, for example, President Emmanuel Macron maintained France's EU presidential mandate while he battled for reelection.

However, there are two reasons why the current situation in Spain is different from that in France last year. Firstly, Macron was a favorite to win reelection and this is not the case with the Pedro Sanchez government in Spain.

Moreover, the next EU Council presidency is a particularly important one because the one that follows, to be held by Belgium between January and June 2024, will be hamstrung by elections to the European Parliament, as a result of which politicians in Brussels will transition to full-time campaigning mode.

Therefore the Spanish presidency has a high degree of importance, not least because the intensity of the war in Ukraine could increase in the coming

months, and many key, related policy issues require attention and resolution, including a potential 11th round of sanctions against Moscow, a €500 million (\$540 million) plan to ramp up ammunition production to aid Ukraine, plus an unprecedented scheme to confiscate frozen Russian assets to help pay for post-war reconstruction.

**Madrid insists its presidency will continue as planned, regardless of the general election and whether the government changes. However, there are significant concerns in Brussels about Spain's ability to effectively fulfill the responsibilities associated with this commitment. What makes this situation all the more complex is that the incumbent, left-of-center Spanish Socialist Workers' Party-led government headed by Sanchez, which has been in power since 2018, is on the ropes following very poor regional and local elections results last month. It is for this reason that Sanchez caught many Spaniards by surprise with his decision to call a snap election, to be held on July 23. This strategy is not without precedent. In 2019, Sanchez, who had only been in power for a few months at that time, called a snap general election which proved successful in triggering a great mobilization of the Spanish left in the face of the threat that the far-right, nationalist Vox party might take office. The prime minister is hoping for a similar result this time, even though polls suggest there is a significant possibility of a shift in power in Madrid in July to a right-of-center administration headed by People's Party leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo.**

On the domestic European front, there is a post-crisis overhaul of the electricity market for the EU to deal with, a world-first attempt to regulate artificial intelligence, an ambitious strategy to prevent the exodus of green industries, and the long-awaited, hard-fought reform of the EU's fiscal rules.

Already, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has postponed a high-profile speech to the European Parliament, scheduled for July 13, in which he was due to unveil the priorities of his country's presidency. It has been pushed back to September, by which time he might no longer be in office.

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Andrew Hammond

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While the political

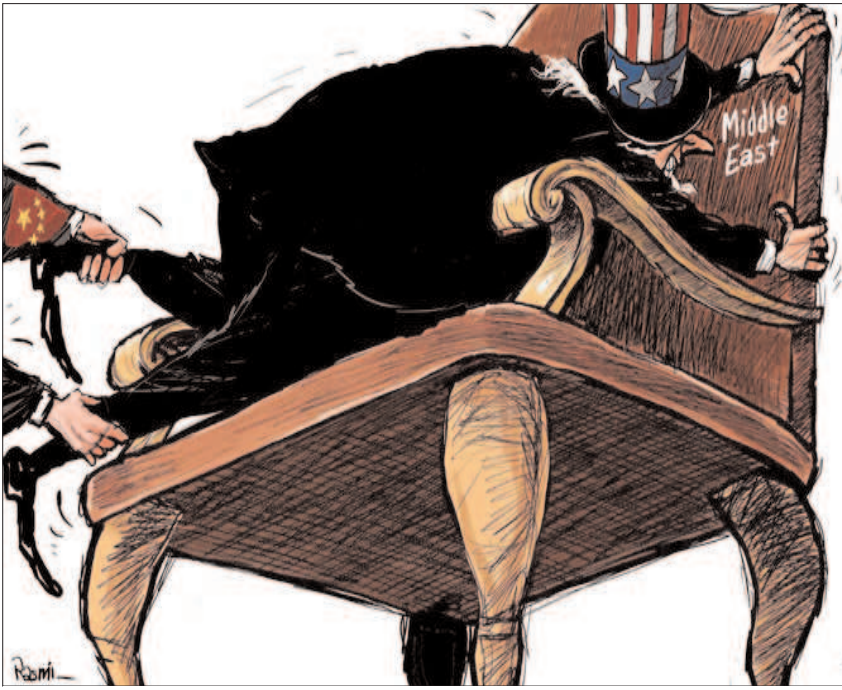
Franco political duopoly of the right-of-center People's Party and the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party that had dominated the country since the late 1970s. Indeed, the combined vote of the two parties, which accounted for about 85 percent of the ballot at the 2008 general election, has fallen away significantly in subsequent elections.

Several “new” parties have filled the resultant political vacuum, including Vox, which only won its first parliamentary seats at the most recent election. Other new parties to emerge recently include the leftist Podemos and Izquierda Unida, collectively known as Unidos Podemos, which currently support the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party-led government in Madrid.

The rise of these new groups has been fueled by popular anger over political scandals, along with the fallout from the worst recession in the country for more than a generation after the 2007-08 international financial crisis, as a result of which there was a property crash and unemployment peaked at 27 percent.

While the People's Party looks likely to emerge as the largest party, depending upon the wider election results there is still an outside possibility that a Spanish Socialist Workers' Party-led alliance could emerge. This would require the support of other parties, though, and it remains unclear whether, collectively, they can win enough seats for a majority.

Taking all of this into account, Spain is therefore heading into an enormously consequential six months. With the next EU presidency so important to the medium-term future of the bloc, any post-election instability in the nation could be magnified across the continent, given the chilling effect it could have on the wider European international and domestic policy agenda, including the war in Ukraine.



## The US should not compromise on Israel's profiling of Americans

Daoud Kuttab

The Israeli media has been busy lately talking about a potential breakthrough in the efforts of US Ambassador Tom Nides to offer a departing gift — a visa waiver for Israelis visiting America. Friendly countries often work out such agreements, provided there is absolute reciprocity; in other words, for Israelis to be afforded special treatment, the state of Israel must adhere to treating all Americans the same.

This is where the problem basically lies.

Israel applies the security concept of profiling. People from certain backgrounds, with certain names and following certain religions, are given special negative treatment at entry points. They are asked to wait for hours and, on many occasions, American citizens are turned back without being

become a standard in relations between the two countries, has been held up due to the attempts by the Netanyahu administration to weaken the Israeli Supreme Court by means of a controversial judicial overhaul. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis have been protesting weekly for 22 consecutive weeks.

The US administration is also unhappy with the failure of the Israeli government to live up to its and previous Israeli governments' commitments regarding the building of illegal Jewish settlements, especially the Homesh settlement in the Nablus area. And US officials were this week upset by a critical remark made by Israel's foreign minister against Vice President Kamala Harris. Eli Cohen questioned whether Harris had

fear is that the US will compromise on the idea of total reciprocity with Israel in the name of Israeli security. Imagine a situation in which Israel refuses to allow a US citizen who poses no security threat to travel to Israel or Palestine just because someone in Israeli security does not like their politics.

Added to the above is the fact that Israel has passed a law that forbids anybody of any nationality from entering Israel if they support in any way the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign. So, if an American from the Bible Belt once liked a BDS campaign post on Facebook, Israel has a law that allows it to ban that person from entering the country. There are numerous cases of Israeli airport officials demanding the passwords to passengers' social media accounts and scanning their

**In order to bridge the gap between US policy and Israeli reality, he is suggesting a trial period starting July 1, in which Israelis will be tested. But anyone who studies the history of trial periods, especially in the highly politicized relations between Israel and the US, will quickly realize that there is a strong possibility the trial period will become permanent. All we have to do is look at the US-sponsored Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles signed on the White House Lawn in 1993. In that agreement, often called the Oslo I Accord, Israel committed to a five-year interim period, during which a permanent settlement would be agreed. This interim period, or trial period, has become permanent now that 30 years have passed since the famous handshake between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin under the auspices of US President Bill Clinton. US-Israeli relations are going through some difficult times, as the Biden administration has yet to offer an official invitation to the White House to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. This invitation, which has become a standard in relations between the two countries, has been held up due to the attempts by the Netanyahu administration to weaken the Israeli Supreme Court by means of a controversial judicial overhaul. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis have been protesting weekly for 22 consecutive weeks.**

# Wildfires a fact of life but we need global action to minimize the risks

One of the main global media headlines over the past week has been the uncontrolled wildfires in Canada that have resulted in dense clouds of smoke blanketing large swathes of the north-eastern US, most notably New York and New Jersey, leaving more than 100 million people struggling to breathe and carry on with their normal daily lives.

Such fires — which are currently raging over 3.3 million hectares, or 33,000 sq. km, equivalent to about 40 percent of the landmass of the UAE — are an annual occurrence in Canada between May and September. What is worrying is that they have been growing in scope, covering much larger areas than ever before, and beginning much earlier in the season. For instance, in just six weeks this year the fires have set new records in terms of spread and the amount of damage caused.

The scale of the fires this year can be blamed in part on a drought and the intense heat that has hit North America, which is in turn in direct correlation to the effects of climate change and global warming that are playing havoc with the world at large.

While the current headlines have largely focused on New York and Canada, at this time of year wildfires have become the norm across large areas of the planet, especially in the northern hemisphere where they mark the onset of summer. Incidentally, summers are not only becoming much hotter but also longer, setting in much earlier in the year and typically over-staying their welcome.

So this year, even as Canada has hogged the headlines, wildfires have also broken out in Europe and other parts of the world. For instance, on March 23, three days after the spring season began, Spain reported its first major wildfire of the year, which burned through 4,000 hectares within hours on the first day alone.

Fires are also burning in Italy and France, the latter of which has barely recovered from last year, one of its worst-ever wildfire sea-

sons, during which it lost 66,000 hectares of forest — almost seven times the average annual loss, which stands at about 9,900 hectares each year between 2006 and 2021.

Almost every year, fires are proving to be more frequent, more intense, much longer lasting and much more damaging than the preceding year. This is due to a mix of factors, mainly human-driven activities but

**It is time for us to accept that these wildfires are here to stay and we can only realistically attempt to manage them, not control them or banish them entirely from the planet. This will require not only a global response, with coordination between governments and institutions, but, more importantly, involves action from all of us. It is important to create awareness among people about how small, careless actions, such as dropping cigarette butts or failing to properly extinguish campfires, can cause major catastrophes. Managing forest fires requires the involvement of a large number of stakeholders, the first and foremost of whom are the indigenous communities that have lived in these forests for thousands of years, because they are the ones who suffer the most as a result of wildfires. Governments and civil society organizations must ensure that the interests of these communities and their homelands are protected as effectively as possible. This requires curbs on the growing incursions by organized and industrial economic activities such as large-scale agriculture, logging and plantation. The main factor responsible for uncontrolled, preventable fires is the trend of monoculture plantations that has taken hold of industrial or corporate forestry. This means the same type of plant or tree is planted across thousands of hectares of land, without any thought to diversification to help reduce the risk not only of fires but also diseases that can spread from tree to tree throughout a plantation.**

also the rapidly deteriorating state of the global environment — which is also the result of human activities.

Wildfires leave huge swathes of destruction in their wake and cause hundreds of billions of dollars in damages and losses each year. The first and foremost impact is, of course, on the global forests that have been under relentless attack by humans as the toll of industrial logging continues to rise across the world, severely depleting forest resources globally.

In the first 20 years of this millennium, according to the Global Forest Watch, forests dwindled by 101 million hectares world-

Ranvir S. Nayar

wide, an area equivalent to that of Ethiopia. Fires were responsible only for 27 percent of this; the rest was the direct result of human activities such as logging, urbanization and agriculture.

Wildfires and forest loss are not limited to any one country or region but affect almost all nations. Therefore it is important to

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These buffers include lakes, rivers, rocky outcrops and ridges. However, as lakes and rivers dry up, for example, these barriers are no longer so effective and, in their greed to maximize output from plantations, many companies ignore advice to leave uncultivated areas clear of vegetation to effectively act as firebreak and help prevent fires from spreading.

In view of the rapidly rising number of tourists heading to the forests of the world, either on camping trips or simply days out, it is also very important for tourism authorities to regulate the number of people allowed in core forest areas at any one time, not only to minimize the chances of an accidental fire but also to curb the damage caused to forests and biodiversity by the growing numbers of human visitors.

It is also vital for countries to cooperate with each other. Those nations that are relatively well-equipped and have a well-trained force of fire officers could offer training to professionals from other countries. Many need help to develop a common fire-fighting lexicon and their professionals need to be trained in fire control techniques and safety mechanisms.

As New Yorkers have clearly realized this week, and Europeans and Asians have been aware for some time, fires are not only a problem for the countries in which they break out, but can also cause widespread disruption many hundreds of miles away. It is important, therefore, that the whole world comes together to fight this menace in the best possible manner.

given a reason.

Nides, who is leaving his post later this year, appears to be pushing for this breakthrough without a total Israeli commitment to reciprocity as a farewell present to Israelis. In order to bridge the gap between US policy and Israeli reality, he is suggesting a trial period starting July 1, in which Israelis will be tested. But anyone who studies the history of trial periods, especially in the highly politicized relations between Israel and the US, will quickly realize that there is a strong possibility the trial period will become permanent.

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US-Israeli relations are going through some difficult times, as the Biden administration has yet to offer an official invitation to the White House to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. This invitation, which has

ever read the judicial plan that she had criticized. He later apologized for his remarks. Furthermore, the US is still awaiting an Israeli investigation into the killing last year of American-Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.

Border crossings between Israel and the rest of the world are infiltrated by security personnel, who have the final decision as to who is allowed in and who is not. A Palestinian American who once lived in Bethlehem cannot use the Israeli airport, while a Jewish American living in the occupied Bethlehem area is allowed into the country without any problem.

Within the areas under Israeli military control, the discrimination is even more obvious. Israelis are allowed to travel throughout the recognized borders of the state of Israel and throughout the Palestinian areas Israel occupied in 1967, whereas Palestinians are confined to their own areas and are not allowed to travel without a special permit issued by the Israelis. As a result, thousands of Palestinian Americans who today live in the West Bank (and some in Gaza) are not allowed unfettered access to Jerusalem and Israel.

It is not clear what the parameters of the discussions behind the scenes are and the commitments that the US is asking of Israel if Washington agrees to the visa waiver. What many

posts before deciding whether or not to allow them into Israel.

Countries around the world value their sovereignty and Israel, like the US, has the right to prevent or allow anyone to enter their sovereign areas. But in this case, America is considering giving all Israelis unfettered access to the US without a prior visa, while Israel wants to keep the right to continue its policy of discriminating against visitors on the basis of their original nationality, their religion, their ideas and their thoughts.

There is no problem in the US offering Israel or any other country special treatment on the condition of total reciprocity. However, any compromise on the reciprocity issue would be an encouragement and a green light for countries to further discriminate against Americans. This is not only a violation of individuals' human rights, but it goes against everything that America stands for. There should not be a trial period or anything less than 100 percent adherence to the reciprocity issue.

All humans must be treated equally. And in the case of an American-Israeli agreement in which all Israelis are treated equally, the very least the US can and should demand is that its citizens are also all treated equally. Period. No ifs, buts or maybes.

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# Govt steers economy out of crisis: Governor

APBF demands soft loans at 1-2% markup with no collateral

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A delegation of the All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF), led by its President Syed Maaz Mahmood, called on Governor Balighur Rehman here at Governor's House, where economic situation of the country and the problems faced by the businessmen were discussed in details. The APBF President apprised the governor about the issues of the business community.

Governor Balighur Rehman, on this occasion, assured delegation of the APBF to resolve their all issues. The Punjab governor said that the government has steered the country's economy out of the crisis by making sincere efforts. He said that the country's economy was showing the signs of stability which bodes well for the development and prosperity of the country.

The governor said that the strengthening of the country's economy and promotion of trade and industry were the priorities of the government.

He added that the government is also very much concerned about the trouble faced by the business community. He said that the government is engaged with the business community on the all trade-related matters through consultation. He appreciated the APBF for its services for the cause of business community. He said that the business community is backbone of the economy and will be facilitated for sustainable economic growth of the country.

APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood, on this occasion called for introducing soft policies for SMEs including special financing schemes where they can get credit at low markup rates with no collateral requirement on 1-2% markup rate. Moreover, there should be a holiday for all taxes and levies for five years for the newly registered companies, especially SMEs.

He said that the business community is backbone of the economy and is ready to supplement all efforts of the government aimed at

economic revival of the country but the government will have to take the business community on board while formulating the trade and industry related policies.

Office bearers of the APBF expressed the hoped that the Governor Punjab will play an active role and will act as a bridge between the business community and the government. They said that it would also promote the idea of public-private partnership that is a key to success. They said that the inclusive policies should be formed in consultation with the stakeholders that will help achieve the economic goals.

The governor agreed with the proposal of the APBF office-bearers that a Charter of Economy should be signed in the larger interest of the country. They said that the taxpayers should be given respect and honor as they are backbone of the economy and are playing a key role to run the economic affairs of the country.

Syed Maaz Mahmood called for taking all steps to

ensure a business and investment-friendly environment as it was imperative for economic progress and prosperity of the country.

Pointing out the problems being faced by the trade and industrial sectors, he stressed the need for providing a level-playing field to the business community. The government should also reduce the cost of doing business by ensuring supply of energy at concessional tariff especially for SMEs sector, he added.

He observed that in view of achieving economic growth through consistency in policies, the government will have to take solid measures to strengthen the trade and industry, especially the SMEs, saving the livelihood of millions of workers associated with the small businesses. He said that the small and medium enterprises are backbone of the economy and their role was crucial for economic development. He said that major issue of the SMEs is limited access to the financing, which should be increased.



MULTAN: Women sorting good quality onions at vegetable market.

## ‘WCCI to resolve issues on priority’

SARGODHA (INP): President Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries (WCCI) Shamim Aftab has said that woman chamber will utilize all resources to resolve the issues of transgender community on priority basis.

She stated this while leading a delegation which paid an observational visit to transgender protection center in Sargodha police lines on Sunday.

On the occasion, In-charge transgender protection center Shiekh Safder briefed the delegation on the facilities being provided at the transgender protection center.

He said that the purpose to establish the protection center was to provide basic living facilities to old age transgender who were not in a position to earn for their own. More than 50 transgender are getting three time meal, clothes and all living facilities in the center, he added.

Shamim Aftab said that the WCCI will no stone unturned for resolving all issues and welfare of the transgender.

## Saudia's Industrial Production Index jumped

RIYADH (Agencies): Affirming the progress of Saudi Arabia's economic diversification journey, the Kingdom's Industrial Production Index rose by 3.2 percent in April 2023, compared to the same month of the previous year, according to official data.

The data released by the General Authority for Statistics revealed that the rise in IPI was driven by high production in mining and quarrying, manufacturing activity and electricity and gas supplies.

IPI is an economic indicator that reflects the relative changes in the volume of industrial output in the Kingdom, and it is calculated based on the industrial production survey.

"Relative weights of the mining and quarrying, manufacturing and electricity and gas supply sectors in the IPI are 74.5 percent, 22.6 percent and 2.9 percent, respectively. Thus, the trend of the industrial production index in the mining and quarrying sector dominates the trend in the general IPI," said GASTAT in the report.

Compared to April 2022, Saudi Arabia's mining and quarrying activities grew by 0.2 percent in April this year as the Kingdom increased its oil production to more than 10 million barrels per day in the month.

Manufacturing activities also rose by 10.5 percent in April compared to the same month of the previous year, while electricity and gas supplies rose by 25.5 percent during the same period.

However, Saudi Arabia's IPI in April decreased by 0.3 percent compared to March 2023, driven by a decrease in manufacturing activities by 2 percent.

Earlier in April, data from the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources revealed that investments in the Kingdom's manufacturing landscape reached SR495 billion (\$132 billion) in a mere seven years since the launch of Vision 2030 in 2016.

# Govt not successful to present growth-oriented budget due to IMF curbs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF), while commenting on the federal budget 2023-24, has said that it is apparently a mixed budget, as the finance minister has not been fully successful to present a business-friendly budget due to IMF conditions, as the government is caught between a painful fiscal adjustment reforms agenda set by the IMF, and to make room for any relief to the people ahead of the elections.

PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that the government has imposed new taxes of almost Rs200 billion without bringing more sectors into tax net, implying burdening those who are already paying taxes.

He noted that there was no mention of reduction in energy tariff, adding that the federal government would fail to reach the targets set in the budget. He said that the country's exports will likely to be less than \$30 billion, adding that the target of Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) will not be achieved.

Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that the present budget lacks major objective of giving a long-term direction 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.

The PIAF Chairman 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 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, he 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 implementation of withholding tax on cash handling is an adverse step and should be abolished. How will it be met? The economy is already slowing down. The Budget is silent on loss-making State Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

Looking at the current budget, it is very difficult to achieve 3.5% growth rate. Rs5 billion for the IT sector and for women entrepreneurs are insufficient. The IT sector is growing rapidly in Pakistan and its share in exports is also increasing rapidly.

The increase in foreign currency import limit up to 1 lakh dollars is welcome which will help to overcome the shortage of dollars in the country. Abolition of duty on machinery for solar panels, conversion of tube wells to solar energy and duty on seeds, youth employment scheme are welcome initiatives.

# Not economy, political gains, fame focus of budget

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt said on Sunday that, instead of focusing on ailing economy, political gains and fame remained the key focus of the government in the federal budget.

In a statement issued here, he stated that the populist budget will worsen the economy instead of improving it, and the masses will pay the price for it.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that not taxing landlords and shopkeepers is unfortunate, and speaks about the priorities of the rulers. Out of 2.2 million shopkeepers, only thirty thousand pay taxes,

but they are not included in the tax net to get votes in the upcoming elections, he added. The business leader further stated that the budget will hit production, exports, and the government's revenue while leading to further degradation of the shattered economy.

The government is trying to treat cancer with sweet pills instead of surgery, which will not save the economy, he maintained. He informed that it is impossible to collect a tax of 9200 billion rupees in the current financial year, and even if it happens, the interest of 7303 billion rupees will be paid, which means that the government will have only 1897 billion rupees left from

the tax revenue.

Shahid Rashid Butt said that the budget for fiscal year 2024 lacks important details like the source of borrowings, while the government is increasing expenditures despite not having the resources.

The finance minister has hinted that the government is considering restructuring the debt after the budget, which means that the government is unable to meet its financial obligations.

The creditors will not restructure the loans without the nod of the IMF, for which Pakistan and the international organisation must be on the same page, which is not an immediate possibility, he warned.

# Need urged for promoting furniture export

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Furniture Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq Sunday said that Pakistani furniture was very popular in Afghanistan and its demand was growing due to exquisite designs with wider varieties.

He said Pakistan has traditionally been one of the major suppliers of furniture to Afghanistan as Afghan traders often import furniture from Pakistan due to its proximity and availability of a wide range of products.

Talking to a delegation of Afghan importers led by Muslim Khan Buner, Mian Kashif Ashfaq said Pakistan and Afghanistan have a significant trade

relationship, including the furniture sector. However, it is important that the specific dynamics of trade can evolve over time due to various factors such as political situations, economic conditions and government policies, he expressed.

He said Pakistan's furniture industry, particularly in cities like Karachi, Lahore, and Peshawar has been exporting a variety of furniture items to Afghanistan, including wooden and upholstered furniture, office furniture and home decor items.

He said that the furniture trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan had been facilitated by land routes, pri-

marily through the Torkham border crossing, which was the busiest land border between the two countries.

The close geographical proximity between the two nations has made transportation relatively convenient. However, it is worth noting that the trade relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan can be influenced by various factors, including political tensions, security concerns, and changes in trade policies, he said.

Kashif Ashfaq pointed out that any development in these areas can impact the scope and volume of furniture trade between the two countries.

# PBF demands revision of NFC Award to strengthen federal govt

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) has said that the Constitution gives provincial autonomy but the eighteenth Amendment financially weakened the federation in the name of provincial autonomy.

In a post budget reaction, PBF Secretary Information and Spokesperson, Zainab Jatoi while talking to media on Sunday said that we demand revision of only that part of the 18th Amendment which is related to allocation of resources through NFC Award.

She said, "The Federation has no money today, all the savings and money are with the provinces. Defense and foreign debt is only the responsibility of the federal government. Provinces should also pay their share for defense."

The PBF spokesperson said the economy is already under pressure from floods and the war between Ukraine and Russia.

However the government has taken a lot of these kinds of measures in the budget for 2023 and 2024 that will help the IT, SME, and agriculture sec-

tors grow. In this financial plan, farming, which is the foundation of the public authority, has allotted five billion rupees for the arrangement of sponsored advances to the agri business.

The public authority has allotted six billion rupees for the following year for the concession on imported urea manure. Charges and obligations on import of value seeds have been annulled. PBF is appreciative of these efforts.

The rural economy has the potential to be transformed by the agro industry. The SMEs are critical to any industry. In this financial plan, the alliance government has carried out a super duty on pay above Rs 150 million. This action is in direct contravention of this promise. Additionally, the public authority has expanded the expense pace of 0.5% on business shippers. The PBF had proposed that a comparable duty design ought to be saved for business shippers or modern to save charge income because of under-invoicing.

Zainab Jatoi further said that the conversion of 50000 agriculture tube wells on solar energy will not only reduce the input cost for the farmers but it will also help reducing demand of electricity and imported diesel.

She said that exemption from duties and taxes on combined harvesters; rice planters, seeders and dryers; and import of certified seeds and saplings and 5-year tax exemption to agriculture based industries of rural areas would help increasing output and reducing the post harvest losses, but we had also expected to announce the relief in fertilizer prices especially in DAP and Potash.

Further, PM's Youth business and agriculture loan scheme, discounted credit facility for small farmers, and increase in agriculture credit target to Rs.2250 billion were some other measures aimed provision of capital into agriculture sector, she said adding that but government should consider reduction in KIBOR rates to ensure benefits of credit schemes.

Jatoi also lauded establishment of Export Council and said it was a long standing demand of business community that was met in the budget 2023-24. She was of the view that \$30 billion export target for new financial year should be revised to \$40 billion while considering the devaluation of rupee and potential of export oriented industry of the country.

She further said that measures like granting SME status to IT sector and tax exemption to youth entrepreneurs would encourage the youth and promote IT and entrepreneurship in Pakistan.

The PBF spokesperson also stated the decision of raising minimum wages of workers to Rs.32000 and said that it would help providing relief to lower income strata of the society.

She urged the need of initiatives for revival of industry, business confidence and imports particularly raw materials for local industry to assist the important sectors of economy in dealing with problems being faced.

# China's exports surged by 8.1%

BEIJING (INP): China's economic prowess has once again corroborated its resurgence, with recent data from the General Administration of Customs (GAC) demonstrating the country's impressive trade performance.

In a clear testament to China's robust economic policies, the country's exports surged by a remarkable 8.1 percent in yuan-denominated terms in the first 5 months, soaring to a staggering 9.62 trillion yuan (\$1.35 trillion), China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Sunday.

Equally noteworthy is the growth of imports, which experienced a 0.5 percent year-on-year increase, reaching 7.15 trillion yuan. It is vital that China's foreign trade sector has undergone substantial improvements, evident in the remarkable growth observed in its trade relations with key partners. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) continues to occupy a

prominent position as China's largest trade partner. Impressively, bilateral trade between China and the ASEAN bloc has surged by a remarkable 9.9 percent, reaching an impressive 2.59 trillion yuan. This remarkable achievement represents a significant 15.4 percent of China's total trade volume.

Furthermore, China's trade collaboration with the European Union, its second-largest trade partner, has also flourished. The GAC data reveals a robust year-on-year growth of 3.6 percent in trade with the EU, amounting to an impressive 2.28 trillion yuan.

These figures undoubtedly illustrate the amplifying strength of China's trade relationships on a global scale. China's unwavering commitment to economic growth and trade

expansion is evident in the recent data, reaffirming its status as a global economic powerhouse.

As the nation continues to foster strong trade ties with its partners, the prospects for China's economy appear even more promising.

Of particular importance is China's flourishing trade with countries along the Belt and Road Initiative, where a remarkable 13.2 percent year-on-year increase was recorded, amounting to a substantial 5.78 trillion yuan. Furthermore, trade with five Central Asian nations experienced an astonishing surge of 44 percent, showcasing the robustness of China's economic engagement in the region. Equally impressive is China's foreign trade with fellow members of the Regional Comprehensive Partnership (RCEP), which saw a notable 4.5% year-on-year growth, reaching an impressive 5.11 trillion yuan.

This data underscores China's commitment to enhancing its trade networks and fostering stronger ties with regional partners. China's staunch dedication to international trade and economic cooperation is clearly bearing fruit, as evident in these remarkable figures. China's foreign trade landscape has experienced a remarkable shift, with private enterprises emerging as major contributors to the nation's economic success, as revealed by the GAC. In the first five months alone, the trade volume of private firms surged by an impressive 13.1% year-on-year, reaching a substantial 8.86 trillion yuan. This remarkable achievement account-

ed for 52.8 percent of China's total trade during the period, marking a noteworthy increase of 3.9 percentage points compared to the previous year.

Against the backdrop of mounting external challenges, China's foreign trade continued to thrive. In May alone, trade grew by 0.5 percent year-on-year, amounting to an impressive 3.45 trillion yuan. Although exports experienced a slight decline of 0.8 percent year-on-year, reaching 1.95 trillion yuan, imports recorded a robust growth of 2.3 percent year-on-year, totaling 1.5 trillion yuan. These figures underscore the resilience and adaptability of China's private enterprises, which have played a pivotal role in driving the nation's trade expansion. Despite global uncertainties, China's foreign trade sector remains vibrant, bolstering the nation's position as an economic powerhouse and exemplifying the agility and determination of its private sector. Similarly, China's export sector continues to showcase its strength, with both mechanical and electrical products and labor-intensive products experiencing significant growth. In the first five months, China's export of mechanical and electrical products reached a remarkable 5.57 trillion yuan, accounting for an impressive 57.9% of the total export value. Recognizing the importance of maintaining stability in foreign trade, the Chinese government, through a State Council meeting held on April 7, had outlined a comprehensive policy mix to support enterprises in securing orders and expanding their market share.

## COURT NOTICE

In the court of Faseeh-ur-Rehman civil judge III.Illaq Qazi kabal district Swat. Case # 1/1 Institution 02/01/2023. Hearing date 21/06/2023. Aftab khanetc Vs Ahmad Khan etc. Notice to:- 8. Mst Eazel daughter Muhammad Dilawar khan 10. Adnan khan s/o Ahmad khan 12. Mst Azaz daughter Muhammad Azeem 15. Mst Hira daughter Alam khan 18. Ramzan khan 19. Raza khan son's Sultan Mahmood khan r/o Mohalla Pervez khan Bara Bandai tsehl kabal district Swat. Whereas Respondents cannot be served in ordinary manner. It is proclaimed in this Court on 21/06/2023 at 8:00 am ex-parte proceeding will be taken against you.seal of the court.

## Lost & Found

The original transfer letter of residential Plot # 1 Road/Street # 30, Block F, measuring 10, 10 Sq. Yard located in Bahria Town Naval Anchory Housing Scheme Islamabad which was in the name of Mrs. Anwar Jan widow of Lt. Lal Khan (Late) has been lost. Finder or anyone having objection/claim may please be contact me or Director Bahria Town Islamabad within 15 days of publication on expiry of notice no objection/claim will be accepted. Contact no. 0334-8904982, Farukh Shahzad Khan.





## World Test Championship

# Australia beat India in final at The Oval



LONDON (Agencies): Australia won the World Test Championship by ruthlessly dismantling India on the fifth day of the final at The Oval.

India's slim hopes of reaching a world-record target of 444 rested on Virat Kohli, 44 not out as they began on 164-3, but the fans' hero was out for 49 in the seventh over of the day.

Kohli aimed a loose drive at Scott Boland, with Steve Smith taking a stunning catch at second slip. In the same over, Ravindra Jadeja edged Boland behind.

The game in their grasp, Australia efficiently worked through the lower order before lunch to dismiss India for 234 and take victory by 209 runs. Boland ended with 3-46, off-spinner Nathan Lyon 4-41.

They become the second winners of the World Test Championship, following New Zealand's success two years ago. It means Australia carry the crown of being the best Test team in the world into the most eagerly-anticipated Ashes series in a generation. The first match in the five-Test

contest against England begins at Edgbaston on Friday.

Bar some brief moments of Indian defiance, Australia have been on top in this final since early on the first day and are deserved winners.

Despite the mountainous task facing Kohli and India on Sunday, their noisy fans had high levels of expectation, cheering every defensive stroke. When Kohli produced his fatal edge, the hope immediately drained from The Oval. Indeed, by wrapping up victory in such swift fashion, Australia avoided a sapping day in the field with the Ashes only five days away.

This has been a supreme demonstration of why Australia will pose such a threat to Ben Stokes' England. Their middle order is formidable, pace bowling potent and spinner Lyon a constant challenge. Their slip cordon misses little, too.

Still, England will have seen weaknesses. Openers David Warner and Usman Khawaja have poor records in this country, there are questions over Australia's back-up

fast bowling and also their collective temperament when under pressure.

Though ultimately won by a large margin, this was an excellent final, full of high-intensity Test cricket. The expectation is the intensity will only grow come Friday in Birmingham.

Boland made a stunning start to his career as a 32-year-old in the last Ashes 18 months ago and his accuracy, relentlessness and seam movement have him primed to make a big impact this time around.

Kohli had made a calm, assured start when Boland dragged him into driving at a wide one. The thick edge flew to the right of second slip Smith, who took a spectacular catch in both hands with his body parallel to the ground. Two balls later, Jadeja's nick was audible around the ground. KS Bharat could have fallen to his first delivery, only for a spitting deflection off the glove to balloon over first slip.

Ajinkya Rahane remained, until one drive too many at Mitchell Starc ended his resistance on 46. Shardul Thakur played all around Lyon to be leg before and Umesh Yadav was bounced out by Starc. Bharat's swipe to be caught and bowled by Lyon delayed the lunch break, allowing time for last man Mohammed Siraj to reverse-sweep Lyon to point.

Australia embraced on the field, the Test mace and \$1.6m (£1.27m) in their possession. They are the first team to win world titles in all three formats of the game and now set their sights on defending cricket's oldest and most storied prize. India have been beaten in both World Test Championship finals. The powerhouse of global cricket, it is extraordinary they have not won a world title in any format since 2011.

## French Open 2023 results

# Djokovic beats Ruud to win Paris title and claim 23rd major

PARIS (BBC): Novak Djokovic showed his greatness once again by overcoming a sticky start to win a men's record 23rd Grand Slam title with victory over Norway's Casper Ruud in the French Open final. Djokovic, 36, was far from his best in the initial stages but his quality in a first-set tie-break laid the platform for a 7-6 (7-1) 6-3 7-5 victory. The Serb moves into the outright lead of men's majors ahead of Rafael Nadal.

He also becomes the first man to win all four majors at least three times. Victory on the Paris clay moves Djokovic alongside Serena Williams in terms of Grand Slam titles, with only Margaret Court now standing in front of him with 24 majors. "I'm beyond fortunate to win 23 Grand Slams in my life, it is incredible," said Djokovic, who also won the French Open in 2016 and 2021. "I was a seven-year-old dreaming I could win Wimbledon one day and become number one in the world. I'm beyond grateful and blessed to be standing here. "I feel I had the power to create my own destiny. I want to say to every young person if you want a better future, you can create it." Minutes after Djokovic won, Nadal paid tribute to his long-time rival. "Many congratulations on this amazing achievement, 23 is a number that just a few years back was impossible to think about and you made it," the Spaniard wrote.

Reaction to Djokovic winning a record 23rd men's major

Djokovic will have the opportunity to tie Court's record at Wimbledon next month - a place where he has already won seven times and will be the favourite to equal Roger Federer's record tally of men's titles.

Djokovic instantly fell flat on his back in celebration as Ruud pulled a forehand wide on the second champi-



PHOTOGRAPH BY AP/WIDEWORLD

onship point.

After a commiserating hug with his opponent, Djokovic ran up to his support box where he celebrated with coach Goran Ivanisevic, wife Jelena, his two children, parents Dijana and Srdjan and NFL superstar Tom Brady.

The victory will also see Djokovic return to the top of the world rankings. Fourth seed Ruud, who has lost all three of his major finals, congratulated Djokovic on "another day, another record". Addressing his opponent, he added: "It is another day where you rewrite tennis history. It is tough to explain how great you are and what an inspiration you are."

Having made no secret of his ambition to win more major titles than fellow greats Nadal and Federer, this was Djokovic's date with destiny.

He pulled level with the pair on 20 triumphs at Wimbledon in 2021, but fell behind Nadal after missing the 2022 Australian Open following a row over his Covid-19 vaccination status that led to him being deported.

Nadal extended the advantage when he won last year's French Open but Djokovic has surged ahead after

winning three of the past four Grand Slams. Even before 14-time French Open champion Nadal pulled out of this year's tournament with injury, Djokovic was considered by many as the favourite, even though his own build-up had been hampered by physical problems. Spanish top seed Carlos Alcaraz was the other main contender, but Djokovic beat him in the semi-finals after the 20-year-old suffered body cramps caused by the tension of facing one of the all-time greats.

It was Djokovic who looked more nervous in the early part of Sunday's final against 24-year-old Ruud.

Tight and tense, the third seed made a number of unforced errors as Ruud pushed him deep in the court and trailed 4-2 in the first set.

But Djokovic grew in stature as a long opening set wore on. With a star-studded crowd including French footballer Kylian Mbappe and British actor Hugh Grant watching on, Djokovic used all of his vast experience to dominate the tie-break as Ruud wilted - and from that point on there was only likely to be one outcome.

# Huzaifa hopeful to contend on Grand Slam court in 3-4 years 8

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's rising tennis star Huzaifa Abdul Rehman has underlined that his ultimate goal is to contend on a Grand Slam court, expressing hopes to reach that level in the next three to four years. The promising tennis sensation has already started his journey to the higher echelons with his recent impressive outings at ITF Futures in Orange Park Florida, USA.

Early last month, he made to the semifinals of the men's doubles along with his partner Timothy Phung (USA).

The twosome dispatched 4th seeds Elijah Srode and Tennyson Whiting (USA) in the 1st round. In the quarterfinal, they defeated Alexander Del Corral and Jake Van Emburgh (USA). But in the semi-finals, they fell to 2nd seeds Vasil Kirkov (USA) and Roy Stepanov(Canada).

However, Huzaifa earned four coveted officials ATP points to break into the doubles rankings, obtaining an 1853 ATP slot. Currently, he is the second Pakistani player, who is present in ATP doubles rankings. The other Pakistan player on the prestigious list is veteran Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, whose current standing is 102. In ITF Singles Futures Tour, Huzaifa overpowered Kaylan Bigun (USA), currently No. 23 in ITF Juniors in the 1st round.

However, he lost in the pre-quarter to Nanda

Govind (USA), a top 400 ATP player. Currently, Huzaifa with three points is the only Pakistan player, who is present in ATP Men's Singles Rankings, where he sits at 1397.

Huzaifa is ecstatic with his performance and believes he is well on course to move up on the ATP Tour. "If everything goes according to the plan, I hope I will be playing in one of the Grand Slams in the next three to four years.

That is my target as well as dream and I hope it will come true," the 20-year-old, who is training at Next Generation Tennis Academy (NGTA) in Sarasota, Florida said while sharing his sentiments with APP on the phone.

"I know there are no shortcuts and I will have to move step by step to reach my ultimate ambition. Hence, I have set a target for myself. Initially, I am aiming to appear in the ATP Challenger Tour to move into the 1,000 rankings in a year. Then I will be trying to join the list of the top 500 players in the next two years. Finally, of course, I will be trying to break into the top 200 to be able to contest in Grand Slam tournaments," he added.

The burgeoning talent of Huzaifa is also evident from the fact that in the recently-held tennis event of the 34th National Games, he earned one gold and two silver medals. Unseeded Huzaifa advanced to Men's Singles

final after toppling the 5th seed Mohammad Abid in the quarterfinal and 2nd seed Mohammad Shoaib in the semifinal.

In the final, he made Pakistan No. 1 Aqeel Khan toil hard to win. After the epic battle that continued for two hours and 15 minutes, Aqeel admitted that he played the best tennis of his career to overcome the young gun.

However, Huzaifa feels that his upward journey in tennis will not be smooth sailing as where on the one hand he will have to beat the best of the best and on the other, he will have to search for ways to meet his expenses. "Tennis is a very competitive as well expensive sport. I believe I can excel in the game provided I have the required financial resources."

"It is true the game's elite players earn millions each year but for players, who are at the outset of their professional career, the situation is quite different. We have to bear expenses on training equipment, apparel, travelling and accommodation. "My parents have been backing me and investing in me. But it is not easier for them anymore now."

According to Huzaifa's father, Muhammad Faisal, BARD Foundation sponsored Huzaifa from March 2022 to March 2023 to help him pursue his dream. "It helped him a lot to gain his ATP points and progress as a professional tennis player.

## 03 days sports event begins at Police Lines HQ

ISLAMABAD (NNI): In a bid to foster healthy activities among Islamabad capital police officers and officials, the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO), Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, kick-started a three-day games initiative at the Police Lines Headquarters, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, the event witnessed an exhilarating football match between Islamabad Capital Police and the National Highway Authority, as well as a thrilling volleyball match between Islamabad capital police Security Division and Logistics Division. Islamabad Capital Police in the football match while the Logistics division was declared victorious in the volleyball match.

Following the directions of ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has initiated this sporting extravaganza to motivate the police personnel and cultivate a culture of physical and mental well-being alongside their law and order responsibilities. By organizing such activities, the Islamabad capital police aims to engage its officials in healthy pursuits while developing their overall fitness and enhancing their job performance. Speaking about the importance of the games, the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO), Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, highlighted the significance of encouraging the police personnel to adopt healthy activities and nurture their physical and mental development.

# Manchester City's Treble 'written in the stars' says Pep Guardiola after Champions League win

ISTANBUL (BBC): Manchester City's Champions League success was "written in the stars", said manager Pep Guardiola after his side sealed the Treble in Istanbul.

City beat Inter Milan 1-0 to win a first Champions League title, adding to the Premier League and FA Cup trophies they had already clinched this season. "I'm tired, calm and satisfied. It's so difficult to win," said Guardiola, who also won the Treble with Barcelona. "It was written in the stars. It belongs to us." Midfielder Rodri's 68th-minute strike - just his second Champions League goal in 48 appearances - was enough to see off Inter Milan at the Ataturk Olympic Stadium.

"It's emotional. A dream come true. All these guys around here waited I don't know how many years," Rodri told BT Sport.

"They deserve it, we deserve it. The last years we were so close. I just

want to thank everyone. It wasn't easy. What a team we faced, the way they defend and counter-attack."

"We gave everything. Finals are like this. You can't expect to play as well as always. Emotions and nerves are there. We competed like animals. It's a dream. This moment will never happen again."

Manchester City were appearing in their second Champions League final in three seasons, having lost to Chelsea in 2021.

They became just the second English men's team to win the Treble, following in the footsteps of city rivals Manchester United who achieved the feat in 1999. Guardiola won the European Cup as a player for Barcelona in 1992 but said he did not realise what he had achieved until the day afterwards - and it will be a similar feeling after City's success.

"Our chairman said 'oh London is where next season's final of the

Champions League is' and I won't tell you my answer to him," said Guardiola.

"Now is time to celebrate, I am looking forward to Monday afternoon in Manchester on our coach and three trophies [as part of a victory parade]."

Guardiola joins United legend Sir Alex Ferguson as the only managers to win the Treble with an English side. "It is an honour for me to be alongside Sir Alex Ferguson. I got a message from him this morning and it is an honour," added Guardiola.

"People say I have to win trebles every season. I am a good manager, but no. I like this competition for the fact we won it, it is part of history and players will be remembered for the rest of their lives. "But now give credit for the five Premier Leagues won in six years. It is important now that people don't forget what we have done. Maybe they can create a museum so the fans can look at the trophies."

# Ferrari make triumphant return after 50 years



LONDON (BBC): Ferrari took a shock victory at the Le Mans 24 Hours 100th anniversary race, with a line-up including Britain's James Calado.

The 33-year-old was part of a three-driver line-up who beat overwhelming favourites Toyota in a race that saw several car manufacturers return.

Ferrari were competing as a top-level works team for the first time in 50 years. "It's a great achievement after so long," said Calado. "This will go down in history," added Ferrari's most high-profile British driver since Nigel Mansell in the 1980s.

The number 51 Ferrari crossed the line first with

Alessandro Pier Guidi behind the wheel after a stint by former Formula 1 driver Antonio Giovinazzi.

It means, 58 years after their last victory, Ferrari have now taken their 10th top level Le Mans win in one of the most thrilling races for years.

Sportscar racing has seen several manufacturers return to the sport following the introduction of new 'hypercarr' rules, which allow for a broader design brief than other series, leading to Ferrari, Peugeot, Porsche and Cadillac building very different looking cars. Five years ago, Toyota were the only manufacturer left in the sport, and had been expected to take a

sixth-straight victory at Le Mans 2023 following wins at every race in the World Endurance Championship this season thanks to the more refined GR10.

But several early crashes and some heavy rain showers shuffled up the field, and when the race settled down through the night, the Ferrari began to show unexpected consistent speed. After hours of running within seconds of one another, Toyota's Ryo Hirakawa spun towards the end of the race at Arnage corner, and Ferrari held on.

General Motors' entry Cadillac finished third with a driver line-up that included Britain's Richard Westbrook and Alex Lynn.

## Abid steers Mardan Red to win against Blues in PCB Senior Inter-District

PESHAWAR (APP): Abid Riaz hammered a cracking knock of 74 runs with nine dashing boundaries and three sixes besides taking two wickets played a key role in his team Mardan Red against Mardan Blues in a match of the PCB Inter-District Senior Cricket Championship played at Mardan Sports Complex Cricket ground on Sunday.

Declared as Man of the Match for scoring 74 runs and grabbing two wickets, Abdi Riaz played a stunning inning by hitting all the rival bowlers toward cracking boundaries. His fluent batting guided his team to a comfortable victory against Mardan Blues.

Earlier, in the match of Pakistan Cricket Board Inter-District Senior, which was played at Mardan Sports Complex, Mardan Red Senior won, while playing first, the highlight of Mardan Red's innings was Abid Riaz who smashed an elegant knock of 74 runs, laced with nine boundaries and three towering sixes. Sajjad Ali was the century maker who hit 16 fours and 3 sixes while Rahmanullah scored 38 runs. Mardan Red Senior scored 298 runs in the allotted 50 overs. Samiullah of Mardan Blues was the most successful bowler who took 3 wickets, Yasir and Mansoor got two wickets each.

## Jonas Vingegaard wins title as Adam Yates finishes second

PARIS (BBC): Jumbo-Visma rider Jonas Vingegaard has won the Criterium du Dauphine just weeks before attempting to defend his Tour de France title, starting 1 July.

Denmark's Vingegaard pipped Team Emirates and Britain's Adam Yates by two minutes and 23 seconds overall. The eight-stage event in France concluded in Grenoble, with Trek-Segafredo's Giulio Ciccone winning the final stage. Ciccone finished 23 seconds ahead of Vingegaard at La Bastille.

"I'm a little surprised by the gaps, I can only be very satisfied, I'm in good shape. Now I'm going to relax for a few days and fine-tune the preparation for the Tour," 26-year-old Vingegaard said. Ciccone's stage win comes after he had to withdraw from the Giro d'Italia in May because he had Covid-19. "I had 10 days off the bike, my condition wasn't 100%, so started here with the Tour de France in the head but saw this week my condition getting better and better, so I'm really happy to close this week with a victory," Ciccone said.



GILGIT: Players from NLI (B) and GBPWD teams in action during the Jashn-e-Baharan freestyle Polo Tournament at Aga Khan Shahi Pologround.





## In brief

### World Blood Donor Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Blood Donor Day will be marked on June 14 (Wednesday) across the globe including Pakistan safe blood supplies are a scarce commodity – especially in developing countries world Blood Donor Day is an occasion to raise awareness of the problem and thank donors worldwide. Giving blood is easy and saves lives many events are held around the world on June 14 to mark World Blood Donor Day. These include football matches, concerts and mobile blood donation clinics. In 2011, the World Health Organization (WHO) called upon communities world-wide to symbolically "paint the world red" by coloring, covering or lighting monuments and landmarks. Despite about 92 million yearly blood donations worldwide, safe blood is constantly on high demand, especially in developing countries. World Blood Donor Day falls on the birthday of Karl Landsteiner (June 14, 1868). He created the ABO blood group system, which is still used today to ensure the safety of blood transfusions.

### IRSA releases 199,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 199,000 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 243,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1430.77 feet and was 32.77 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. The water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 101,300 cusecs and 70,000 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1137.20 feet, which was 87.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 53,400 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 102,500, 84,200, 60,500 and 22,600 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 54,700 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 15,300 cusecs was released from River Chenab at Marala.

### June 20 deadline to submit application

RAWALPINDI (APP): June 20 would be the deadline to submit an application to collect hides of sacrificial animals as Rawalpindi District Administration would not allow anyone to collect hides without permission and a No-objection Certificate (NoC) as per the directives of the Punjab government. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Office Rawalpindi had announced that the applications for collecting hides of sacrificial animals would be received till June 20 and after the deadline, no application would be entertained. According to a district administration spokesman, the administration would not allow anyone to collect hides without prior permission of the authorities concerned as the Punjab government had imposed a ban on the collection of hides without NoC on Eid ul Azha. He said, the charity organizations intending to collect the hides of the sacrificial animals had been directed to submit applications to the office of DC Rawalpindi for permission letter by June 20. The Home Department of the Punjab Government had banned the collection of the hides without the approval of the competent authority. The DC office Rawalpindi would not receive any application for the permission letter after the expiry of the above-mentioned date.



ISLAMABAD: People filling drinking water from filtration plant at Ghori town during hot day in the Federal Capital.

## Railways retrieve 994 acres land from illegal occupants

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has retrieved as many as 994 acres of its land worth millions of rupees from illegal occupants during various anti-encroachment operations across the country. "Around 487 acres retrieved in Punjab, 142 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 337 acres in Sindh and only 28 acres in Balochistan," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. He said that about 3,287 acres in Punjab, 832 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,180 acres in Sindh, and 687 acres of land in Balochistan were being encroached. The official said that in light of the directives of the Supreme Court, the anti-encroachment operations for retrieval of encroached railway land all over the Railway network were initiated and a joint procedure order was issued to all divi-

sional superintendents for retrieval of Railways land from encroachment.

"The anti-encroachment schedules, on a three months basis, are being prepared and sent to all concerned in line with the joint procedure order," the official added.

He said Pakistan Railways had also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups, and even business organizations who were using it for residential, commercial, and agriculture purposes for decades. "The encroachment operation will be launched with the assistance of Railway Police and district administrations of the relevant provincial governments," he added.

He said the government was taking several steps to retrieve encroached

land from the land grabbers including a detailed survey being carried out to identify the encroached land, occupied by the individuals and under illegal occupation by various government departments. The official said that First Information Reports (FIRs) were being lodged and cases were registered and sent to PR Judicial Magistrates for expeditious trial. The issue regarding illegal occupation and possession of Pakistan Railways' land by government departments and institutions has also been taken up with the concerned departments, he added.

The official said PR owned 167,690 acres of land across the country, of which 90,326 acres was in Punjab, 39,428 acres in Sindh, 28,228 acres in Balochistan, and 9,708 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### CDA pursues upgradation of urban amenities, infrastructure

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is taking concrete steps for ensuring the provision of urban facilities to the city dwellers and maintenance of infrastructure including the installation of street lights, road carpeting and resolving water-related issues, neglected in the past.

"Special attention is being given to the completion of the remaining development works in the sectors I, G H and D series, provision of civic facilities, and facilitating the home builders in these sectors in pursuance of the directives of Chairman CDA Noor ul Amin Mengal," an official told APP.

## BISP achieves several milestones during FY 2022-23 through expanding schemes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) has achieved several milestones during the Fiscal Year 2022-23 to provide relief to those living below the poverty line through increasing its budgetary allocations and expanding the scope of different schemes including Benazir Kafalat, Benazir Nashonuma and Benazir Undergraduate Scholarship.

According to the performance report of BISP from FY April 2022-April 2023, the BISP budget was increased from Rs. 235 billion to Rs 400 billion during the period, registering a 70 percent increase.

The number of Benazir Kafalat program beneficiaries has increased from 7.6 million to nine million during this year. While the amount of Kafalat stipend has been increased from Rs 7000 per quarter to Rs. 8750 per quarter, registering a 25 per cent increase.

The present government has also included Transgender persons in the program without the conditions of poverty score. Under the Benazir Taleemi Wazaif program which aims at cash transferring to incentivize enrolment of children in schools, the number of enrolled children has been increased from 2.6 million to 7.1 million. The Benazir Nashonuma Program has been expanded from 15 pilot districts to 149 districts across the country while increasing the number of Facilitation Centers up to 487 during the period.

Benazir Nashonuma is an initiative of cash transfer to prevent stunting and malnutrition among children. Under this initiative, 0.52 million beneficiaries have been enrolled. The number of Benazir Scholarships for Undergraduates has been increased from 82,000 to 92,003 during the period. To mitigate the sufferings of flood-affected people, a total of Rs. 70 billion has been disbursed among 2.8 million beneficiaries (Rs. 25,000 per family).

Under the Fuel Subsidy initiative, Rs. 16.9 billion has been disbursed among 8.6 million families through giving Rs 2000

per family.

The program has also achieved the goal of transition from static to dynamic National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) through establishing 600 registration centers. The NSER aims at real-time update of changes in socio-economic status of households.

**11.8 million children enrolled under Benazir Taleemi Wazaif Programme so far:** The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has so far enrolled 11.8 million children into schools through Benazir Taleemi Wazaif initiative.

According to an official source, a total of 3.0 million children had been enrolled under this scheme during July- March FY2023. So far, Rs 63.3 billion have been disbursed since inception of the Benazir Taleemi Wazaif initiative out of which Rs 23.4 billion have been disbursed during July to March, FY2023.

In pursuance of the commitment to provide Universal Primary Education as a part of SDGs, the government launched a Co-Responsibility Cash Transfer initiative for providing an additional cash per quarter to BISP beneficiary families in October, 2012 for Primary Education.

Since July 01, 2021, scope of the programme has been expanded from Primary to Secondary and Higher Secondary level and is currently operational all over the country. The overall objective of this initiative is to encourage education through regular cash transfers to invest in human capital development. B-form/ CRC facilitation through NADRA database is mandatory for the enrollment of child in the programme. A beneficiary child must attend school or college for at least 70 percent of the school or college effective days within a quarter to receive cash transfers from second quarter and onwards. The stipends rates for the students are Rs 1,500 per quarter per boy, Rs 2,000 for girl student at primary level while Rs 2,500 and Rs 3,000 are being paid for boy and girl student respectively.

## Illegal housing societies fleecing masses money

RAWALPINDI (APP): Whole of their lives, people especially salaried class toil hard to meet their ends and save each penny to have a reasonable abode towards the end of their career.

But their desire of having a house dashed to ground when they fall prey to fraudulent elements attached to real estate business who befool the people by convincing them to invest their hard-earned money in housing societies, either lacking legal status or not having enough land.

Unfortunately, owing to weaker laws and their poor implementation, these mafias continue to flourish with a mushroom growth in Rawalpindi district as statistics show that out of over 550 housing schemes, around 79 have got all the legalities completed, while the rest are either fake or lack the required NOCs.

Though, the regulator has identified the illegal housing schemes, but could not initiate action against them as the relevant law calls for three years imprisonment and a fine of Rs 0.5 million against unauthorized and illegal housing schemes. When contacted, RDA spokesperson Hafiz Irfan said that the Authority was working to control such societies and in this regard, it had uploaded a list of "legal and illegal housing societies on its website" so that the people could be saved from investing in illegal schemes.

"Strict action in accordance with the law is being taken against such societies including demolishing of illegal buildings and issuing of notices to their administrations. As many as 42 legal notices were issued besides lodging nine FIRs against the rules' violators during the last five months. Their 17 offices were sealed while 35 complaints in FIA Cyber Crime Wing for registration of FIRs were launched this year," he said.

But, the ground situation is different as the department issues notices and gets FIRs registered against such

societies when they seek electricity and gas connections.

These illegal housing schemes are rampant in Rawalpindi, Gujjar Khan, Taxila, Wah, Murree, Kotli Sattian and other areas.

"Majority of illegal housing schemes presently under our control were established by the administrations of then district and tehsil councils," Hafiz Irfan informed.

"The RDA had requested Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) to refrain private TV channels from airing advertisements of illegal housing societies," he said. Moreover, he said, the Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and Director General of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had also been approached to block bank, social media accounts of such schemes. With rapid urbanization, Rawalpindi city has also succumbed to unplanned development together with an acute failure of the administration to enforce the building bylaws. As a result, irregular constructions have popped up and there is a growing trend of building residential structures on agricultural lands in the outskirts without obtaining requisite permissions.

"As far as our master plan is concerned, the authority hopes to complete it soon as a consultant has been hired who is working on four tehsils of Pindi in first phase," the RDA spokesman said. Another matter of concern is establishing the housing schemes in the suburbs of Rawalpindi city including Adiala Road, Chakri, Fateh Jang road, Taxila, Murree, Kalar Syedan and other areas on fertile agriculture land that would have cascading effects on food security in years to come.

"Scarcity of land and rampant use of fertile agricultural land for housing societies would lead directly to a major problem; a growing food crisis," said former Director Soil

Conservation Department Rawalpindi, Malik Ghulam Akbar.

"With urbanization and growing population, landowners who earlier used to rent out their land to small farmers for growing wheat and other food crops, are now bent upon developing housing societies for earning more money," he remarked.

Ghulam Akbar said in an agro-based economy like ours, "we cannot afford to lose agricultural land and the government must impose restriction on construction of housing societies at fertile agricultural land."

When asked about his point of view on this issue, the RDA spokesman Hafiz Irfan said there was a difference between agricultural land and vacant, barren areas. Obviously, the housing schemes were being developed on vacant, barren areas with exception to small pockets of land. "Recent notifications of the Punjab Government about agricultural land are being fully implemented by RDA in processing private housing schemes," he informed. He also mentioned to differences between the Punjab Local Government Land Use Rules 2020 and Punjab Development Authorities Rules 2021 in terms of planning mechanisms and approaches.

"The Local Government Rules 2020 do not have provisions for peri-urban areas rather these provide limited option of site development zones," he said. "Therefore, major cities where development authorities had been established, they should notify peri-urban areas for broad-based planning with the demarcation of parcels of land for specific uses including agriculture." Regardless of the efforts being made by authorities to control the rampant increase in illegal housing schemes, there was a need to frame a proper mechanism and strict laws to stop the initiation of a society before all the prerequisites are met so that the hard-earned money of masses could be saved.

## Students advised to enroll in three-month free short courses

RAWALPINDI (APP): The students have been advised to avail the opportunity and enroll in three-month free short courses during summer vacations as skills training camps have been started here in the Divisional Public School and Government College of Technology, Rawalpindi for male and female students.

According to Commissioner Division, Liaquat Ali Chatha, the students should learn skills during summer vacations as skills and technical education is need of the time. The Commissioner asked the students that instead of wasting their precious time during summer vacations, they should learn skills that would help eliminate unemployment.

He said, vocational education leads to employment opportunities. In developed countries, the children are taught skills during vacations. The role of teachers

and parents is very important in attracting the students towards technical education, he added.

Good intentions are needed along with the vision, Liaquat Ali said.

Today's skilled student is the guarantee of tomorrow's prosperous Pakistan, he added. The children, who would successfully complete the program, would be awarded a Rs 5000 scholarship, the commissioner said.

Liaquat Ali Chatha y

said the program of imparting skills and technical education to the student during summer vacations is a major initiative of the Punjab government.

The Commissioner informed that he was a member of the committee formed in this regard and is aware of the importance of this program.

The program would have constructive effects, he said adding, technical education training is a joint effort of different departments

including ICI, SDD, HED and SED. It is possible to eliminate unemployment through skill and technical education, the Commissioner said adding, technical training would be beneficial not only for the person getting education based on technical training but the entire family would benefit economically.

Earnest efforts required to achieve the targets set to eliminate poverty and unemployment, he said.

According to a Commissioner Office spokesperson, a ceremony would be held in honor of the students who would complete the program and prizes would be awarded.

This initiative of the Punjab government would prove to be helpful in changing the economic situation of the citizens, she said.

The spokesperson informed that the summer skills camps would provide training in 14 different trades to students.

## WASA accelerates operation against defaulters

RAWALPINDI (APP): Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi has accelerated its ongoing operation against defaulters, said a WASA spokesman. He informed that the Managing Director (MD), WASA Muhammad Tanveer had directed the authorities concerned to make all-out efforts to achieve Rs 100 million revenue target set for June.

The MD announced that a bonus of 15 days basic salary would be given to the staff if the set target is achieved.

He said that the agency had conducted a consumer survey for the first time through its staff, which had not incurred any additional cost. In this survey, 3127 illegal connections were caught, from which additional revenue recovery of more than Rs 44 million would be collected annually, he said adding, while, earlier during a routine recovery campaign, 1683 illegal connections were also caught thus a total of 4810 illegal connections were unearthed. 9,328 connections were also upgraded during the survey, he informed.

Due to solid steps taken by WASA, additional revenue of Rs 2.8 million per

month would be collected, he said and informed that action against illegal connections would continue and no relaxation would be given to anyone.

The MD had appreciated efforts of the revenue staff and announced special bonus for the employees who had shown good performance, he said adding, the revenue inspectors and their teams on extra-ordinary performance would be given a special bonus of 15 days basic salary.

Disciplinary action would also be taken against those who could not achieve the minimum revenue recovery of target.

He said that all the revenue inspectors had been directed to submit their daily progress reports to their respective Deputy Directors which would further be sent to MD WASA. All the expenditure of WASA is dependent on revenue recovery, therefore, any kind of lapse and negligence would not be tolerated and the defaulters would not be given any concession.

The MD had ordered the officers concerned not to accept any pressure during revenue recovery campaign.

The crackdown would continue until the outstanding revenue amount from the last defaulter is recovered, he added.



ISLAMABAD: A volunteer distributing free food among deserving people at Mauve Area G-7.



Minister meets EU scholars

KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Interior Minister in a meeting with religious scholars of Denmark, Norway, and Germany discussed security, education, and the fighting against drugs in the country. The top officials of the Interior Ministry met with the religious scholars of the European Union at the headquarters of the ministry, a statement said. The two sides discussed mutual interested issues including security, education, and fighting against drugs.

Forces urged to treat people well

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Prime Minister of Afghanistan Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, in a meeting with the chief's intelligence of Nangarhar and the police chief of Kunar, urged the security forces to treat people well. The local security official of Kunar and Nangarhar shared details about the security situation of the provinces with the Acting Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, a statement released by Arg.

## ‘550 former govt officials returned to Afghanistan’

KABUL (Khaama Press): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, Taliban's Acting Prime Minister met with UNAMA Chief, Roza Otunbayeva in Kabul and said that more than 550 former government military and civilian officials have returned to Afghanistan.

Official sources have not confirmed the report and claim that hundreds of former government military personnel have been persecuted and killed by the Taliban group.

While meeting with the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA), PM Kabir said, since the return of the Taliban to power “islands of power, corruption, war and insecurity” have ended in Afghanistan.

This comes as at least 13 people including some key Taliban members were killed and more than 30 others were injured in the latest terror attack in north-eastern Badakhshan



province on Friday.

During the meeting, Mawlawi Kabir asked the international community to remove the senior Taliban members' names from the “black list”, and said Taliban administration wants to maintain active diplomacy and good relation with the international community.

Mawlawi Kabir stated that

international organizations and aid groups could resume their operation in Afghanistan – adding the international community could complete the unfinished projects in Afghanistan.

Considering the dire economic situation in Afghanistan multi-folded with drought and poverty, Afghan people are in urgent need of further international aid.

Meanwhile, the Taliban regime's reluctance to positively respond to the demands and concerns of the international community, especially in the areas of education and women's right to work, has caused donors to drastically reduce the amount of aid to Afghanistan, which further isolates the war-torn country.

## Johan Ndisi appointed as new Special Envoy for Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Sweden's government has appointed Johan Ndisi as Swedish Special Envoy for Afghanistan and the new head of the Swedish embassy for the country, a statement said.

The statement added that he would take up his appointment in August and that the embassy's operations had temporarily been relocated to Stockholm, the Swedish Ministry of foreign affairs said.

“The government has appointed Johan Ndisi as special envoy for Afghanistan and head of authority for the Swedish embassy in Kabul. The embassy's operations have been moved to Stockholm instead of Kabul for now,” the statement said.

Johan Ndisi is the deputy director of the Swedish Foreign Ministry's African Unit. He formerly held the position of ambassador to the EU in Brussels, the embassy in Harare, and Tirana. Among other things, he has served as the Foreign Ministry's deputy chief of the Communications Unit.

## Three killed in traffic accident

BADAKHSHAN (Khaama Press): At least three people were killed in a traffic accident that took place in the Kofaab district of north-eastern Badakhshan province, Taliban officials said.

Esanullah Kamgar, the spokesperson of the police in Badakhshan province on Sunday, June 11, confirmed the incident and said the road accident took place in the Kofaab district of the province.

The incident happened when a Toyota Datsun deviated from the road and fell into the valley, resulting in the death of three people who were in the vehicle.

Meanwhile, in several traffic incidents in different parts of the country including Sar-e Pol, Bamyan and Zabul province over the past week, at least 33 people were killed and 45 others sustained serious injuries in a single day, according to official sources.

The recent rise in the number of road incidents is directly linked to careless driving, lack of paved roads, poorly maintained vehicles and failure to abide by the traffic laws according to officials.

## Citizens complain about deactivation of ATM machines

KABUL (TOLONews): Citizens complained about the deactivation of ATM machines and worn-out banknotes in the markets.

They complained that customers need wait for several hours to withdraw money from banks.

“The ATM machines have been deactivated for a while both in private and government banks. The people are facing problems,” said Nabiullah, a resident of Kabul.

“Previously, the ATM machines were active in the hospitals and markets. If someone was in an emergency, they could withdraw

money from ATM machines but the machines are currently not activated due to various problems. The ATM machines are not working now,” said Homayoun, a resident of Kabul.

Meanwhile, some citizens urged the Islamic Emirate to distribute new banknotes into the market.

“They could distribute 50 Afs bill and 100s as well as 500 Afs bill and 1,000 Afs bills to the people because the people are facing challenges as the banknotes have become worn out,” said Rafiullah, a resident of Kabul.

“We encourage the people

to take their worn-out banknotes to the banks and exchange them for new banknotes,” said Imran, a resident of Kabul.

This comes as the Central Bank (Da Afghanistan Bank) had earlier announced the distribution of 10 and 20 Afs bills.

“Those citizens who want to exchange their worn-out banknotes can refer to the private and government banks,” said Hassibullah Noori, a spokesman for the Central Bank.

The Central Bank meanwhile called on citizens to care for the new banknotes properly.

## Nadim seeks other countries’ support to higher education



TATARSTAN, Russia (TOLONews): The acting minister of higher education, Neda Mohammad Nadim, in his visit to Tatarstan, Russia, urged other countries to support Afghanistan's higher education system.

Addressing an event at the Russian Federation's International Forum of Islamic Ministers in the Republic of Tatarstan, Nadim emphasized the importance of having professionals and urged countries in the region to send professional staff to Afghanistan. According to him, some plans are underway to increase the capacity of university lecturers in Afghanistan.

“We expect friendly countries to support higher

education in Afghanistan by sending professional cadres there or, in their own countries, by providing scholarships to train professional cadres,” Nadim said.

Nadim also raised the issue of infrastructure in the country, saying that the international community should work with the Islamic Emirate to improve educational standards.

“Lack of infrastructure is another challenge we need your support for. Lack of laboratories and facilities are challenges that need a lot of time to be resolved in Afghanistan due to the economic problems. We hope our education system will be supported in this regard,” he added.

The acting minister of

higher education urged countries to have trust in the Islamic Emirate and maintain good relations with the current government.

“Paying attention to science and expertise, loyalty to the homeland, upholding Islamic values, keeping higher education away from political, ideological, police, and intelligence matters, and strengthening the country's higher education system are crucial and fundamental,” said Fazl Hadi Wazin, a university lecturer.

The remarks by the acting higher education minister regarding the support of education come as women have been banned from attending universities since last December.

## UNSC report on Afghanistan biased and far from reality: IEA

KABUL (Agencies): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has said the UN Security Council report by the sanctions monitoring team on the situation in the country is “biased and far from reality”.

The UNSC's sanctions monitoring team said in its latest report that the IEA's link with terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaeda, remains strong and symbiotic.

“A range of terrorist groups have greater freedom of maneuver under the Taliban (IEA) de facto authorities. They are making good use of this, and the threat of terrorism is rising in both Afghanistan and the region,” the report read.

In response to this, the IEA said in a statement Sunday that they consider the continuation of UN Security Council sanctions and such reports “as full of prejudice and in conflict with the principles of independence and non-interference, and calls for an end to it.”

They also said claims that there are rifts within the IEA, that Afghanistan has become a safe haven for terrorists, that drug trafficking is carried out by IEA officials, that there is a monopoly of power and that government is not representative of ethnic groups is baseless and clearly hostile, and baseless “propa-

ganda”. The IEA said in their statement that rumors of a rift between their leaders was in “particular the continuation of the propaganda of the past 20 years.”

The IEA said it strongly rejects the claims it is allowing “opponents of neighboring and regional countries” to use Afghanistan soil against other countries.

In addition, the IEA said the cultivation, production and trafficking of drugs has dropped significantly and that recent media reports to this effect were testimony to this.

“The Islamic Emirate emphasizes that the publication of such biased and

baseless reports by the Security Council does not help Afghanistan and international peace and security, rather, it increases worry among the people, it [casts] doubts about the independence and impartiality of the United Nations, as well as strictly damages its credibility and reputation,” the statement read.

“All decisions of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan are made in the light of Islamic Sharia guidelines, bilateral and multilateral commitments and national interests, and it continues to interact with the international community to address common concerns,” read the statement.

## World Handicrafts Day: Women face lack of market for their items



KABUL (TOLONews): On World Handicrafts Day, many businesswomen in the country expressed their concerns over lack of market for their products.

They said that there has been a decrease in the market for their products over the past two years and that they need support from relevant institutions.

“We ask the government to help women,” said

Rokhsar, a female investor who has worked in the handicrafts business over the past four years. “Women should be supported so they can stand on their own feet and make progress.”

“Our business has slightly declined since (the Islamic) Emirate assumed control. The sales decreased due to the poor economic situation of the

people. They cannot afford to buy our products. Also, our products are not sent abroad due to the closure of air corridors for women,” said Benafsha, a businesswoman.

Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, said the Islamic Emirate has a commitment to assist female entrepreneurs and

that the ministry is working to address women's issues.

“We fully support women who are engaged in handicrafts business, and we create markets for their handicrafts both inside and outside the country so that they may make an important contribution as a powerful part of the country's commerce sector,” Javad noted.

Meanwhile, the Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that women's chambers of commerce have been established in 16 provinces of the country.

“Chambers of commerce have been opened in sixteen provinces, even in the provinces that we did not expect, such as Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar, Nuristan, and Herat, and in Kabul,” said Salma Yousefzai, the chairperson of Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Previously, the acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, Nooruddin Azizi, said that more than 50,000 companies are informally led by women in the country, of which 5,000 companies are operating officially.

## 300 children included in vocational programs during this year

HERAT (Agencies): The Department of Labor and Social Affairs in Herat says it rounds up more than 2,000 street children every year and includes them in technical and vocational training programs.

According to the department officials, about 300 of these children were included into technical and vocational programs in the first few months of this year.

“During this year, we surveyed about 500 street

children, 300 of them were included in technical and vocational programs,” said Abdullah Suri, deputy head of the Labor and Social Affairs Department in Herat.

Meanwhile, a charity foundation named “Atefi” in Herat province has recently provided the opportunity of technical and vocational training programs to 100 orphans and poor children who will be taught tailoring skills, how to repair phones and other profes-

sions in the next six months. The foundation's authorities say their goal is to create job opportunities for orphaned children.

During this year, 200 of these children have been covered by technical and vocational programs, the foundation's officials said.

“One hundred orphaned and needy young children from different areas of Herat city were surveyed and today, Inshallah, their educational workshop, which

includes sewing, phone repairing and embroidering bags, will be inaugurated by the elders of Islamic Emirate,” said Abdul Zahir Irshad, the foundation's head.

Experts however believe that in the current situation there is a need to provide more educational opportunities for these children and the government is obliged to take care of these children along with their families with the cooperation of the helping institutions.

## Over 2,000 Afghan refugees return home from Iran

KABUL (Khaama Press): More than 2,000 Afghan refugees returned from Iran, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) said in a statement on Sunday.

At least 534 Afghan refugees came back to the country via Islam Qala in Western Herat Province, the Ministry said. The Ministry also said that at least 288 of the 2,000 returnees were introduced to the International Office for Migration to receive basic necessary aid.

In recent months, the number of Afghan migrants returning home from Iran has surged at a never-before-seen rate for multiple reasons.

Previously, Mawlawi Abdullah Reyaz, head of the refugee department of Nimruz province, had said that more than 65,000 migrants have returned to the country through the Pul-e-Abresham crossing point over the past month.



In the meantime, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation had reported that more than 527,000 Afghan refugees had returned to the nation in the previous year, noting that they either left the host country voluntarily or were forcibly left the

host country. However, the UNHCR stated that a strong correlation exists between the ongoing return of Afghan refugees from neighbouring countries and the rising inflation and dearth of economic possibilities in the host countries.

## Air pollution in Kabul increased significantly over past week: NEPA

KABUL (TOLONews): The National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) said that Kabul's air pollution levels have tripled over the past week, adding that airborne particles and climate change are key factors contributing to the capital city's growing air pollution.

The agency noted that it is making to lower the amount of air pollution in Kabul, but it is unable to do so due to a lack of adequate equipment to measure the level of pollution.

“All the equipment we have installed at the National Environmental Protection Agency's facilities, the statistics we have collected over the last two or three days, and our graphs, especially about dust and airborne particles with a diameter of 2.5 cubic meters relatively, all show that pollution is increasing beyond the standard air quality of the World Health Organization,” said Basir Amin, the inspection control officer of NEPA.

Kabul residents said

that air pollution has increased diseases among people, especially among children.

“The air is really polluted and it has caused various problems for Kabul residents, including breathing problems, and it has also created a ground for other diseases,” said Tariq Habibzai, a resident of Kabul.

“I ask the Islamic Emirate to stop the businesses and investors who use poor materials,” said Noorullah Shams, a resident of Kabul.

But what steps should be taken to prevent air pollution in the country?

“It is important to focus on the creation of green areas in the cities as well as the creation of green belts around the cities that are mainly made up of trees and perennial plants,” said Sayed Qayum Hashemi, an expert on environmental issues.

According to reports from international organizations, Kabul is one of the capital cities with the highest levels of air pollution in the world.



# Imran has mind of Hitler, but body of chameleon changing colour: Marriyum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb while criticising Imran Khan on Sunday said that the mind of the "political sphinx" was that of Hitler while his body was that of a chameleon, which not only changed its colour, but also expression within no time.

In a tweet, mocking Imran she said that on May 9, military installations and memorials of martyrs were also attacked because "they" did not agree with Imran Khan's mindset.

Taking a job at Imran Khan, she said there was no room for the constitution in his mind, nor for the law, humanity or morality. She said he had only arrogance, ego, stubbornness and hypocrisy, who

offered life extension in the closed rooms but shouted slogans of Mir Jafar outside.

She said he accused the United States in the public rallies, but later apologized and hired lobbying firms there.

She said that politicians and democrats talk only to politicians, not to people like Imran. She said that Imran Khan was still looking for a "shoulder" and "crutches" for coming back to power which was no longer available.

She said that Imran Khan was seeking RTS-type support and pardon in foreign funding, Tyrian White paternity case, the 190 million pounds case, and other corruption cases like the Al-Qader Trust case but these talismanic facilities were no longer available now.

# PML-N gives nod to launch election campaign

LAHORE (NNI): The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Sunday decided to start its election campaign.

PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in which she conveyed the message of PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif. The former prime minister had been directed to expose the policies of the party that harmed the country. Mr Sharif also directed the party to form a committee for the purpose of the election manifesto and to include the action plan of providing easy loans and employment opportunities in the party's narrative.

In the meeting, PM Shehbaz and Ms Nawaz discussed the political situation in the country.

The premier had asked the provincial presidents of the party for a report regarding the election tickets in Punjab and Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa.

Former Punjab chief minister Hamza Shehbaz and Suleman Shehbaz were also present on this occasion. On the other side, PML-N leader Mian Javed Latif said his party will not make seat adjustments or alliances with any political party. Addressing a press conference, Mr Latif said, "A line of demarcation needs to be drawn between a politician and a terrorist." He said that prosperity cannot come to the country by creating small groups and factions. "The deal can only be done with the people. We have not made any deals with anyone else," he clarified. Regarding the elections, he said that the PML-N will contest the elections under its own symbol.

Everyone else has the right to a level playing field, he added.

Regarding the case of journalist Arshad Sharif, Mr Latif said, "I want to request that the judiciary listen to the voice of Arshad Sharif's mother."

Earlier, the federal government allocated Rs 42.4 billion for general elections in budget 2023-24.

As per details, the government allocated Rs 15 billion for the security of general elections and Rs 5.6 billion for project management units and voting.

In budget 2023-24, Rs 4.8 billion and Rs 270 million have been allocated for publishing ballot papers and voter lists whereas Rs 1.7 billion will be spent on the training wing and Rs 500 million on media coordination. The funds allocated for the preparation of the election are Rs 1.2 billion. The government has allocated Rs 9.6 billion for election in Punjab, Rs 3.6 billion for Sindh, Rs 3.9 billion for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Rs 1.1 billion for Balochistan.

# Not seeing elections in October: Raja

LAHORE (NNI): Opposition Leader in National Assembly Raja Riaz on Sunday hinted at the delay in the general elections. "Not seeing general elections in October," Raja Riaz was quoted as saying while exclusively talking to a private television channel.

First, we have to make Pakistan economically strong and then go for elections, the opposition leader said and added that constitutionally the tenure of government can be extended up to 6 months. "I will support the extension of the assembly and the government if the matter is moved to NA," he announced.

Commenting on the release of PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Riaz said "You can say he is not leaving PTI." The one who goes home from jail shows the commitment he made, he added. The NA opposition leader said Jahangir Tareen is his friend but he is not going to join his Istikhame-Pakistan party. "I have decided where will I go," Raja Riaz claimed those who gave 'wrong' suggestions to PTI chief, left the party. Earlier in the month of May, Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said the ongoing law and order situation to normalise in a few days and the polls are on time. "Elections in Pakistan will be held in October," Khawaja Asif said in his interview with Al-Jazeera.

# PMD alerts authorities to remain vigilant of BIPARJOY cyclone impacts

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Extremely Severe Cyclone Storm (ESCS) "BIPARJOY" may probably approach the southeast Sindh coast and cause widespread wind-dust/thunderstorm rain with some very heavy/extremely heavy falls at few districts of Sindh between June 13-17.

About the possible impacts of the cyclone, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has revealed on Sunday that "With its probable approach to the southeast Sindh coast, widespread wind-dust/thunderstorm rain with some very heavy/extremely heavy falls accompanied with squally winds of 80-100Km/hour likely in Thatta, Sujawal, Badin, Tharparker and Umerkot districts during June 13-17". "Dust/thunderstorm-rain with few heavy falls and accompanied with squally winds of 60-80 Km/hour is likely in Karachi, Hyderabad, Tando Muhammad Khan, Tando Allayar, Mirpurkhas districts from June 13/14 and June 16", the PMD said.

Squally (high intensity) winds may damage loose and vulnerable structures. Storm surge of 3-3.5 meters (8-12 feet) is expected at the land falling point (Keti Bandar and around).

The PMD has advised the fishermen not to venture in open sea till the system is over by June 17, as the Arabian Sea conditions may get very rough/high accompanied with high tides along coast.

The Very Severe Cyclonic Storm (VSCS) "BIPARJOY" over east



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah holding a post-budget press conference at the Sindh Assembly's auditorium.

# May-9 perpetrators should be brought to book: Javed Latif

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister Mian Javed Latif stressed on Sunday that perpetrators of the May-9 sorrowful incidents should be brought to book so that people could differentiate between a political party and a terrorist group.

Addressing a press conference at Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) secretariat at Model Town, he said the unfortunate incidents taking place in the guise of protests on May 9 by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf were an attempt to weaken the state. He said there was ample evidence of foreign conspiracy behind the attacks on that fateful day.

He demanded that perpetrators of the May-9 incident should be exposed before the nation to avoid such an incident in future. State properties including military installations were damaged by the protesters under a planning, he added.

The federal minister said that facts about the conspiracy under which elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was ousted in 2017 should also be made public so that people could be

made aware of facts. The fact had already been related by many retired people of state institutions, he said and demanded that people of the country should also be told the facts about the conspiracy, which resulted in halting process of speedy development in the country under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif.

He said that various development projects were launched by the then PML-N government, whereas huge foreign investment under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was pouring in constantly to change the fate of the people; however, ousting of the prime minister under a conspiracy stopped the process of development and prosperity of the country.

Javed Latif said the PML-N wanted general election should be held on time; however, level playing field should be ensured to everyone. He said the PML-N, being a strong believer of democracy, did not ever support banning of any political party or a political leader; however, there was a need to ascertain if any party was ever involved in terrorism acts

like May-9 incidents.

He said the perpetrators of May 9 incidents deserved no leniency and should never be spared, as it was a matter of sanctity of the state and anyone who had violated the law and the Constitution should be dealt with as per law of the land to maintain the writ of the state.

To a question, he said the PML-N strongly believed in power of masses and the party would accept their verdict that who should rule the country. He made it clear that the PML-N would contest general election under its electoral symbol and from the party platform.

To another query, the federal minister said that the Punjab province was a stronghold of the PML-N, as its people were well aware of the services rendered by the party for their welfare and they would again vote for the PML-N. Javed Latif said the PML-N had been strongly advocating the stance about rule of law and Constitution in the country and it was still standing with it and would continue to do so in future as well.

# Clashes resume in Sudan as 24-hour ceasefire ends

KHARTOUM (AFP/APP): Shelling and gunfire resumed Sunday in the Sudanese capital, witnesses said, after the end of a 24-hour ceasefire that had given civilians rare respite from nearly two months of war. Deadly fighting has raged in the northeast African country since mid-April, when army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), turned on each other.

The latest in a series of ceasefire agreements enabled civilians trapped in the capital Khartoum to venture outside and stock up on food and other essential supplies.

But only 10 minutes after it ended at 6:00 am (0400 GMT) on Sunday the capital was rocked again by shelling and clashes, witnesses told AFP. Heavy artillery fire was heard in Khartoum and its twin city Omdurman to the north, and fighting also erupted on Al-Hawa Street, a major artery in the south of the capital, they said.

The one-day lull was "like a dream" that evaporated, said Nasreddin Ahmed, a resident of south Khartoum who was awoken by the fighting.

Asmaa al-Rih, who lives in the capital's northern suburbs, lamented the "return of terror" with "rockets and shells shaking the walls of houses" once again.

Clouds of smoke were also seen billowing for a fifth successive day from the Al-Shajara oil and gas facility near the Yarmouk military plant in Khartoum.

Multiple truces have been agreed and broken, including even after the United States had slapped sanctions on both rival generals after the previous attempt collapsed at the end of May.

Both Burhan and Daglo amassed considerable wealth during the rule of longtime Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir, whose government was subjected to decades of international sanctions before his overthrow in 2019. The 24-hour ceasefire that ended on Sunday morning had been announced by US and Saudi mediators who warned that if it failed they may break off mediation efforts.

The two warring sides had "agreed to allow the unimpeded movement and delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout the country", the Saudi foreign ministry said on Saturday. "Should the parties fail

to observe the 24-hour ceasefire, facilitators will be compelled to consider adjourning" talks in the Saudi city of Jeddah which have been suspended since late last month, it added.

The mediators said they "share the frustration of the Sudanese people about the uneven implementation of previous ceasefires".

The fighting has gripped Khartoum and the western region of Darfur, killing upwards of 1,800 people, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.

Nearly two million people have been displaced, including 476,000 who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, the United Nations says.

Over 200,000 have entered Egypt, mostly by land. But Cairo on Saturday announced it was toughening requirements for those Sudanese who had previously been exempted from visas -- women of all ages, children under 16 and anyone over 50. Egypt said the new requirements were not designed to "prevent or limit" the entry of Sudanese people, but rather to stop "illegal activities by individuals and groups on the Sudanese side of the border, who forged entry visas" for profit.

# Russia says it hits Leopard tanks, U.S. Bradley vehicles in Ukraine

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia on Sunday said it had destroyed at least seven German-made Leopard tanks and five U.S.-made Bradley vehicles over 48 hours while repelling Ukrainian attacks, though Russian bloggers reported Ukraine had briefly pierced part of the Russian line.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy acknowledged on Saturday that his military was engaged in "counter-offensive and defensive operations", a day after President Vladimir Putin said Russia had repelled the first attacks of the offensive.

Russia's defence ministry said it had repelled more than a dozen Ukrainian attacks over the past day in three major directions and had destroyed a column of armoured vehicles of the 128th Mountain Assault Brigade in the Zaporizhzhia region. "During the past day, the armed forces of Ukraine continued unsuccessful attempts of offensive actions in the Donetsk, southern Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia directions," it said. Reuters was unable to



immediately verify battlefield reports from either side, but was able to verify the location though not the date of a video showing Russian drones striking Ukrainian-manned tanks in the Zaporizhzhia region.

Russian military bloggers said Ukrainian forces had smashed through a section of the Russian lines south of the town of Velyka Novosilka, briefly taking several villages as Russian forces retreated to higher ground. Vladimir Rogov, a Russian-installed official in the part of the Zaporizhzhia region controlled by Russia, said Russian forces had then taken the village back. Ukraine has said it made gains near Bakhmut, which fell to Russia last

month. Russia's defence ministry published several videos and pictures over recent days showing numerous strikes on Ukrainian-manned armoured vehicles and tanks from Ka-52 attack helicopters and drones.

In footage released by the ministry on Saturday, drones were shown striking tanks in the Zaporizhzhia region where Kyiv's forces have so far focused their counteroffensive. Reuters was able to verify the location of the video as two miles south of the village of Mala Tokmachka in Zaporizhzhia by vegetation lines, crop squares and buildings that matched satellite imagery of the area.

# Shafay says not right to do like May 9 incident to pressurise army

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League Quaid (PML-Q) General Secretary Chaudhry Shafay Hussain said the incident of May 9 is unfortunate and it is not right to do such things to increase the pressure on the Pakistan Army.

Shafay Hussain along with the party's chief organizer Chaudhry Sarwar addressed the PML-Q Youth Conference on Sunday and criticized the corrupt practices of the negative elements and the vandalism on May 9.

Shafay Husain said the youth was brainwashed on May 9 and fed to burn army buildings and monuments of the national heroes.

Shafay said his grandfather Zahoor Elahi raised a voice against the land grabber mafia during his time and Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain took this politics forward. He said in Pakistan, politicians are accused of being involved in corruption but Chaudhry Sarwar and Chaudhry Shujaat are not accused of any kind. The PML-Q leader advised the youth that one should not believe anything on social media as the youth was misled in the name of true freedom.

# Pak-Turkiye bilateral cooperation in diverse fields to open vistas of economic prosperity: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that the enhanced bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Türkiye through joint investment and ventures would prove 'a win win' situation for the both countries.

In an interview with Haber Global, a Turkish Tv channel, the prime minister highlighted that a target of bilateral trade to the tune of \$5 billion, in the next three years, between the two countries was very much achievable. The prime minister said that the areas of solar and hydro power energy in Pakistan possessed huge potential and the Turkish investors could avail of this opportunity. "I want to assure as Prime Minister of Pakistan to do everything to facilitate Turkish investors. There is great scope between the two countries to make this wonderful journey more successful," he added.

The prime minister opined that respective sectors of Türkiye had potential in these areas of Pakistan and it could play its role.

Our labour was more skilled and if they have Turkish investment, it would be a well combination, thus opening vistas of opportunities for joint ventures, he added.

The prime minister, to another query, replied that the railroad network between Pakistan, Iran and Türkiye could play a very

important role which required improvisation. It would definitely result in reduction of the cost of transportation and making their production of goods very compatible in the global markets, he said, adding that his aim was make this network more efficient.

Felicitating President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on his reelection, the prime minister said that the president had proved himself as an established statesman and politician.

The prime minister said that he was looking forward to working closely with president Erdogan to further cement their bilateral relations and trade and investment ties.

Comparing Pakistan and Türkiye as 'one soul two hearts' he said the relations between the two countries dated back to centuries.

Türkiye had always supported Pakistan in difficult times, ie; during floods and quakes, it had gone an extra mile to support them, he added. Similarly, different governments of Pakistan irrespective of the political party in power, they always supported their Turkish brothers and sisters. When it came to Türkiye, all the political parties were one.

"This is the journey we have adopted and hope to achieve our mission through hard work and sincerity of purpose," he stressed.

The prime minister said that these personal bonds of brothers and friends always

helped them to come through every thick and thin. The prime minister said that Pakistan and Türkiye enjoyed strong strategic partnership as they had also entered into joint ventures over ship making industry, adding while there were other areas in which both brotherly countries had shared interests.

He reaffirmed support to Türkiye's territorial solidarity and integrity and said that Türkiye had always supported Pakistan on the issue of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The prime minister, responding to a question, said that they had been passing through difficult challenges, prices were sky rocketed due to imported inflation, the floods had displaced 33 million people while crops were completely washed away and infrastructure stood damaged which had cost them around \$30 billion losses.

Still, he reiterated that the people of Türkiye were strong and facing these challenges, and expressed his optimism that they would negotiate through these challenges with joint efforts.

The prime minister, to another question, maintained that the coalition government had successfully galvanized the international community after floods last year and arranged a Geneva donors' conference where the international community made pledges, thus it saved

the country from serious dangers of default.

The previous government reneged its agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that led to very serious economic situation. They coalition government was able to negotiate with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and Pakistan was out of the grey area. "The credit goes to the coalition government which was a big achievement," he added. The prime minister said that despite these challenges, they were focused on improving the economy and cited recent wheat and cotton crop yields, saying that they economy of Pakistan was improving.

The prime minister expressed the confidence that the IMF's 9th review would sooner of later be approved as they had met all the points. Prime Minister Sharif further said that the Indian atrocities and the sacrifices of Kashmiri people were known to the entire world. He said that India was adamant and had a hegemonic attitude, stressing "It was a high time for the world to resolve the Kashmir issue as per UN Security Council resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri people." Unless, the issue was resolved, peace could not return. Only holding of peaceful talks was a way forward for the peaceful resolution of the issue, he said, adding the both countries

needed to feed and create jobs for its population and eliminate poverty by spending their resources on these areas. To a question, the prime minister maintained that they had formed a committee to hold parleys with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and to arrive on a peaceful settlement of holding of elections nationwide. The committees were agreed but Imran Khan refused.

He said that national and provincial assemblies elections in Pakistan were held together.

The prime minister said that the current National Assembly would complete its tenure after which elections would be held on time to strengthen democracy. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) would decide about holding of polls and they would follow its instructions.

He also dispelled the allegations over provincial hegemony and said that Punjab province always acted like elder brother of the three provinces. They contributed and shared their bounties and sufferings together.

Referring to May 9 vandalism, the prime minister said that PTI chief Imran Khan was arrested on serious corruption and graft charges. During PTI's tenure, he had sent all the political leaders behind bars on false allegations but they had not protested in this manner, the prime minister said.